



# First Steps

A primer on the geographies of children and youth

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- \_ Chris Cunningham
- \_ Kim England
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- \_ Sarah L. Holloway
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First steps are synonymous with childhood. The physical act of a baby taking her/his 'first steps' is one of the milestones that the child's Significant Others' (especially parents) cherish most, and their recollections of the event quickly become an integral part of the 'family legend' that is constructed from everyday life. Metaphorically, childhood is a series of 'first steps' which children take, either informally (e.g. the gradual relaxation of parents'/guardians' rules over when and where their children can access spaces beyond the home independently of adults and older children), or formally (e.g. the incremental bestowal of rights and 'access' by legal and other institutions as a young person ages). Many of these 'first steps' are celebrated (particularly those taken by younger children) and instil in Significant Adults that improbable mix of pride and amusement (e.g. the audience's reaction to the baby ballerinas in the dancing display), while others are feared (particularly those taken by youth, e.g. first sexual encounters) or misunderstood (why don't Sk8tr boiz care about how they look?).

The 'first steps' of academics into emergent fields – such as the early forays into children's geographies in the 1980s and 1990s – arouse the same senses of wonderment, excitement, disdain and dread. Some of those working within the mainstream may belittle this endeavour, perceiving these new studies to be a distraction from the key theoretical and empirical questions which scholars should engage. Others from the mainstream may view such work as a useful exercise, albeit one with a limited capacity to engage a limited number of key questions and, therefore, having a limited shelf-life. In this instance, it is acknowledged that such studies contribute to the development of theory and understanding, but it is expected that these gains will be achieved in the short-term and that a new fad or fashion will adopt its mantle thereafter. These have been the dominant reactions in Geography to the geographies of young people (although, interestingly, the scholarly community of the 'new social studies of childhood' has been much more receptive to the insights afforded

by the study of children in place, space and environment). The sceptics would envisage a brief (attempted) incursion to the mainstream to cede to a smaller community of marginal scholarship on the periphery. Yet, children's geographies continues to flourish; some geographers have cemented their reputation in the wider discipline through their work on children, youth and families (for example, Stuart Aitken, Cindi Katz and Gill Valentine); young researchers such as Harriott Beazley, Elizabeth Gagen and Thomas Herman are gaining respect for their research; and most recently and notably, Taylor and Francis have judged there to be sufficient interest in the field to warrant the introduction of the new peer-reviewed academic journal, *Children's Geographies* in 2003.

It is an opportune moment to take stock of the geographies of young people. While there is no shortage of scholarly review articles (McKendrick, 2000, p.360), what is missing is a review which captures the senses of wonderment and excitement which accompanies academic forays into this emergent field. This short book complements these scholarly but dispassionate reviews by presenting a collection of short notes on 'personal favourites' from 21 scholars (note the irony) who themselves have, or are establishing, a track record in writing the geographies of children, youth and families. First and foremost, the collection seeks to enthuse the reader. Each review considers an enduring or recent 'classic', and together they cover the breadth of human geography, providing, in passing, insights into the worlds of young people and introductions to some of the cornerstones of the subject field. There is no shortage of the personal pronoun in this writing, which is part autobiographical. Written in a light – even light-hearted – style, these reviews focus on the impact of, and inspiration provided by, the text on the reviewer. Read what others have had to say about these works, or better still read the original, for a systematic analysis. These are personal reviews about personal favourites that should work up, rather than quench, a thirst for the geographies of young people.

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# Stuart C. Aitken on Donald Winnicott

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**I first came across Donald Winnicott's ideas on children, play and 'reality' when working on my dissertation in the mid-1980s (Aitken, TO-ADD YEAR) and grappling with some queasiness over Piagetian developmental theory (Piaget, 1937). What intrigued me at that time was Winnicott's focus on transitional objects that enabled children to move in a wider world beyond attachments to primary caregivers. Transitional space "... is not inner psychic reality" he writes in *Playing and Reality* (1971, pp. TO-ADD PAGES); although it is "outside the individual ... it is not the external world ... Into this play area the child gathers objects or phenomena from external reality and uses these in the services of ... inner or personal reality."**

Existing as a third type of reality that both separates and unites internal and external existence, transitional space represents a neutral area of experience that will not be challenged, allowing for a flexible manipulation of meanings and relationships. Julia Kristeva (TO-ADD YEAR) uses Winnicott's notion of the 'spaces of play' (transitional spaces) as provisional boundaries that help us understand our relations with the 'Other' and so the notion has found some resonance with geographers. But Winnicott's argument has a stronger claim than suggested by this neat typology, one he does not make but which may be inferred from his focus on play and non-instrumental ways of knowing. The agenda of feminists such as Jane Flax (1990) and post-structuralists such as James Glass (TO-ADD YEAR) is to transform Winnicott's notion of transitional spaces into ideas of justice that are not constrained by hierarchical and arbitrary valuations of difference. Flax, for example, argues that Winnicott's 'spaces of play' makes one of the most important contributions to post-Enlightenment thinking because it de-centres reason and logic in favour of 'playing with', and

