

Changing Landscapes for Childhood and Youth in Europe

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Edited by

Lynne Chisholm
and
Vassiliki Deliyianni-Kouimtzis

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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

LYNNE CHISHOLM
AND VASSILIKI DELIYIANNI-KOUMITZIS

The past twenty years have witnessed a resurgence and restructuring of theoretical and research interest in childhood and youth as social conditions, constructions and choreographies. This period has seen the emergence of much stronger interdisciplinarity of perspective together with the beginnings of a global scientific community that not only exchanges ideas and information, but also engages in empirical comparisons and reciprocal theoretical interrogations. Collections drawing on contributions made to international conferences have begun to appear (for example, Bendit and Hahn-Bleibtreu 2008; Nilan and Feixa 2006; Helve and Holm 2005; Leccardi 2012) and there are some examples of attempts to build integrated critical perspectives for specific regions of the world (for example, Agbu 2009; Anagnost, Arai and Ren 2013; Brown, Larsen and Saraswathi 2002; Maira 2009).

The early years of life through to adolescence have long attracted considerable attention in psychology, especially in developmental psychology and in connection with psychoanalytical approaches to personality and identity development (and see Mayall 2009, 2005 for a critical view on the dominance of psychological perspectives). Analyses of disadvantage and risk amongst children and young people, based in social welfare concerns, were also well established by the middle of the last century (France 2008; Harslof 2005; Majamaa 2011; McElwee 2007). For its part, educational theory and research has very largely been predicated upon children and young people as the subjects and objects of teaching and learning in formal, non-formal and informal settings and processes (see here for example Chisholm 2013a).

During the second half of the 20th century, interest in childhood and youth spread across a range of humanities and social science disciplines, with sociology and its extended scientific communities playing an anchoring role in bringing a diverse range of theoretical insight and empirical inquiry into communication and exchange. During this period, the patterns of young people's lives were largely set into the framework of

developmental stages and social transitions, whereas their activities and attitudes were increasingly understood with reference to theories of socialisation and subcultures. This process of emancipation from approaches marked by essentialism, if not more baldly biologically determinism, initially took root in youth studies from the 1970s, prompted by studies of young people's leisure activities (classically: Hall and Jefferson 1975/2003) and of social inequalities in educational and occupational origins and destinations (classically: Brown 1987; Griffin 1985; Willis 1977). Childhood studies followed suit two decades later, prompted by the consequences of the restructuring of the youth phase, the democratisation of parent-child relations and the incursion of commercialism and consumerism into family life (cf. Alanen 2010; Alanen and Mayall 2001; Chambers 2012; James and James 2004; Qvortrup 1995; Steedman 2005).

By the 1990s, the scale and pace of economic and social transformation, increasingly defined through the lens of multi-dimensional globalisation and technological change, made the need for theoretical renewal evident. At the same time, both motivation and opportunities for carrying out comparative and intercultural studies rose. The contexts in which research could be conducted expanded (as the 'new Europe' opened up and the Pacific Rim sought greater interchange with Europe and North America) and new channels emerged through which such research could be funded (most notably through EU programmes, but subsequently also by international organisations and initiatives together with enhanced cooperation between national funding councils). During the last decade, childhood and youth studies have thus developed into a lively arena of international and interdisciplinary research activity, one in which pure and applied interests together with purely intellectual and more closely policy-related concerns interact in a constructively critical manner.

Current theoretical interest focuses on the re-conceptualisation of childhood and youth as social constructions within the life-course as a whole, itself undergoing major restructuring in the light of contemporary cultural and economic change and modernisation (Blossfeld, Klijzing, Mills and Kurz 2005; Chisholm, 2013b and in this volume; Corsaro 2011; Handel, Cahill and Elkin 2006; Heinz and Marshall 2003; Irwin 2013; Levy, Ghisletta, Le Goff, Spini and Widmer 2005; Wyness 2006). These reformulations can no longer be adequately pursued within insulated discourses that relate solely to single countries, specific cultures and bodies of knowledge expressed through particular languages. Economic and cultural globalisation processes exert dual and reciprocal influences, in that they restructure societies and identities simultaneously from within

and without. Digital communication technologies are increasingly opening up physically remote communities to external sources of cultural information and options, whereas denser and more accessible transport and travel draws ever more people into direct contact with diversity. These processes are by no means evenly distributed, so that centre-periphery relations become both more complex whilst equally embodying new kinds of relations of social inequality along with those that already exist and structure patterns of life chances and risks.

