

GLOBAL CHILDHOODS

~ ISSUES AND DEBATES ~

KATE CREGAN AND DENISE CUTHBERT



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For Mabel and Olive
For Tim

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kate Cregan is the author of *Sociology of the Body* (2006), *The Theatre of the Body* (2009) and *Key Concepts in Body and Society* (2012). The majority of her writing and research is on understandings of embodiment across time, space and cultures, with particular reference to medical interpretations of the body, medical technologies and the representation of the body in images. She has two allied research interests, in ethics (human, social and research) and how the praxis of becoming a writer informs the process of becoming a researcher. She has extensive experience teaching and researching in the humanities and social sciences, including teaching ethics to medical students. Currently, she is co-ordinator and senior lecturer of the interdisciplinary Graduate Researchers in Print (GRiP) programs in the Faculty of Arts, Monash University and is a Visiting Fellow in the School of Graduate Research at RMIT University.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AI	Artificial Insemination
AIHW	Australian Institute for Health and Welfare
ARTs	Assisted Reproductive Technologies
ASPCA	American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
BMI	Body Mass Indices
CAAFAG	Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups
CHH	Child Headed Households
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
ECCE	early childhood care and education
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GD	Gender Dysphoria
GDRC	Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child
GID	Gender Identity Disorder
HIC	High-Income Country
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Australia)
ICA	Inter-country Adoption
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ILO	International Labour Organization
IVF	In Vitro Fertilisation
LIC	Low-Income Country
MDGs	Millennial Development Goals
MIC	Middle-Income Country
NYSPCA	New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
NYSPCC	New York Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children
OECD	Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation
PID	preimplantation diagnostic screening
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals
SCAN	Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (Malaysia)
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UHM	Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNDRC	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNUDHR	United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

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Part One

KEY IDEAS AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES IN THE STUDY OF CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD

KNOWING CHILDREN: THEORY AND METHOD IN THE STUDY OF CHILDHOOD

- Policies and practices aimed at 'protecting the best interests' and 'the rights of the child' are premised on Global Northern ideas of children and childhood.
- The Global Northern understanding of children and childhood is strongly influenced by theories of children as adults in 'development', which permeates a range of fields of intellectual endeavour (e.g. education, law, medicine).
- That approach is increasingly subject to analysis and criticism, based on the theoretical approaches that see children as partaking in a process of socialization (e.g. sociology, anthropology, politics).
- As a result of the intensification of various globalizing forces, those ideas are becoming dominant around the world, although they remain unevenly adopted and openly contested, both by national systems and in local practices.

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has seen the globally syndicated genealogical documentary programme *Who Do You Think You Are?* (Wall to Wall and BBC 1, 2004–present) will have some familiarity with just how much childhood can depend on economic, social, political and geographic context. The popularity of tracing family ancestry in the Global North, which has grown exponentially over the past 30 years or so, necessarily begins with returning to the subject's origins and from there traces back through the births (and deaths) of forebears. It is, in essence, a project that can only be achieved by searching through successive lifespans and therefore successive childhoods.

What is a child? On one level the answer to this question may appear blindingly simple.

1. A child is a young human being.
2. A child is in the stage of life known as childhood.
3. A child is *not* an adult.

These intuitive answers seem to be straightforward truth statements. But are the key terms used in our discussion, child and childhood, so easily delineated and defined by seeing them paired with obverse terms, adult and adulthood? What about adolescents and teenagers: are they necessarily children? Are they uniformly *not* adults? When applied to the lived realities of specific people, do these responses even begin to answer our primary question?

A cursory glance at relatively recent history swiftly yields the answer, no. From the 1920s onwards, children and childhood came to be understood and approached in developed, modern societies in ways that were utterly foreign prior to, and for the majority of the world's population at, that time. This was the result of militation for reform in the treatment of children over the nineteenth century that slowly led to the events, proclamations and declarations that culminated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989). The UNCRC, at which we shall look in some detail in Chapter 3 of this book, is the keystone in contemporary constructions of childhood and the demarcation of the child as a specific form of human being (Bhabha, 2006) on a global scale.

In the spirit of genealogical television, we begin our historical contextualization of 'the child' with examples from the British and Australian experience of the lives of three specific children living just prior to the 1920s – Bob Ingham, Nell Duffy and Lance Davey – a time when child reform movements were gaining significant strength internationally but before they were codified by the League of Nations in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1924). Each of these narratives illustrates an aspect of our point about the historically contingent nature of contemporary views of childhood, at that turning point in the construction of the Global Northern child.