'making use of' as the qualities most characteristic of how the self develops. Debra Morris (2000) uses Winnicott to establish an enlightened form of justice that provides a positive political theory of privacy. I think this has important implications for those of us who are concerned about the relations between the geographies of young people and the complex disillusion of public and private spaces. One of Morris's main points, of which I have quite a lot to say (Aitken, 2001), is that transitional spaces are needed so that certain things may be rendered ambiguous, unseen and unspoken. According to Winnicott, certain questions and behaviours around a child's favourite bunny or blanket are simply forbidden. For example, to present a child with the question "Did you conceive of this [bunny] or was it presented to you from without?" seems absurd and would engender a confused or silent response. Winnicott points out that it is no less cruel to pose the same question to an adult. In either case, argues Morris, the question is 'demoralizing' because it calls to question something that should simply be accepted.

There is also the link between Winnicott's work and the construction of culture. The function of transitional objects persists in shared illusions or what he calls more generally 'culture'. Culture and symbolism are not immutable structures that define children, but children are in the process of creating future cultures and symbolisms. Accordingly, culture is not conceptualized as Freud's (TO-ADD YEAR) or Lacan's (1978) external and coercive 'law of the father' which forces the child's separation from the mother. Rather, children are able to bring something of the inner self to the traditions and practices of society in order to be able to make use of them. In this sense, Winnicott points to liberatory ways of constructing childhood and knowing children.

**Stuart Aitken is** Professor of Geography at San Diego State University, USA. He is *Children's Geographies'* Commissioning Editor for North America. His areas of research interest revolve around urban and social geography, with an emphasis on families and communities, children and youth, and film. *Geographies of Young People: The Morally Contested Spaces of Identity* was published by Routledge in 2001.

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# Chris Cunningham on Hilaire Belloc

This collection began with *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts* (PUBLISHER, 1896) followed by *More Beasts for Worse Children* (PUBLISHER, 1897), *Cautionary Tales for Children* (Duckworth, 1907), *More Peers* (Duckworth, 1911) and *New Cautionary Tales* (PUBLISHER, 1930). *The Cautionary Verses: The Collected Humorous Poems of H. Belloc* collection was published by Duckworth (London) in 1939; the Red Fox edition (Random House, TO-ADD ISBN) was published in 1995.

**Chris Cunningham** is an Honorary Research Fellow (Department of Geography and Planning) at the University of New England, New South Wales, Australia. His research interests include community planning for natural hazards (particularly bushfires); social history and philosophy applied to planning; and children's use of the urban environment.

**“Hilaire Belloc?”, you say, “You mean that 50% French, 150% British, 200% Catholic bigot/zealot; cantankerous early Twentieth Century poet and essayist, testy member of the British Parliament. A seminal influence on your research into the world of children? You have to be joking!”**

I had not long been introduced to the world of children's research before I realised that the key to understanding children was the rather obtuse, silly and perverse worlds that *adults* build for themselves. I knew Belloc through the *Cautionary Verses* long before I contemplated any kind of research (apart from the question of around which creek the frogs and snakes were most likely to be hanging). Even as a child I knew that this writing was funny: *funny* funny as well as *peculiar* funny. This guy had a real feeling for the way kids saw the world. He appealed to us in our own language, and to our fascination for the morbid. His passages had the same raciness and attention to awful detail as our own dreadful playground ditties, such as those from *Jim (Who Ran Away From His Nurse and Got Eaten by a Lion)*: ... Now just imagine how it feels, / When First your toes and then your heels, / And then by gradual degrees, / Your shins and ankles, calves and knees, / Are slowly eaten, bit by bit. / No wonder Jim detested it!

Belloc had no fear of the terrifying world of childhood candour and its love of disasters. He turns the grown-up world upside down. It is the adults of the verses who were the silly characters, more so than the children. Even as a ten year old I could understand the irony of the non-child, *Charles Augustus Fortescue, Who Always Did What Was Right, and so Accumulated an Immense Fortune*. ... The nicest child I ever knew, / Was Charles Augustus Fortescue. / He never lost his cap, or tore, / His stockings or his pinafore: / In eating Bread he made no Crumbs, / He was extremely fond of sums, / To which, however, he preferred, / The Parsing of a Latin word ... / ... And thus [through marriage] became immensely rich / And built the

splendid mansion which, / Is called 'The Cedars, Muswell Hill', / Where he resides in Affluence still, / To show what everybody might, / Become by SIMPLY DOING RIGHT. What was 'right', of course, was no special or particular moral courage, merely *not to rock the grown-up boat*.