Young people self-evidently stand at the forefront of such social transformations, both in the sense of being prime actors of change and in terms of being those whose lives will be most persistently marked by change. Recent European analyses (for example, Du Bois-Reymond and Chisholm 2006; Faas 2007) have identified a number of key framing features of contemporary change: social and political transformation following the demise of a divided Europe from 1989; increased migration into Europe from other world regions, significantly associated with flight from bitter poverty, environmental degradation and armed conflict; weakening of traditional gendered divisions of labour and diversification of gendered social relations; and broad-based evolution of democratic values and forms of organisation, placing an ever stronger accent on equality, inclusion and participation.

Moreover, the effects of economic restructuring and globalisation on labour markets in Europe have long since produced chronic under-employment and unemployment amongst young people, most particularly and increasingly amongst those with poor education and qualification, whereby the cumulative effects of multiple disadvantage show themselves most painfully in the continuing close correlations between social origin, ethnic-cultural group membership and educational outcomes (Bottrell and Armstrong 2007; Devadason 2007; Chisholm 2013b; MacDonald and Marsh 2001; Scarpetta, Sonnet and Manfredi 2010). Well-qualified young adults must wait longer than ever to find a secure foothold in employment and career; poorly qualified young people may well find themselves waiting for ever – this is the most well-known expression of the deepening polarisation of life chances and risks in European societies, but certainly not the only one, as recent studies focusing on family transitions have well demonstrated (Bottrell and Armstrong 2007; Cole and Durham 2007; Leccardi and Ruspini 2006; López-Blasco, McNeish and Walther 2003; Nilson, Brannen and Lewis 2012; Roberts, Khasan, Dsuzev, Gorodyanenko and Tholen 2003). Since 2009 the consequences of the global financial crisis are proving little short of dramatic for those European countries most severely implicated in the fall-out for national

economies (with Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain in the forefront). Research has yet to document and analyse the consequences for children and young people, but first-hand assessments suggest that long-established patterns of intergenerational transfers and solidarities that have played key roles in underpinning social continuities in transitions to adulthood in the public and private spheres (cf. Kovacheva 2006) are unlikely to survive intact in the mid-term.

Furthermore, once again, it is young people that spearhead civic opposition to the measures taken to contain and manage the financial crisis – for example in Spain and Greece during 2011, where young activists led and sustained mass sit-ins in city squares across the country. Forms of participation based on principles of direct democracy and grassroots social action are taking widespread hold amongst Europe's younger generations, who are able to make use of digital communication technologies to generate and manage the expression of public opinion in ways that have only become possible in the past decade (cf. Pechtelidis 2011). And this is not simply a European phenomenon, nor is it most vividly expressed in Europe – it is much rather the youth of North Africa and the Middle East that is now populating the vanguard of social and political action for change (Larémont 2012; Iwilade 2013).

With specific respect to children's lives, the issues outlined above filter 'downwards' in more indirect ways. Children's rights to participation and autonomy have been interpreted in practice through a variety of measures at local level that attempt to recognise and invite children's voice and contribution in the shaping of community spaces and facilities, frequently accompanied by action research projects (for example, see: Cammarota and Fine 2008; Ginwright, Noguera and Cammarota 2006; Percy-Smith and Thomas 2010). Research interest in the democratisation of family life – as expressed in the structuring of domestic space, decision-making with respect to the use of resources and leisure or holiday time, and so forth – is now well-established (for example, see: Griffin 2011; Kuhar and Reiter 2013; McDonald and Shildrick 2007; Robinson 2009; Solomon, Warin, Lewis and Langford 2002). However, much literature remains tied to the risks to which children are exposed and how to protect children most effectively from risk, whether in relation to digital technology, diet and exercise, educational performance, social inequalities or indeed violence and abuse in all its guises. And in reverse, the consequences of exposure to and experience of such risks then filters 'upwards' in the form of an accumulation of personal and social advantage and disadvantage that pre-structures the shaping of identities and trajectories through youth and young adulthood (Bynner 2005; Côté and Bynner 2008).

This collection has chosen to focus on three areas of current theoretical and research interest. Firstly, the social construction of the life-course is an enduring theme for childhood and youth studies. On this occasion we privilege gendered and family transitions and transformations, which are less well covered in the existing literature than is the case for education and employment patterns. Secondly, the ways in which children and young people are 'party to' the societies and cultures in which they live have increasingly moved to the centre of the research stage. On this occasion we turn the spotlight in particular towards migration and poverty as factors that work against inclusion and belonging, but also point to examples of countervailing policy and action. Thirdly, between that which endures and that which attracts particularly strong interest stands that which is novel and suggestive. In this collection, we focus on the potential of virtual worlds for creating and enabling new forms of social and political action.

