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In his pioneering work on the modern nation as a particular kind of 'imagined community', Benedict Anderson (1983: 16) asserts that 'in the modern world everyone can, should, will "have" a nationality, as he or she "has" a gender'. And, he might have added, as he or she 'has' a childhood.

In recent decades, we have seen an explosion of interest in the constructedness of national identities, gender relations and childhoods. Eley and Suny (1996: 8) note, with respect to nations, that the 'need to constitute nations discursively, through processes of imaginative ideological labor – that is, the novelty of national culture, its manufactured or invented character, as opposed to its deep historical rootedness – is probably the most important point to emerge from the recent literature'. A great deal of the literature in recent gender and childhood studies argues that constituting these identities also takes considerable 'imaginative ideological labor'. Modern constructions of gender and childhood are far from ahistorical, universal forms, though much of their power to shape experience, thought and action derives from their claims to reflect, in some simple and direct way, fundamental realities that are given in nature. (This is true as well for nationalism, the 'natural' form of political loyalty in the territorially defined polity of the nation-state.)

It sometimes seems, in the heady rush of social constructionist arguments within contemporary social theory, that we are swimming in a sea of discourses, where social constructions can be imagined and reimagined at will. But the richer and more interesting discussions of nation, gender and childhood explore complex interrelations among constructed meanings,

historical circumstances and material conditions. Thus, we may argue that the modern nation is a 19th-century European form, depending for its existence on strategic political interventions and the ideological labor of intellectuals. In contrast to nationalist self-understandings, nations do not develop naturally or inevitably out of pre-existing commonalities of territory, language, religion, customs or world-views. Such commonalities may constitute significant resources for the development of a national consciousness, but considerable imaginative labor and political persuasion are also normally required for a unified national identity to be experienced as more important than differences of dialect, culture or regional affiliation.

Similarly, modern constructions of gender and childhood are neither natural nor inevitable reflections of biological dimensions of sex and age. While all societies have given meaning to physical differences associated with sex and age, the modern notions of male and female and of childhood and adulthood are culturally and historically specific. These terms already presuppose a world of western cultural assumptions – for example, that sexual or age differences are self-evidently dichotomous and that they define the parameters for exclusive identities, just as the boundaries of a nation are meant to define a clear line between 'us' and 'them', natives and foreigners.

A major challenge for the social sciences in decades to come is exploration of the ways these differentiating identities – male or female, adult or child, citizen of this or that nation – support, legitimate and reinforce, as well as challenge and partially contradict one another. Consider, for example, relations between gender and nationalism, the topic of an emerging 'growth industry' in relation to contemporary reconceptualizations of nations and nationalism. While many theorists of the modern nation have marginalized gender by focusing on culturally male activities of war, politics and interactions within the public sphere (Kedourie, 1960; Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983), others have begun to explore ways in which a public sphere depends on a particular sort of private, inner world, associated with women and children.

There is a growing body of provocative work exploring the centrality of historically specific constructions of gender, sexuality, privacy and domesticity within articulated structures of capital, urban life, cultural forms, political institutions and subjective orientations associated with the modern nation-state (Mosse, 1985; Jensen, 1986; Koontz, 1987; Parker et al., 1992; Eley and Suny, 1996). The modern nation has typically been imagined in terms of metaphors of the conventional nuclear family. Women, as 'mothers of the nation', reproduce the substantial body of the nation, care for its future citizens and teach the common 'mother tongue', while men are the productive agents of the economic and political conditions for social reproduction. A 'brotherhood' of men is charged with defending, protecting and containing the core domestic spaces. The polarization and hardening of the modern dichotomy of male/female can be seen as crucial to marking off

boundaries and setting up hierarchical relations between distinct domains of social life – the private and the public, consumption and production, objective need and subjective desire – upon which the historical development of capitalism and the modern state depends.

Anderson (1983) has argued compellingly that the nation is a particular sort of 'imagined community', requiring the technological means and social infrastructures for generating a sense of imagined communion among large numbers of people who will never meet most of their fellow citizens face to face. A nation, he asserts, is a distinctive kind of community that emphasizes internal homogeneity and definitive boundaries separating one national community from another. This is very different, for example, from dynastic realms, where diverse groups are hierarchically organized around a dominant center, with 'fuzzy' external boundaries that could – at least in principle – encompass the world.