The poems, with their simple couplets, were literally memorable. To this day I can still recite most of them by heart. They tap into the child's sense of fun while satirising the types of 'good' literature that most children were still brought up on as late as the 1950s. As I, with my friend Margaret Jones, somewhat by chance, found ourselves researching the worlds and environments of childhood, we discovered the works of Jean Piaget (1937), Philip Aries (1960), the Opies (1969), Roger Hart (1979), Robin Moore (1986) Brian Nettleton (1987), Hugh Matthews (1987) and many other researchers, and acknowledged their emphasis on the need of children to actively manipulate nature and overcome the barriers placed on them by the adult world. In his own way Belloc had been there before with his witty verse *Franklyn Hyde. Who Caroused in the Dirt and Was Corrected by His Uncle*: ... His Uncle came on Franklyn Hyde Carousing in the Dirt. / He Shook him hard from Side to Side and hit him till it Hurt. / Exclaiming, with a Final Thud "Take that, Abandoned Boy, / For Playing with Disgusting Mud As though it were a Toy!"

In short, those verses which so delighted my childhood and were so effortlessly committed to a memory that has held them for the best part of 50 years have provided a rich mother-lode of epigrams to adorn the title page of many a conference paper and article. For those colleagues working in the area of children's environments who have not yet discovered them, you are in for a real treat. In a world where ideological correctness yet reigns, and children's literature is yet again oppressively moralistic and didactic, they are an antidote still as fresh as it was at the time when they were first published.

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# Kim England on Isabel Dyck

Dyck, I. (1989) Integrating home and wage workplace: women's daily lives in a Canadian suburb. *Canadian Geographer*, 33(4): 329-341. (ISSN 0008-3658)

Dyck, I. (1990) Space, time, and renegotiating motherhood: an exploration of the domestic workplace. *Society and Space*, 8: 459-483. (ISSN 0263-7758).

**For me, these papers were among the first to use theoretically informed empirical work to demonstrate that femininities are culturally constructed and spatially situated. They are based on Isabel's Ph.D. research on women's mothering practices in the Coquitlam area of suburban Vancouver (Dyck, TO-ADD YEAR).**

I was so pleased when they were published because I had long been troubled by the common portrayal of suburban women as helpless, and even hapless, victims, constrained by their environment. Isabel's work provided an important corrective to this caricature. Drawing on Giddens' structuration theory (1984) and feminist theory; she argued that suburban women are strategizing human agents with transformative capacities, suggesting that "(s)pace does make a difference to women's lives, not just in the form of physical arrangements adding to logistical problems in combining paid and domestic labour, but as central to how social interaction is constructed and understood" (1990, 479).

Isabel explored what it meant to be a 'good mother' in a setting that itself is understood as a 'family place' (in the 1980s, Coquitlam consisted primarily of single family, owner-occupied homes, and most families were married couples with children). She presented an account of the suburbs as both shaping *and* being shaped by the seemingly mundane, recurrent practices of everyday life. She showed that highly localised

social networks - 'over-the-fence' and 'street relationships' with neighbours - are important in terms of sharing information about the practicalities of child-rearing. But they also enable mothers to gauge whether others share their values and views on managing the mother-child relationship.

These relationships provide *recurring* opportunities for the women to assess, contest and negotiate the localised meanings, identities and practices associated with mothering. Along the way the mothers (usually collectively) constituted the street or a neighbour's home or yard as carefully controlled extensions of their own homes and thus 'safe spaces' in which they can leave their children. And, of course, all of this has a normative dimension as much of it "is the working out, in moral terms, of what motherhood should be" (1989, 337) and the mothers "negotiate understandings of what 'motherhood' embodies, where it should and can occur, and by whom" (1989, 340).

In 1998 I became a mother for the first time and not surprisingly, Isabel's work has taken on even more meaning for me as I recurrently negotiate the rocky terrain of integrating home and paid employment, as well as striving to understand and be a 'good mother' (although I struggle to remake this 'the good enough mother!').

**Kim England** is Associate Professor of Geography and Adjunct Professor of Canadian Studies & Women Studies at the University of Washington, USA. She is affiliated to the Center for Research on Families and is a feminist urban geographer. Her research deals with the local labour markets, women's paid employment, families and child care.

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# Roger Hart on Colin Ward and Tony Fyson

Ward, C. & Fyson, A.J.C. (1973) *Streetwork: The Exploding School*. Routledge & Kegan Paul: Boston, Mass. (ISBN 0-7100-7683-5).

**Roger Hart** is Co-Director of the Children's Environments Research Group, Center for Human Environments, at the Graduate School of the City University of New York, USA. His book *Children's Participation* (1997), has been translated into Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, and Italian.