We do not claim that this collection represents a comprehensive account of current work in the field of childhood and youth studies, but rather it offers a snapshot of the current landscape that consciously includes contributions as a set of exemplars from diverse corners of Europe, with additional material from Australia and North America. These contributions are ordered thematically as described immediately above, and not at all according to the corner of the world from which they derive. The suggestion is, therefore, that readers might reflect on the relations between specificities and commonalities in a loose vectoring of theme and context. Each of the chapters can certainly be read singly and in their own terms, but they can also be considered concurrently within and across the three sections of the collection.

Life-course transitions and transformations

The collection opens with a conceptual discussion of the social construction of the life-course. Lynne Chisholm argues that the extent to which complexity, differentiation and contingency have become definitively characteristic suggests a shift from linearity to hypertextuality. Social scientists have tried to capture changing constructions of the life-course by identifying new life-phases that open up between the increasingly fuzzy borders of the classic categories of childhood, youth and adulthood. At differing levels of analysis, they have described processes of fragmentation, contradictions and disjunctions that arise thereby. However, life-course theory is still embedded in sequential formulations, rather than critically interrogating these and exploring

alternatives. The chapter thus begins to consider the implications of non-linear conceptualisations of childhood and youth.

Turning attention to more concrete aspects of transition, the second chapter considers the active formation of gendered identity. Drawing on an empirical study from Greece, Katherina Dadatsi and Vasiliki Deliyanni-Kouimtzi delineate the construction of male identities and the development of boyhood during adolescence. Grounded in the conviction that masculinity exists only in relation to femininity, but is also constructed in diverse and multiple forms, the chapter highlights how masculinity is constructed through adolescent boys' views of peers who engage in 'cross-gendered' sports activities. Sports are strongly associated with popularity and peer status; they are also of major significance in adolescence. Boys' accounts demonstrate active negotiation between conformity, challenge and contradiction in relation to social ideologies that set sports activities and gender identities into a tensioned field of meanings. In line with a considerable body of research findings (for example, Paechter 2012; Renold 2001; Swain 2004) the chapter concludes that the prescriptive performance of gender identity exerts greater pressure on boys than on girls.

As young men approach the prospect of becoming fathers, they must extend their gendered identities to encompass masculinity and parenthood in relation to each other. From a critical feminist perspective, Evanthia Tazoglou's chapter addresses the ways young Greek men talk about fatherhood. Based on discourse analysis, the account seeks to reconstruct negotiated meanings of fatherhood from the perspective of young men themselves. The analysis uncovers a set of interpretative repertoires they routinely employ, focusing on two dominant and divergent repertoires centred on fatherhood as responsibility and fatherhood as personal engagement. These can both be set into relation with hegemonic masculinity, but they equally include contradictory discourses that point towards reconstruction of the traditional fatherhood model and renegotiation of gendered dilemmas in present-day Greek society. How these tensions are approached and resolved are material to the fine-grained texturing of transitions to adulthood not only for young men, but also for young women.

The final chapter of this section also addresses the transition to parenthood, but from the viewpoint of European comparative research in eight countries with differing welfare regimes, labour markets and demographic patterns. Siyka Kovacheva and Stanimir Kabaivanov begin by describing contemporary youth as an extended life-phase that also contains increasingly differentiated internal steps towards independent

adulthood. This is most readily visible in charting the transition from school to secure and stable working life, but these patterns are intimately interwoven with establishing one's own household, family and becoming parents. The overall rationale is to achieve satisfactory work-life balance and, where possible, to improve the quality of life between the demands of work and parenthood. Young adults of both sexes actively develop strategies in these respects, which they apply with greater or lesser success according to the specific circumstances in which they find themselves. The analysis thus seeks to identify the factors that determine how far they are successful, placing the information gained in interviews with young working parents into the broader framework of differential policies in the countries under study.

Communication and participation

The second section of this collection opens with a critical interrogation of the potential of digital technologies for teaching and learning. James Côté recounts the somewhat extravagant claims that have been made in a North American literature that has already reached a wide readership amongst educationalists and the public at large. These claims are set against the background of research that describes the generational shift from digital immigrants to digital natives, typically concluding that not only digital competence but also learning styles and preferences are changing rapidly, so that today's children and young people need and want pedagogies and didactics that are distinctly different from those developed in non-digital worlds. The chapter deconstructs the arguments and evidence, in order to bring the debates into clearer proportion. It concludes by emphasising that teaching and learning continue to exist in relation to each other – an exclusive focus on learning risks neglect of how teaching as a set of activities takes place and the extent to which these can be improved or replaced by using digital tools. Côté argues for a judicious and well-balanced combination of conventional and virtual teaching and learning, tailored to the purpose, the context and the participants.