A perspective on gender and nation adds an important dimension to Anderson's theory. While the modern nation emphasizes homogeneity in the public sphere, it also depends on definitive internal boundaries between male and female worlds. Homogeneous national subjects with a particular sort of historical consciousness and sense of community do not spring forth fully formed. They must be made, within the structurally female domains of the family, local community and school.

While we can begin to identify integral connections between modern constructions of gender and nation, it is important to remember that there is a far from perfect and harmonious fit between them. In contrast to male ethics of abstract justice and rational self-interest in the public realm, the female sphere is characterized by an ethic of nurturance, empathy and care. Insofar as society protects within itself a site of alternative values and perspectives, it remains perpetually open to the possibility that these alternative visions may be taken out of their circumscribed contexts and used as the grounds for radical political critiques – for example, 'maternalist' critiques of military policy or of political assaults on social welfare services (Ruddick, 1989; Koven and Michel, 1993).

Emerging interest in the topic of gender and nationalism signals a rethinking of the phenomenon of nationalism from 'the bottom up' and 'the inside out'. For many years, the study of nationalism – as the ideology of the modern nation-state – was left to political scientists, macro-sociologists and national historians. More recently, the topic of nationalism has been explored by anthropologists, literary theorists, feminist researchers and others concerned with understanding connections between political ideologies and public actions, on the one hand, and people's everyday practices and forms of consciousness, on the other.

Given this shift in orientation, it seems remarkable, at least upon first consideration, that explorations of 'the child' and its structural role in the nation-state are still so undeveloped. However, as Jenks (1996) has recently

argued, the tendency to naturalize identity is still strong in relation to child-hood, even if this tendency is increasingly criticized in relation to ethnicity, race, gender and nation. It is as though the child represented the last stable, grounded point in the constantly shifting field of relations and ephemeral identities that characterizes postmodernity.

Writing these words in the heat of the American presidential campaign, I am struck by how much of the political discussion focuses on the nation's responsibility to its children. The figure of the innocent and vulnerable child has strong political appeal and is being used to justify widely divergent political agendas. Debates about welfare reform and the capacities of unwed welfare mothers to raise moral children, or about the desirability and rationality of providing state-funded education to both immigrant and native children make frequent mention of the needs and best interests of 'the child' (in its singular, generic form). Such notions of the universal child, with preestablished needs and interests, tend to short-circuit more far-reaching political debates about fundamentally different visions of the nation implied by different positions in these debates, and about the place of various groups of children – differentiated by class, race, ethnicity, religion, gender and geographical location – within these variously configured nations.

Once we begin to explore the intertwined topics of children, childhoods, nations and nationalisms, many important questions arise for theoretical and empirical investigation. In what respects are certain notions of children – as foci of gender-specific roles in the family, objects of regulation and development in the school, symbols of the future and of what is at stake in contests over national identity – pivotal in the structuring of modern nation-states? In what respects are visions of 'the needs and interests of the child' integrally connected to the policies and practices of nationally framed legal, welfare, medical and educational institutions? How have conceptions of proper modern children and childhoods functioned to identify 'deviant', 'wayward' and 'dangerous' classes of children and 'abnormal' and 'indigent' families in need of state regulation and rehabilitation? And, very importantly, how have children themselves variously understood, experienced, identified with, sometimes resisted and partially reshaped nationalist projects of which they have been primary objects?

Eley and Suny (1996: 22) remind us that national identification is a matter of 'sensibility':

... something transmitted from the past and secured as a collective belonging, something reproduced in myriad imperceptible ways, grounded in everydayness and mundane experience. . . . A common memory of belonging, borne by habits, customs, dialects, song, dance, pastimes, shared geography, superstition, and so on, but also fears, anxieties, antipathies, hurts, resentments, is the indistinct but indispensable condition of possibility.

For nationalism to do its work, ordinary people need to feel that the natural grounds for identification with their fellow citizens and for feelings of

difference from others are grounded in the common-sense world of everyday life. How do childhood experiences and memories come to function as crucial resources for nationalist sensibilities? (Or, as someone once observed to me, what is nationalism but the memory of customary foods eaten as a child?)