**After completing a PhD on the geography of children in the mid 1970's I was looking for a useful way to continue this work. A quietly radical couple of fellows housed in the education unit of the *Town and Country Planning Association* in London pointed me in the right direction - Colin Ward, anarchist and writer with experience in architecture and teaching, and Tony Fyson, a geographer and planner.** They were producing material that was enabling many school geography teachers to involve children in meaningful community research, such as planning and design proposals on the built environment. The monthly *Bulletin of Environmental Education* and the book, *Streetworks*, were my first guideposts for developing a research programme. They solved my dilemma as a Professor who did not want his theory and research only to reach other academics. I had quickly learned in New York that city planners were not too interested in using the findings of a researcher on children's use and perception of the environment. Bill Bunge had shown us that research with communities on the geography of children could influence city decisions (Bunge, 1971), but he had not involved children themselves. The kind of work reported in *Streetworks* offered the exciting prospect of simultaneously conducting research, environmental education and planning *with* children. All of this suited my political orientation to participatory democracy. I could not only work with children but I could help them come to see the environment as something that was rightfully theirs. Sadly, I did not have many colleagues in this endeavour for there is a tendency for academics, to think that schoolteachers as well as children are not truly worthy of being researchers. I soon realised just how radical it was to have children conduct research on issues that they deem important in their everyday environment. After having one

community research programme thrown out of a school because the children were raising racial issues I realised that *Streetworks* had dealt inadequately with political conflicts. It failed to offer sufficient guidance to teachers on the values and difficulties of having children face political conflicts and barriers to change in their community. I believe that Ward & Fyson had concluded that it would be best to carry out their mission quietly, not wearing their politics on their sleeves but rather allowing teachers and children to build their own political orientation through the process of research and action. It took the writings of Freire (1972) to complete my understanding of how children can proceed all the way down the road of political awareness by facing the barriers to their proposals. A few of the articles in *Bulletin of Environmental Education* reveal that some teachers were in fact able to help their children go well down this road. The quietly subversive strategy of Ward & Fyson enabled the education unit at the *Town and Country Planning Association* to exist into the early 1980's. It sometimes seems that after Margaret Thatcher declared there was no "such thing as society" the schools became saturated with the ethos of individualism and turned their back on group work and community research. In fact, there has been a growth in participatory work by NGOs with children and youth outside of schools in many countries, including the UK, but this has rarely involved geographers. The new growth of social theory and the interest with childhood in geography is exciting. But we must not let this become strictly a domain for academic dialogue. Theory building is something all citizens do, including schoolteachers, children and parents. I hope that this review will encourage some geographers to look again at the potentials of 'streetwork'.

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# Sarah Holloway on Cindi Katz

- Katz, C. (1993) Growing girls/closing circles: limits on the spaces of knowing in rural Sudan and US cities. In Katz, C. & Monk, J. Editors. *Full Circles: Geographies of Women Over the Life Course*. Routledge: London. 88-106. (0-415-07562-9)
- Katz, C. (1994) Textures of global changes: eroding ecologies of childhood in New York and Sudan. *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research* 2: 103-110. (ISSN 0907-5682)

**My approach to research in children's geographies has been shaped as much by literature in the new social studies of childhood, as by my reading of explicitly geographical work. In picking one source of inspiration to review however, I have opted for Cindi Katz's work because I've found her insights invaluable in thinking about what a geographical analysis might add to the social science tradition.**

What I find particularly appealing about the new social studies of childhood is their recovery of children from essentialist discourses through an examination of the social construction of childhood, an examination that pays due attention to the importance of children's agency in the constitution of different children's childhoods. However, in an interesting overview of work within this field, James *et al.* (1998) identify an irreconcilable split between studies which are global in their focus (for example, those which examine the importance of global processes in shaping children's position in different societies across the world) and those which have more local concerns (for example, studies which show how children are important in creating their own cultures and lifeworlds). Such a split is problematic, I would argue, because the boundaries of the global/local dualism, like many others, are unstable and blurred through everyday practice. As global and local are inevitably intertwined in practice (Holloway & Valentine, 2000b), approaches which consider only one can miss much of interest.

Katz's (1993, 1994) work in New York and the Sudan is perhaps the most innovative research in children's geographies to show how an analysis of global and local might be integrated. Her aim is to

provide texture to the notion of global change by demonstrating some of its local consequences. By focusing on New York and a village in Sudan, she demonstrates that the local manifestations of global restructuring have had serious, negative consequences for children. In particular, she points to the way global processes cause systematic disruption of social reproduction and highlights its consequences for children in both locations, most notably that they fail to receive the knowledge and skills necessary for their adult futures. For example, cuts in public spending mean many young New Yorkers are let down by a failing public school system, while children in Howa, a Sudanese village, are learning farming skills which global shifts in the political ecology of agriculture are rapidly rendering redundant. In so doing, she does not focus solely on global processes but also demonstrates how children actively experience and respond to these 'global' changes. For example in Howa, the environmental degradation brought about by the incorporation of the village into an agricultural development project means children had to travel further to collect water, wood and graze animals. In undertaking these tasks children are not passive victims of global processes but exercise control over their own lifeworlds, for example choosing from a young age the terrain in which they would work, their paths to and from it, and the time at which they would return to the village each day. The study thus illustrates that 'local' cultures (how children organise their day) are bound up with 'global' processes; and that 'global' processes do not exist in the ether, but are worked out in 'local' places. In this way, she demonstrates how the gap James *et al.* (1998) identify might be bridged and more rounded studies of childhood produced.

**Sarah Holloway** is Lecturer in Human Geography at Loughborough University, UK. Her research interests are gender and childhood, cross-cutting the fields of urban, social and economic geography. She co-edited *Children's Geographies: Playing, Living, Learning* with Gill Valentine (Routledge, 2000a).