By 1915, aged 15, Robert (Bob) Ingham was sailing the Mediterranean, indentured in the British Merchant Navy as it regularly supplied the Royal Navy during the First World War.¹ Bob had left his home near Stroud in Gloucestershire, where his widowed mother and younger siblings remained. In later life, Bob claimed that he 'jumped ship' in Melbourne around 1921, and went 'bush', and indeed his Merchant Navy record does not give a discharge date. In 1927 he married Agnes (Anne) Duffy, the younger sister of Nell Duffy. Nell Duffy and Lance Davey were the grandparents of Kate Cregan, one of the authors of this book.

As had been the case for several centuries in the UK, sending a son to sea was a recognized way of ensuring that he acquired further skills or practical training, had secure employment that kept him fed and sheltered, and enabled him to contribute to the family income. An apprenticeship in the Merchant Navy was a recognized path to a career at sea in what was, at that time, a thriving industry. As its name implied, the Merchant Navy was unlike the Royal Navy in being based on trade rather than warfare. The Merchant Navy was not as socially prestigious as the Royal Navy, but it was a job with potential prospects.² A youth's wages and

rank might reflect his 'junior' status and inexperience, but he would be expected to behave, to all intents and purposes, as an adult (Heywood, 2001).

Ellen (Nell) Duffy was unusual for a girl growing up in a large family in the Australian bush in the second decade of the twentieth century – outback of the mining town Broken Hill, NSW – in still being in school at the age of 14. Nell's sister Edith, two years older, was already married and had had a daughter at the age of 15. Amenities in the family home were few and utilities non-existent: there was no plumbing, electricity, gas, bathroom, laundry or toilet. All the washing was done by hand, outside, and a wood stove was the only means of cooking and heating water. Washing and cooking were labour intensive core tasks and were exclusively viewed as women's work (Roberts, 1985). When in 1916 Nell's mother gave birth to Jack, her tenth and last live birth (of 12 full-term pregnancies, eight of whom survived into adulthood), Nell left school. Summoned from the classroom by her younger brother Carl, Nell was expected to take over her mother's household duties and the baby's care during her mother's month of 'lying in'. By the time Nell was called home from school in 1916, candles, soap, shoes and cloth could be bought in Broken Hill but in addition to cooking and hand-washing, knitting, sewing, milking, and butter- and cheese-making remained common domestic duties. With her elder sister married, her one older brother in work and eight younger siblings to care for, it was both a practical and logical choice for Nell to start work in the home.

Lance Davey was 16 in April 1917 when he took part in an armed robbery in Footscray – a working-class suburb of greater Melbourne – in the company of another young man. Lance had left school (having achieved the 'qualifying certificate') and was employed as an 'electrical improver' in a small city engineering company, Hoey and Bowen's, where he had met his accomplice, Walter Gleeson (*Advertiser*, 8 September 1917: 3). Lance had turned 17 by the time he was apprehended in September 1917, and although his legal counsel argued he should be tried in the Children's Court because he was 'under seventeen' at the time of the offence, Mr Brown of the Criminal Prosecution Service and the presiding magistrate disagreed (*Advertiser*, 1 September 1917: 2). Founded in 1906, the Children's Court of Victoria was a recent, and professedly enlightened, innovation for the specialized handling of legal cases involving those 16 and younger, whether as malefactors or in cases to determine guardianship. However, the fact remained that those who had reached the age of 17 were considered mature and rational enough to be fully culpable for their actions and to be tried, sentenced and imprisoned as adults (Carrington and Pereira, 2009).

Accordingly Lance was charged, tried and found guilty as an adult before the Supreme Court of Victoria and sentenced to three months' imprisonment, suspended on his 'entering into bonds to be of good behaviour for three years' (*Argus*, 19 September 1917: 11). Had the sentence not been suspended, it is highly likely Lance would have been sent to the formidable Pentridge Prison. Gleeson, the owner of the gun, had already served three months in prison for the hold-up (*Weekly News*, 8 September 1917: 2), and subsequently received six months 'with hard labour' for related thefts from Hoey and Bowen (*Advertiser*, 1 September: 3).