Even as we begin to identify constellations of nation/gender/childhood in modernity, we are already forced to question what is happening to these 'structured coherences' (Harvey, 1989) in an increasingly 'postmodern' world? How are contemporary challenges to and restructurings of childhood related to significant transformations in constructions of gender and nation? In a world characterized by transnational flows of commodities, capital and people, by vast numbers of refugees, migrants and displaced stateless groups, and by various forms of globalized culture (including music, fashions and film), the concept of nationality has become increasingly problematic and ambiguous (Basch et al., 1994). Changes in gender relations and family forms blur divisions between inside and outside, private and public.

Children and youth become increasingly visible outside the conventional spaces of home, school and local neighborhood. 'Street children' move through the crowded streets and other public spaces of central business areas in urban areas around the world. Child politicians speak out at public hearings on the environment and human rights, as children's rights advocates proclaim the child's right to participate in the wider society, on local, national and international levels. Can we begin to speak of new sorts of emergent childhoods, in new sorts of relations to the nation-state – and perhaps including new forms of transnational childhoods as well?

And what about those increasingly visible groups of 'deviant children' – members of ethnic or religious minorities, immigrants, marginalized 'delinquents' – who do not fit easily into national molds? As we have seen, the idea of the modern nation depended on an imagined community that could be experienced – at least by a majority of the population much of the time – as a coherent and homogeneous national culture. Such notions and experiences are increasingly difficult to sustain in a world of boundary-blurring multiculturalisms and boundary-proliferating ethnic and religious nationalisms. Children's bodies and minds are often primary stakes in contemporary 'culture wars' (see Stephens, 1995).

Childhoods, nationalisms and the life-worlds of children

It is important to remember that while we may discuss 'the modern nationstate' as a sort of ideal type, every instantiation of this form has its own geography, history and forms of national identification. Any adequate theory of childhood and nation would need to be sensitive to this historical and geographical specificity.

And then there is the question of the complex relation between these

changing social constructions and the experiences, understandings, life conditions and possibilities of actual children. One has only to turn on a television or open a newspaper – or, in some cases, to walk down the streets of one's own neighborhood – to be confronted with the stark consequences that contemporary nationalist conflicts have had for children's everyday lives. Nationalist struggles in the former Yugoslavia, in Rwanda and in many other places around the world have put children into situations of enormous physical danger, psychological trauma and social instability. Children of refugees and immigrant laborers in 'the new Europe' experience in their daily lives the complexities, contradictions and sometimes physical dangers of multiculturalism and resurgent European nationalisms.

Postcolonial third world populations have learned that in order to make internationally legitimated claims to political autonomy, they must frame these claims in terms of bounded nation-states and distinctive national cultures. Children figure prominently in debates about national educational curricula and national cultural policies. Moreover, children and youth play central roles in most third world national military forces, as well as in the organization of 'national liberation' forces. Children are thus not only the victims of nationalist struggles. They are also, increasingly, drawn into waging them.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that 'the child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name and the right to acquire a nationality' (Article 7). But in light of the tremendous costs for children of contemporary nationalist claims and conflicts, we might also argue that children should have rights not to be constrained within bounded and exclusionary national identities and not to have their minds and bodies appropriated as the unprotected terrain upon which battles are fought about the nature, range and future of nations and national identities.

In speaking about children and nationalism, it is clearly important to beware of making easy generalizations or value judgments. Some of the articles in this issue point out dangers to children of nationalisms based on notions of racial purity and other stereotyped visions of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (Povrzanović, Okely, Stephens). Others present arguments for more benign forms of nationalism as resources for the formation of children's identities (Norwegian visions of nationalism, as described by Gullestad, and the links between children's early experiences and forms of national consciousness in Iceland and Kamchatka, as developed by Koester).

It is neither realistic nor desirable to think that we could approach the charged topic of children and nationalism without making value judgments about the implications of various sorts of nationalisms for various groups of children within, or at the margins of, diverse nations. But in order to make more informed and less immediately ethnocentric judgments, we need to develop better structural/historical understandings of the roles children and

childhood have played in the development of modern nation-states and nationalist projects, of challenges to and transformations of these phenomena in the current era, and of ways that children themselves have experienced and understood imagined national communities and some of their historical consequences (in the form of national family policies, social welfare programs, school curricula, cultural heritage programs and so on).