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# Owain Jones on Chris Philo

Philo, C. (1992) Neglected rural geographies: a review. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 8(2): 193-207. (ISSN 0743-0167).

**Owain Jones** is a Research Fellow at the School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol. His research interests include geographies of childhood (urban and rural, innocence, otherness, nature and disordered spaces), geographies of 'Nature' (animal geographies, tree geographies, ecological timespaces) and rural geography (cultures of rurality).

**Early in 1993 I was completing my Masters Degree in Bristol and trying to get a Ph.D. application sorted out. I scooped up some of my young kid's books, replete with (more or less) gooey images of the countryside, approached my would-be supervisor, and informed him that I wanted to do something about the rural and children.** "Read this" I was told, and that was (more or less) that. My successful bid to the ESRC and my subsequent thesis (Jones, 1997) were squarely set in the frameworks established in Philo's article. Since then at numerous conferences I have heard others presenting work on the rural, childhood, or rural childhood cite Philo's article as a conceptual point of departure, and it still features as a key reference in journal articles (e.g. Matthews *et al.*, 2000). It truly is a landmark paper.

The article uses a rural geographer's brief and somewhat dismissive review (Gill, 1991) of Colin Ward's book *The Child in The Country* (Ward, 1988 and see Philo p.15) to launch a consideration of how (rural) geography had often ignored cultural otherness in the rural - in this case childhood - and how Ward's book was in fact a sensitive, open account of rural childhood replete with many geographical implications. Philo was alerted to this via Ward's earlier famous book on childhood *The Child in the City* (Ward, 1978), for which, incidentally, Moore's (1986) *Childhood's Domain* was written as a 'companion volume' ( see Spencer on p.21). I immediately purchased *The Child in the*

*Country* and that became another cornerstone of my Ph.D.

Philo draws out the intimate spatial richness of Ward's book, and weaves this with the then emerging concerns of the 'cultural turn' and emerging geographies of childhood. As with Philo's work more generally, the theoretical assurance and lucidity is matched by a clear accessibility and a depth of references, notes and observations. Key within the paper is the framework of the 'geographies of childhood' and 'children's geographies' and how children's worlds are "structured 'from without', and experienced 'from within'" (p.198). Themes which are present in Ward's book and Philo's paper which resonated strongly in the research that I did, and in subsequent writing are, amongst others, the agency of children, their interactions of childhood and adult geographies and the contested constructions and reconstructions of spaces as ordered/pure/'same' and disordered/'other'. Thus the article is very much in sympathy with the new paradigm for the sociology of childhood which emerged with publications such as James *et al.* (1990). There is a commitment to study the geographies of childhood, but in a way that is sensitive to the complex otherness of childhood. It remains a key resource for those 'doing' children's geography - rural or not.

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# Lia Karsten on Willem F. Heinemeyer and Lamoraal U. de Sitter

Heinemeyer, W.F. & de Sitter, L.U. (1964) *Buurt, Jeugd en Vrije Tijd* (Neighbourhood, Youth and Leisure). Gemeentelijk Bureau voor Jeugdzorg: Amsterdam. (TO-ADD ISBN).

**The book by Willem Heinemeyer & Lamoraal de Sitter is rather well known among geographers in the Netherlands. It is an empirical study of residents' functional, social and cultural orientation towards the neighbourhood.** It criticises the dominant discourse of the 1950's (the *wijkgedachte*) which asserted that the neighbourhood was and should be the integrating framework for all its residents. Heinemeyer & de Sitter showed that the neighbourhood was no longer the dominant place for all 15-23 year olds to spend leisure time and to meet friends. The older the youth the less they are focused on their residential environment and the more negative their outlook towards it.

I read this study many years ago. Yet, it was not at the heart of my research on children between the ages of six and twelve. During my preparation for the National Youth Lecture (Karsten, 1999) I wanted 'historical' (before 1970) data about children's daily lives, which unfortunately are very rare. By coincidence I found an appendix in the book by Heinemeyer and de Sitter which provided exactly what I was looking for. The appendix reports a study among 10-12 year old children in Amsterdam in 1960. I was positively surprised by some interesting quantitative and qualitative data, which enabled me to draw some comparisons with Amsterdam in 1996 (Karsten, 1998):

These data challenged the prevailing view that there has been a sharp decline in playing outside (Valentine and McKendrick, 1997). To my surprise 25% of the children in 1960 reported playing mostly at home after school time, compared to around 20% in 1996.

While the dominant idea that (most) children are spending more time in organised or institutionalised leisure settings (Karsten, 2002) is supported, these data show that there continues to be a rather big group of unorganised children. Heinemeyer and de Sitter report that one quarter of children in 1960 had a sport-membership, while in my 1996 research over fifty percent of the Amsterdam children were actively engaged in sporting clubs. The percentage of children who were not members of any children's clubs, however, was the same in both decades, at around 40%.