Kerry Mallan, Parlo Singh and Natasha Giardina's chapter switches the focus from formal to informal learning contexts. The authors are working to gain a better understanding of today's digitally competent youth, and in this context their contribution shows how young people deal with 'iScapes', a term used to refer not only to the digital environments created by IT systems, but also to the interconnectedness of online and offline spaces. Using participatory research methods, the authors investigate the ways in which high school students in Australia use new information and

communication media to construct their identities, form social relations and adopt creative practices in everyday life contexts.

New technologies, on the other hand, are important resources in attracting young people to formal politics and they can use these actively to create participatory political practices. Anita Harris's article focuses on how young women make use of new information and communication technologies, exploring questions about the changing aspects of political participation offered to them by the new media and the need to reconceptualise notions of citizenship. She suggests that, by creating a less intimidating public domain in which young women can act, these politicised virtual spaces represent new directions of activism and contribute to the construction of new participatory communities and the development of new kinds of public selves. Equally, however, the same activities convey, as she writes, "important things about the limits of the kinds of conventional citizen subject positions offered to young women at this time".

Vasiliki Triga and Aphrodite Baka take the discussion about the relationship of the new media and participatory practices further. Their contribution argues that new information and communication technologies could play an important mediating and facilitating role for encouraging political participation and active citizenship amongst young people. The authors discuss the use of the Net by youth social movements for motivating and mobilising for political participation and protest. The contribution is based on a case study of youth protest in Greece following the death of a 16-year-old in the context of police action during a demonstration in 2008. The orchestration and management of the youth protest movement was significantly mediated through blogs, and this communication channel sustained the movement after the street protests as such had waned. By means of content analysis, the chapter is able to show how blogging constructed and conveyed information and argument rapidly and effectively, thus successfully motivating and mobilising political opposition.

The final contribution to this section takes up the quandaries that arise from the fact that new communications technologies are open, uncontrolled spaces that individuals and groups may also use in predatory and injurious ways. Michel Walrave and Wannes Heirman's chapter assesses the nature and extent of cyber-bullying on the basis of a survey amongst young Belgians that sought to discover their possible involvement in and experience of the phenomenon. The results of the inquiry suggest that cyber-bullying is more widespread than had been expected; the study was also able to identify at least some of the factors

that generate its onset. Those young people who report themselves to be IT-competent, to have independent online access and to spend significant time on the Net are more likely to perpetrate cyber-bullying. This correlates with the fact that boys, too, are more likely to be cyber-bullies, since it is boys who are generally more likely to devote time and energy to IT and the Net (especially for gaming, whereas girls find virtual social networking more attractive). Girls, then, are more likely to become the victims of cyber-bullying, which parallels their greater vulnerability to gendered violence in 'real' life.

Contours of belonging and inclusion

Belonging and inclusion are not unitary, undifferentiated concepts, nor do they express themselves simply in everyday lives. When people move between countries and cultures, they become the subjects and objects of highly complex structures and relations of memberships and identities. These can seldom be separated from the personal circumstances of formal and social inequalities that, with few exceptions, accompany migration both as antecedents and as consequences. Poverty and its social corollaries are undeniably closely associated with migration.

Migration itself is not new to Europe, but it has changed direction: until very recently, Europeans migrated in large numbers to other parts of the world in order to secure a better life. Today, people from other parts of the world migrate into Europe – in the hope of securing a better life. Migration has always been predominantly a 'young' phenomenon – young adults are most likely to migrate, voluntarily and involuntarily, and so they will usually become parents in their destination country. In turn, this means that due to their demographic structure, first-generation migrant populations are bound to contain disproportionately high numbers of children and young people. On the one hand, societies rapidly diversify and embrace a wide variety of minority ethnicities and cultures; on the other hand, these changes do not take effect evenly, so that multi-ethnic youth lives alongside older age groups who are much less culturally diverse.

Children and young people from migrant and minority backgrounds (and not only those in the first generation) face considerable challenges with respect to the formal and informal dimensions of multi-faceted belongings and inclusions. At the same time, children and young people in general still do not enjoy full personal and social rights as citizens: in some respects, they are also positioned as 'foreigners' in their own countries.