My argument here is that the topic of children and nationalism raises timely and important issues for anyone concerned with the health, social welfare, life conditions and possibilities of children in the contemporary world. This topic also opens up significant new areas for sociological, historical and psychological research within the growing field of 'childhood studies'. Finally, a focus on children and nationalism has much to offer researchers in other fields as well. Child-centered studies (surely as much as research focused on women and gender) represent a promising new area for rethinking the nation from 'the bottom up' and 'the inside out'.

'Children and Nationalism': an international conference

In light of such considerations, the Norwegian Centre for Child Research hosted an international, interdisciplinary 'Children and Nationalism' conference on 13–16 May 1994 in Trondheim, Norway. The Centre invited 22 participants from 10 countries (Norway, the US, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Brazil, the UK, Germany, India, Japan and Croatia). Our primary aim was to begin to conceptualize what it might mean to put considerations of children and childhood at the center of the profound rethinkings of nationalism and the nation-state that have taken place within the last several decades.

Because our goal was to begin to map out a new area of study, we could not expect to find many established experts on the conference topic. Rather, we invited some specialists in research on nations and nationalisms, together with others working on issues related to children and childhood, in the hope that their meeting in Trondheim would generate suggestive and fruitful dialogs.

Topics identified for discussion included the following:

- 1. Historical perspectives on the development of modern notions of children and childhood in relation to the development of the modern nation-state;
- 2. The role of children-focused national education systems and cultural policies in creating and reproducing distinctive national identities;
- 3. The export of modern Euro-American notions of children, child-hood, nations and nationalisms around the globe and important transformations of these constructions that occurred in the process;
- 4. The current resurgence of nationalisms often in the form of

'ethnic' or 'religious nationalisms' – alongside the internationalization of economic and cultural structures, and the implications of these 'new nationalisms' for the life conditions and experiences of children;

- 5. Processes by which a nation's politics becomes a child's everyday psychology or fails to do so, or does so only partially and in contradictory ways;
- 6. Experiences and life conditions of various groups of nationally 'deviant' children for example, street children, refugees, migrants and ethnic minorities:
- 7. The nature of new sorts of transnational children and childhoods.

One of our conference goals was to put the new topic of children and nationalism on the 'nationalism research map'. In hindsight, this may have been too ambitious an aim, though the conference did succeed in raising important questions and pointing toward areas that need much more theoretical and empirical exploration.

Judith Ennew, in her conference summary and evaluation, discussed some of the difficult challenges involved in

... deliberating about two fundamental forms of identity – childhood, which we have come to regard as the location and explanation of adult neuroses; and nationality, which is either a source of great pride or deep shame, but never neutral. This conjunction is bound to bring with it powerful, and sometimes uncontrollable, effects that intervene in thought, writing and debate. Not for nothing have most presenters emphasized not only that their work is preliminary (indicating far more uncertainty than is usual or real in the realm of academic false modesty), but also that it has been 'provoked' by the title of the conference. The reiteration of this word, 'provoked', shows how uncomfortable some of the subject matter threatened to be.

Ennew noted that the conference might have been more appropriately titled 'Childhood and Nation', rather than 'Children and Nationalism', insofar as most of the presentations explored how certain constructions of childhood have been shaped by, have legitimated or have challenged particular constructions of the nation. Far fewer presentations dealt with empirically grounded studies of the ways children themselves come to understand and incorporate into their own identities various sorts of nationalist visions and structures of feeling. We are pleased to note that at least least one such study has already grown out of conference discussions and 'provocations'. (See Hengst, this issue; 43–62, for preliminary findings from a survey of notions of collective identity among 8- to 13-year-olds in England, Germany and Turkey.)

Articles in this issue

The six articles included in this special issue of *Childhood* developed out of conference presentations and discussions. They represent a variety of world regions and approaches to the topic of children and nationalism.