It is fascinating to learn about other historical periods (see also Gaster 1991), however, we need to err on the side of caution. The social and physical environments for children have changed enormously making comparisons very difficult, and only in relationship to the time and space specific context. In the 1960 research, nearly all Amsterdam children were of Dutch origin, while in the 1996 research two thirds of the children had a Turkish, Moroccan or Surinamese background. In 1960 there were several neighbourhood cinemas (which were indeed frequented by many children on a very regular base), while in 1996 they are almost completely gone. Cars were still very rare in 1960. But it was cars about which children in the 1960 study complained most, such as is illustrated by the following quote: "My street is an awful street, there are too many cars, there is no place to play" (p. 82). How do we have to interpret such quotes? Some children in 1960 complained about the bad smell in the street and even about rats! At least this book learns us: city life in earlier times was not always better for children than nowadays!

**Lia Karsten** is a member of the Amsterdam Centre for the Study of the Metropolitan Environment at the University of Amsterdam (Netherlands). Her research interests embrace the: geographies of children and youth; family households in the city; and the use of urban public space. She organized the international conference, *Building Identities, Gender Perspectives on Children and Urban Space* (Karsten, et al. 1995).

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# Cindi Katz on Denis Wood and Robert Beck

Wood, D. & Beck, R.J. (1994) *Home Rules*. The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore & London. (ISBN 0-8018-4618-8).

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***Home Rules* is a luminous investigation of a single room, a couple of kids and their parents. It is a brilliant *tour de force* that, working through the four hundred odd rules for living in the Wood living room, reveals how the nitty-gritty stuff of everyday life (where forks go, and why you can't put your feet on the couch) is amassed, sorted, sifted, and reassembled to produce an enduring and specific material culture.** Wood & Beck closely observe how the rules of culture of class, gender, race, nation and sexuality are embedded in and conveyed by material objects and how children absorb these rules in their relations to material objects. Wood & Beck study the ostensibly *laissez faire* Wood family living room as a field of rules in which the parents inculcate their children and make them complicit to the ordering principles and shared values and meanings of what we might think of as the *hipoisie*. The book is astonishingly original; it manages to domesticate Foucault (TO-ADD YEAR) and breathe everyday life into him. No mean feat! Even more impressive, the authors, inspired by Roland Barthes (TO-ADD YEAR), provide a close reading of a single room as a social text, that, pushed to the limits as *Home Rules* is, can reveal the deepest insights into social relations, the production and reproduction of culture, and the material social practices that produce order and maintain social life. Their scope is breathtaking. They really do find the world in this room and they do great

honour to their inspirations; Barthes (TO-ADD YEAR), Levi Strauss (TO-ADD YEAR), Geertz (TO-ADD YEAR), Goffman (TO-ADD YEAR), Glassie (TO-ADD YEAR), Bourdieu (TO-ADD YEAR), and Laing (TO-ADD YEAR) among others. As might be suggested by such an eclectic set of thinkers, the book is structured as a collage of things, rules, things in rule space, negotiations, pictures, diagrams, values and meanings. Their project is to read the room in slow motion and extricate from it the cultural forms and practices that produce order, meaning and values. As I read their reading, the slow motion gave way to floods of associations, rushes of insights into my own rule-making and rule-sharing behaviours, and deep satisfaction in glimpsing the complex in its very simplicity and the seemingly simple as woefully complex. Wood has been an inspiration and example to me in all of the twenty-five years that I have been studying children geographies. My time at Clark just trailed his (and Roger Hart's), so their ecological means for studying children's everyday lives was part of the air I breathed and inspired my work in zillions of ways. Wood has always been particularly inspiring in his ability to see the world in nothing. I'm big at that. This book churns out of the seeming nothingness of inhabiting a living room as a way of understanding the workings of and relations between memory, conscious sharing, embodied knowledge and material culture. It is charming, inspiring, and deep.

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# Hugh Matthews on Roger Hart

Hart, R. (1978) *Children's Experience of Place: A Developmental Study*. Irvington: New York. (TO-ADD ISBN).

**I suppose I became a *paedogeographer* sometime during the early 1980s. Until that time I had been thoroughly engaged in writing up every last dreg of my Ph.D. thesis on the historical geography of the chemical industry in the UK (Matthews, TO-ADD YEAR). My enthusiasm for synthetic fertiliser production was not unbounded, however, and I felt that there was a need for change.** Like Stuart Aitken more recently (1998), the birth of our two children changed my life. I progressed from being an expert nappy changer to become the family chauffeur, moving one or the other between friends, relatives, fast food outlets and swimming pools. It was during the course of these escorted journeys that I began to realise that my children and their friends (still all aged under five) seemed to have a keen and exacting sense of place. Landmarks, road junctions and familiar sights provided triggers for observations that apparently enabled them to anticipate their journeys. I was intrigued, for here was a geography that I had forgotten about as an adult and one for which I was not conditioned by my careful reading of numerous parental guides rooted in Piagetian theory (Piaget, 1926). Out of curiosity, I began to look around to see if there was anything written on children's spatial capabilities. Beyond the classic developmental psychology texts there was not a great deal, but one book caught my attention, a huge gaudy yellow jacketed tome,