The histories of these three young people from Kate Cregan's family are replicated by the experiences of their contemporaries in the first decades of the twentieth century, or at least by those of similar socio-economic backgrounds. In the context of contemporary understandings of childhood – with compulsory schooling, restrictions on employment for people under 17 and legal frameworks in line with the UNCRC that assume not-yet-fully-developed responsibility for those under 18 – these narratives may seem to reveal conditions of childhood and youth that are exploitative and unjust. And yet, none of these young people considered these events, nor the expectations placed on them, nor their treatment to be unusual. None of these three young people could vote until they turned 21³ and when in paid employment received lower than adult wages: but, in practice, they were functioning as responsible (or irresponsible) citizens long before that age.⁴ Further, their experiences were, at the time, relatively enlightened. As we shall see in Chapter 3 in relation to child labour reform in the nineteenth century, the fact that these young people had been in school until 13 or more was a very different state of affairs from their own parents' or grandparents' generations.

In the early twentieth century, most young people in the Global North over the age of 14 were expected to be in full-time work, whether paid or in the home, unless they were of a class that could afford to keep them idle or in schooling long enough to become professionals. As we shall see in Chapter 5, children were on street-corners in the largest cities in the USA, selling newspapers and organizing against their employers when required (Gillespie, 2013). From other US examples we can also see that children in agricultural families were expected to contribute to the family's economic enterprises:

Remembering her own childhood in Massachusetts in the years 1806 to 1823, Elizabeth Buffum Chace recalled: 'In this house, besides the ordinary housework of those days, various manufactures were carried on: candle making, soap making, butter and cheese making, spinning, weaving, dyeing and of course all the knitting and sewing, the dressmaking and tailoring and probably the shoe making and the millinery of the large household were performed within its limits – and the children, whether native or adopted, began very early to do their share.' (Lovell, 1937: 4, cited in Stern et al., 1975)

From these brief and very specific examples we can begin to map an approach to exploring rather than simply answering our primary question, and to canvassing the meanings of what it is to be a child and what constitutes childhood. Already we can see a vision of children and childhood radically different from dominant contemporary ideas, having perhaps more in common with some of the lived realities of children in developing and under-developed countries that we shall encounter in the case studies in Part Two. The task of Part One, therefore, is to analyse and contextualize those dominant notions as historically and politically informed.

What we demonstrate throughout *Global Childhoods* is that the dominant approaches to children and childhood embedded in UNCRC owe at least as much to the history of knowledge in Western Europe as they do to contemporary, or

historical, issues affecting children. The study and interpretation of efforts to militate for better treatment of children, and the policies formulated around children and childhood are all embedded in more generalized social and political upheavals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As we will show, the understanding and regulation of the embodied lives of children has mutated along with wider epistemological shifts (Elias, 2000; Foucault, 1991; Ariès, 1962) and just which fields of knowledge are considered appropriate in the upward shaping of children has changed over time.

GLOBAL CHILDHOODS

In Western Europe, religion provided the guiding hand for much of the ethical and moral considerations around children and childhood until at least the end of the seventeenth century. Religious dogma pervaded common cultural expectations of appropriate social and filial relations ('honour thy mother and father both') whether one had access to formal education or not. The offspring of the wealthy and rising classes received these tenets as promulgated in early educational theory and administered in early educational practices (Erasmus, 1530; Castiglione, 1528; Luke, 1989). As Western European nations set about seeding their empires around the globe, they also began the long and ongoing process of globalizing Global Northern culture and knowledge (see, for example, Said, 1978; Schiebinger, 1993) through such processes as education. Children, and understandings of childhood, therefore were amongst the earliest objects of colonization and cultural domination (Fass, 2007). Such processes have been slow and uneven, yet global childhoods shaped in the image of Global Northern childhoods have been in formation for centuries.

As state structures became more secular across Europe from the eighteenth century onwards, many religiously informed attitudes towards the upbringing of children, their proper treatment and their role in society remained in place, but appeared in less spiritual and increasingly 'liberal' guises (Locke, 1690, 1693; Rousseau, 1762; Piaget 1972). Or, rather, the agreed moral and ethical precepts that were once the exclusive domain of faith persisted but became absorbed and naturalized into less spiritual, more scientific practice. As we shall see in more detail in Chapter 2, the notions of children and childhood with which we are familiar in Global Northern cultures today emerged out of these secular inheritors of spiritual assumptions and approaches. The child was presented through a range of relevant expert knowledge systems that over centuries have hardened into realms of professionalism (Foucault 1975, 1988, 1991). In particular, the professional realms of law, medicine and education have been paramount in defining, delimiting and regulating children both at the centre and the periphery of colonial empires. By the late nineteenth century, psychology and sociology also began to play a significant part in the theorization of childhood.

In late- or post-modernity, the theoretical questions posed in these various disciplinary fields (education, law, medicine, psychology, sociology) are accepted as 'legitimate', and are dominant in the formation of knowledge concerning