David Koester explores the role of the child in national consciousness, as well as the formation of national consciousness in childhood within two social contexts - Iceland, with an already established national identity and written history, and the incipient nationalism of the Itel'men of Kamchatka, in the turbulent post-Soviet period. Noting that nationalism is the 'condition under which signs and symbols of national identity do not feel arbitrary', Koester explores different ways in which Icelandic and Itel'men children come to incorporate national symbols as forms of 'embodied knowledge', i.e. in ways that make these embodied symbols later seem to be the grounds for a sense of natural identification with a particular nation, in contrast to other nations. Koester includes the wonderful story of an old Itel'men man holding a 6-month-old baby, moving it and stretching its arms to forms of music that the child will later learn are important ethnic markers differentiating the Itel'men from other ethnic and national groups. Koester shows how childhood memories - predominantly visual in the case of Iceland, and auditory and corporeal in the case of the Itel'men - can become important resources for national identification.

Marianne Gullestad explores what happens to the formation of national identities in situations where the conditions of everyday life are undergoing significant and far-reaching changes. Gullestad argues that Norwegian notions of national identity have been closely linked to notions of childhood, ever since the 19th-century development of a distinctive Norwegian national consciousness. One of the reasons that many Norwegians see their form of nationalism as particularly benign is that Norwegian nationalism is regarded as a positive force in children's everyday lives, ensuring that children have the space they need for free and natural development and the symbolic resources they need for the formation of stable and coherent social identities. But these stable identities are challenged in an era of 'late' or 'transformed' modernity, as the nature and boundaries of the nation and the homogeneity of a national community are called into question by the presence of immigrants and asylum seekers; the activism of the Sami indigenous minority; the increased penetration of national boundaries by globally circulating goods and media; and calls for Norwegian inclusion within the European Union. The boundaries of children's worlds are also changing, as childhood moves more and more from 'self-governed realms in the interstices of the neighborhood to professionally supervised educational realms combined with visible public citizenship'. It is thus not surprising, Gullestad argues, that there is an intense preoccupation in contemporary Norway with the location and nature of boundaries – between persons, families,

neighborhoods, ethnic groups, nations and not least between different forms of childhood (spontaneous and natural vs constrained and institutionalized, traditional vs imported, etc.). This preoccupation is accompanied by a 'passion for boundary-setting' of all sorts, in both public and private domains. Gullestad develops a complex and interesting picture of the ways that challenges to the nation-state are linked to changes in the everyday contexts of children's lives, at the same time that everyday practices of setting boundaries in relation to children's worlds provide important 'experiential grounds and metaphoric resources' for the ways people understand and act in relation to issues of national boundary-setting as well.

While it is clear from Gullestad's article that notions of how children figure in national consciousness have real-life consequences for 'actually existing children' (a favorite term of Cindi Katz's during our Trondheim discussions), Heinz Hengst emphasizes the need for more empirical research on the world-views of children themselves. His study includes German and Turkish children in Germany, English and Asian children in England, and Turkish children in Turkey. Hengst is interested in the ways that children become politically socialized, via families, schools, neighborhood interactions and, increasingly, children's peer groups and the mass media. How and when do children form notions of 'us' and 'them', those with whom they identify and those whom they regard as 'foreigners'? While Hengst's study is still in progress and the conclusions still preliminary, he presents materials suggesting that we may be witnessing a generational shift in the dominant ways identity and difference are conceptualized – away from nationally framed divisions between 'us' and 'them' to a complex constellation of transnational identifications, national identities and attributions of the term 'foreigner' to the 'others' – migrants, emigres and political asylum seekers – within national territories. Hengst emphasizes that any focus on children and nationalism today must be sensitive to the new challenges that many children face in dealing with proliferating social differences in their everyday lives, as well as to the escalating importance of globalized media in children's experiential worlds.

Maja Povrzanović explores changing contexts for children's political socialization in war-torn Croatia. She suggests that in situations of violent ethnic conflict, children are forced to develop explicit notions of their own and others' ethnic identities sooner and in more stereotyped ways than in peaceful circumstances. She tells the story of the winter of 1991–2, when her two-and-a-half-year-old son constantly built, ruined, rebuilt and again destroyed his Duplo buildings, proclaiming that he was 'playing Vukovar'. In the summer of 1992, a 3-year-old neighbor tried to persuade the author to take the role of 'the Serb' and throw objects down at the child from the balcony. Povrzanović argues that during the war in Croatia, particularly with the ubiquitous media coverage of the war and stereotyped images of 'the Enemy', children's everyday lives became 'overpoliticized'. Since every

version of the Other is also a construction of the Self, the essentialized, stereotyped characteristics attributed to Serbian enemies also refer back in complex ways to Croatian children's own processes of identity formation. What will these early childhood experiences of definitive and inflexible ethnic/national identities mean for these children's future capacities as citizens of a forcefully unified Croatian nation?