rather poorly printed in a sort of camera-ready style, written by Roger Hart, a young geographer from the USA (although I was later to find that he was a graduate of Hull University and a native of Nottingham). This book, *Children's Experience of Place*, based upon Roger's doctoral studies (Hart, TO-ADD YEAR), redefined my way of looking at the world of children. The text synthesises a two-year study spent observing and working with children in a New England township, called 'Inavale'. Employing a range of ecological-ethnographical methodologies, Roger uncovers a rich inventory of childhood geographies. There are chapters on spatial competencies and mapping skills, accounts of how children spend their time outside their homes, descriptions of favourite, scary and dangerous places and discussions on the concept of free and accompanied range. Here was a treatise that was amongst the first to straddle the emergent studies of behavioural geography and environmental psychology and which challenged conventional wisdom. For me the book was a landmark text, an irresistible and inspirational source that profoundly influenced the way I went about researching children. Although the subject has now moved on, for those coming anew to the geographies of children and childhood, I strongly recommend that you unearth this celebrated account and examine the 'roots' of our 'new' geography.

**Hugh Matthews** is Professor of Geography and Director of the Centre for Children and Youth at University College Northampton. He is Editor of *Children's Geographies* and published *Children and Regeneration* in 2001 and *Making Sense of Place: Children's Understanding of Large-scale Environments* in 1992.

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# John H. McKendrick on Seebohm Rowntree

Rowntree, S. (1902) *A Study of Town Life*. 3rd Edition. Longmans, Green & Co: London. (A facsimile copy of the original edition was published by The Policy Press in 2000, ISBN 1-861-34202-0).

**John McKendrick** is Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships at the University of Edinburgh. He is Viewpoints Editor of *Children's Geographies* and edited the Special Edition of *Built Environment* which addressed the theme of 'Children's Playgrounds in the Built Environment' (1999). He is currently writing a book entitled *Geographies of Children for the Geographical Association*.

**For social commentators in the UK, Rowntree's *A Study of Town Life* is one of those 'must-cite' books that we tend to 'read' through the words of others. Arguably, it is the seminal contribution from the genre of monographs penned by those well-intended and well-to-do philanthropists who discovered poverty through systematic field-based research in the nether regions of 'great' cities in Victorian Britain.**

It was, however, a book that I should never have read. I had spent the previous six months making five hundred mile round trips every other weekend to conduct interviews for a project on the commercial provision of leisure space for young children (McKendrick et al. 1999). I had compiled a mountain of data, which had to be sorted, ordered, analysed and synthesised en route to the end-of-project report. But the prospect of a conference on Rowntree: one hundred years on drew me back to my first academic love – the geographical study of poverty. In an act of pure indulgence, data and deadlines were cast aside and an abstract was penned.

I soon found myself teasing out the multi-faceted geographies of poverty that lay hidden beneath the surface of Rowntree's work. The conference paper was delivered successfully, but the richest rewards arose from the conjunction of my academic interests in the geographies of poverty and those of families/young people.

It was a book that proved to be well worth reading. It is littered with partisan and patronising social commentary that made me cringe! Such as his disdain at the attachment of poor families to the familiar environment of the Hunsgate slum, "... love for the district and disinclination to move to better surroundings, which combined with an indifference to the higher aims of life..." (p.5). Arghh! It carries vivid recollections of absolute material poverty that made me angry! Such as the general rule whereby, "the wife and

sometimes the children have to forego a portion of their food – the importance of maintaining the strength of the wage-earner is recognised, and he obtains his ordinary share" (p.55).

And sprinkled throughout, are rich field observations on many of the themes with which current day geographies of child/youth/family are concerned. It recognises the need for 'intensive' research; "many of the ... details were often of such a character as could only have been supplied by those intimately acquainted with the families" (p.14). Even so, much that matters in children's lives cannot be accessed via third parties; "we see the man go to the public-house and spend money on drink; we do not see the children going supperless to bed in consequence" (p. 135). It conveys an understanding that young people were both the cause of family poverty (large families is one of the six 'immediate' causes of poverty, p.119) and the solution to it ([household income is] raised above the 'primary' poverty line on account of the earnings of their wives and children, p.127). Local area variation is observed with respect to child mortality (p.208) the economic contribution of the child to the family (p.30) and area overcrowding (p.168). But most importantly of all, I found out that children were an integral part of life in the English pub! Just as I was about to use my results from the growth of family pubs in the UK to herald the opening up of 'adult domains' to children in the 1990s, I learn from Rowntree that in the 1890s children "simply swarm[ed]" around pubs (p.318) and that they were a "usual" feature of the pub environment (p.317). Children's key role was to fetch drink for the 'off-site consumption' of the father and "very few of these children .. exceeded twelve years of age" (p.320).

*A Study of Town Life* is, in the final analysis, no more than a few wonderful pieces of a jigsaw that is waiting for us to construct.