The first two chapters of this section consider the social impact of migration on children and young people on each side of the ‘fence’ of citizenship. The opening chapter analyses the ways young people’s moral agency is constituted in relation to the moral aspects of forced migration and asylum. Drawing on qualitative data from group discussions and individual interviews with ‘citizen’ and ‘non-citizen’ students and teachers, Mano Candappa, Madeleine Arnot and Halleli Pinson highlight the complexity of moral judgement amongst ‘citizen’ school pupils in England. Their analysis shows how hostile public discourses on asylum powerfully influence young people’s moral values, even though these discourses contradict the more inclusive ideology of the school. However, in specific cases whereby children seeking asylum were threatened by exclusion from schooling or deportation from the UK, pupils are capable of expressing contestation towards dominant hostile public discourses ideologies and can demonstrate their affiliation to human rights discourses, thus gaining and using resources for developing more autonomous agency in their lives.

For her part, Lia Figgou then reports on how young adult Greek citizens construct and reconstruct discourses about migration to Greece. She conducted focus groups with 18-24 year old university students, in which the characteristic tenor is that Greece literally cannot afford to take in migrants on the current scale. For these young people, migration is essentially a law and order issue for a country with fixed borders that must be protected from illegal immigration. However, these accounts included contradictory elements: the students express their agreement with principles of social justice and respect for human rights – which favours open borders – but at the same time they underline perceived negative consequences in terms of integration obstacles and problems both for the migrants and for the receiving country.

The next two chapters of this section each address inclusion and exclusion issues from the point of view of migrant youth. Marcus Herz and Thomas Johansson base their analysis on a phenomenological approach to being stopped on the street by the police, drawing on interviews on this subject with four male immigrants between 18 and 25 years old. The chapter concentrates on their feelings, experiences of discrimination and social exclusion, mapping how all this becomes part of these young people’s everyday lives. They must devise strategies to deal with this contingent risk, which becomes an integral part of their identity development and their way of life.

Moving on from this, Carles Feixa and Teresa Lopez adopt a differently nuanced perspective, positioning young people from

Mediterranean backgrounds as a global generation migrating within the region. This contribution explores the psychological, social and cultural implications of this distinct pattern of youth migration in a space that is at once inclusive (considering the social history of Mediterranean cultures as closely related, mutually interpenetrating and open to cross-mobility) and excluding (in the context of sharp North-South barriers to exchange and mobility, complicated by Palestine conflict and Cypriot division).

Yet experiencing oneself as a 'non-citizen' is not restricted solely to migrant youth. Pamela Abbott and Claire Wallace's contribution depicts the disengagement from political, economic and social citizenship as expressed by young people in Moldova. This is a consequence of the country's social and system disintegration following the demise of the USSR and the intense and sometimes violent competition and conflict surrounding territories, resources and national sovereignties. In this context, a particular view of citizenship emerges from the findings, one aspect of which is alienation from the formal system and the state in general. Their analysis is based on interviews with young people and young adults in different circumstances – at school or at university, in stable or in precarious employment. The key finding is that in all of these groups, the majority sees little future for themselves in their own country. This leads them to disengage from constructing their own pathways to integration into Moldavian society and economy, which could turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The most desperate forms of exclusion (including via migration) find their expression in human trafficking. In the case of children, enforced beggary – a specific variety of exploitation of the body – constitutes a form of trafficking that has become endemic in southeastern Europe. Konstaninos Panagos describes the ways in which this 'business' is organised as enforced beggary in Greece, exploiting children from poor countries in the region and in particular Roma children from Albania. These 'non-citizen children' are likely to be classified in everyday life as an annoying outgrowth of the canker of the 'undeserving foreign poor' – or at best as the pitiful victims of their undeserving parents, perhaps of their criminal slave drivers.

Under such circumstances, the notion that children have – or should have – rights *in their own right* appears almost to be a side-issue, but it does represent a fundamental shift in perspective that in principle would benefit all children, whatever their formal and informal citizenship status. On the basis of social research with street children in many countries, Daniel Stoecklin proposes that the key to appropriate policy and action lies in combining respect for diversity with the principle of agency. All social

actors, including children and young people, can recognise, enact and voice lived experiences by using the sensitising concepts that researchers using grounded theory develop and adopt to make sense of the worlds they study and on which they report – in other words, part of the answer to charting and understanding the changing landscapes of childhood and youth, in Europe as elsewhere in the world, lies in a democratisation of the research process that can take respectful account of what children and young people tell us about their lives.

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