Judith Okely draws on her long-time anthropological research among Gypsy travelers in the UK, in order to explore the ambiguous status of a traveling ethnic group within a majority culture that associates cultural identity with the occupation of a fixed territory. Thus, Okely argues, the continuing existence of Gypsy culture represents a challenge to fundamental organizing principles of the nation-state. This explains, at least in part, the state's continuing interest in regulating and assimilating Gypsy society. In this article. Okely focuses on the ways that debates about the education of Gypsy children become a crucial site of struggle about the nature of Gypsy identity. The author shows how cultural constructions of middle-class white childhoods as the universal norm have served to categorize working-class children as deviant, disadvantaged and in need of state rehabilitative services. In turn, representations of working-class children have been monolithically applied to Gypsy children, rendering them subject to state programs for change and 'rescue'. Assumptions about the needs and best interests of 'the child' (singular, universal and ethnically 'neutral') are linked to arguments for the sedentarization of Gypsy society and the assimilation of Gypsy travelers into the national system of organized industrial wage labor. Okely's article shows how universalized notions of childhood can be used by states to regulate, control and attempt to eliminate internal differences that challenge the normative construction of national citizens.

Finally, my own article looks at some of the post-Cold War literature on the US national security state and the 'Cold War consensus' in American popular culture of the 1950s and early 1960s. Important recent work has linked containment policies underlying Cold War defense programs and the containment of sexuality and gender roles within American society. My article turns the focus to constructions of children and childhood – presented in US government information films about the national defense program, in educational materials prepared for school-age children and in American popular culture. I argue that children were depicted as asexual, innocent beings at the heart of the contained domestic world, as objects of strictly genderdivided parental care and protection, and as the vulnerable core of American society, whose protection from foreign enemies required and legitimated the construction and perpetual development of a vast defense system. The article counterposes dominant Cold War images of abstract, generic children (invariably presented as white and middle class) to the actual children most vulnerable to risks associated with uranium mining, weapons production and testing, and government-sponsored radiation experiments: native American

and Mormon populations, indigenous populations in the Pacific Islands, children in a New England school who were diagnosed as retarded and used as subjects of government-sponsored radiation experiments. In various ways, I argue, these were all seen as 'deviant' children, whose lives could legitimately be put at risk in the interests of safeguarding 'normal' children at the heart of Cold War nationalist visions of American society.

Concluding comments

It should be clear from this introduction that the Trondheim conference raised many more questions than it definitively answered, an outcome that is expected and appropriate when the goal is to open up a new area of study. It is precisely because childhood so often still tends to be seen as natural and innocent, ahistorical and apolitical, that it is eminently fitted for use within nationalist visions and projects, with a wide range of consequences for the lives of actual children. Conference participants agreed that it is important to look behind common-sense and often essentialized understandings of both childhood and nationalism, to the complex and intertwined processes of their social and historical construction. Doing so is more than just a scholarly exercise: it also opens up the possibility that things might be different from the ways they are now, that we might contribute to the formation of new sorts of childhoods, nationalisms and transnational visions, with positive implications for children's everyday lives and future possibilities.

It is my hope, and the hope of conference organizers and sponsors, that this special issue of *Childhood* will continue the provocative work begun at the Trondheim conference and spur others on to further work in developing the concepts, theories, methods and empirical studies that will truly put the topic of children and nationalism on the 'research map', as well as into the realm of public discussion and political debate.

Notes

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The topic of children and nationalism is timely and significant, and inherently controversial. As editor of this special issue, I wish to remind the readers that the perspectives and opinions expressed in each article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect my own views, those of the other editors or the publishers.

1. Many works could be cited as illustrative and exemplary. Here I note Anderson (1983), Chatterjee (1993) and Eley and Suny (1996) on nations and nationalism; Ortner and Whitehead (1981) and Butler (1990) on gender; and Ariès (1962), James and Prout (1990) and Jenks (1996) on childhood.

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