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# John Morgan on Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine

Skelton, T. & Valentine, G. (1998) *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*. Routledge: London. (ISBN 0-415-14921-5).

**I picked up my copy of *Cool Places* on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1998. I remember it well because I visited the bookshop on my way home from work on the day my nephew - Oliver - was born. I also remember feeling extremely frustrated from teaching a whole series of geography lessons to sixth-formers who were bogged down with the task of completing the syllabus and preparing for exams. I read *Cool Places* over the next few days, and remember being energised and excited by it.** It seemed to me to map out a whole new set of geographies, neither celebrating uncritically nor denying the importance of young people's geographies. The authors of the chapters in the book wanted to recognise the 'agency' of young people, to give voice to their experience and, most importantly, to make a statement about the rights of young people to have that experience recognised. These were all the things that, when I talked to my students, they seemed to feel had often been denied them by their geography courses.

The various contributors to the book take care to describe the contexts in which young people construct their geographies (the young people's lives in this book are lived in urban, suburban and rural places, at both work and at play). This is not to say that these geographies are simply a matter of individual choice, since many of the chapters point to the real structural difficulties that limit young people's use of space (some of the young people in this book are homeless, some are from relatively

well-off backgrounds whilst others have little access to resources). However, what comes through is the sense that young people make their identities in a whole variety of spaces, some of which are welcoming, others constraining. But young people are never passive 'victims of geography'. For me, as a geography teacher, the book serves as a constant reminder of the need to recognise the geographies of young people. It is inspirational in that it reminds me of the need to constantly find ways to create spaces (real-and-imagined) for negotiation and alternative visions. This is not always easy, but *Cool Places* offers a real attempt to justify and argue for recognising young people's geographies. When I started teaching geography, I was much influenced by a book called *Teaching Geography for a Better World* (Fein & Gerber, 1988). That book offered a guide for geography teachers who wanted to alert young people to 'other worlds'. One of the problems with that approach is that there was scant recognition that young people have their own complex 'informal geographies'. For me, as a teacher, *Cool Places* provided a rich summary of some academic research into these informal geographies, and hinted at ways to make the link between the formal geography of the classroom and the informal geographies of young people. Whenever I recommend that beginning geography teachers read *Cool Places*, I hope that it offers them ways to recognise and value the geographies of the young people they are going to teach.

**John Morgan** is Lecturer in Education (Geography) at the University of Bristol.

He runs the PGCE Secondary Geography course and previously taught Geography and Politics in schools and colleges in London. His research interests include social and cultural geography, critical pedagogy, and multicultural education.

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# Kenneth Olwig on Yi-Fu Tuan

Tuan, Y-F. (1978). Children and the natural environment. In Altman, I. & Wohlwill, J.F. Editors. *Human Behavior and Environment: Children and the Environment*. Plenum: New York. 5-32. (ISBN TO-ADD).

**Kenneth Olwig** is Professor of Landscape Theory at SLU-Alnarp (Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet) Department of Landscape Planning, Alnarp, Sweden. He is particularly interested in the relation between social development and individual human development, with regard to children.

**As I sat down to write this review my daughter, Mette, looked up from her textbook – “What was the ‘68 Generation?’” “Your parents ...”, I replied wincing, and went on, trying desperately to make history sound interesting: “... In ‘68 I worked with retarded inner city black kids in Washington as a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War. There were race riots, huge anti-war demonstrations, like in *Forest Gump*. And your mother and I married in Denmark, visited Paris in an uproar, and Czechoslovakia ...”.**

Mette’s question reminded me of how I met Tuan. The Vietnam War ripped me out of my comfortable life as a student of Nordic philology at The University of Minnesota. When I went back, with a revived interest in children and social issues, I switched to geography. Yi-Fu Tuan was there then, helping to deflate the *Quantitative Revolution’s* balloon (Billinge *et al.*, 1984). When every pro-quantifier at a seminar had shot their wad, Tuan would pose a deceptively simple question that would cause some pseudo-scientific edifice to collapse at their feet. Unlike some of the erstwhile positivists, born again as ‘radicals’, who used impenetrable language and had the right answers, Tuan eschewed both jargon and the believer’s truths; offering, instead, a subverting Socratic arsenal of incisive questions.

I first read this iconoclastic essay a few years later as a young lecturer in Copenhagen, and as I ingested it my generation’s cherished eco-sophomoric ideas began to crumble. “Children’s health,” Tuan notes, “depends more on the quality of parental care, nutrition, medical services, and the socioeconomic environment ... [than being surrounded] by woods” (p.TO-ADD PAGE). Tuan’s children are not the creatures of nature, they are “active, goal

oriented and highly educable beings ... [who are] far more interested in people and their activities than they are in the physical setting”, or, for that matter, “picturesque scenes and landscapes” (p.TO-ADD PAGE). “A child’s world,” for Tuan, “is never nature. It is nature ordered by society” (TO-ADD PAGE).

Tuan’s reaction to his assigned topic, ‘Children and the Natural Environment’ betrayed some exasperation: “But what is the natural environment? ... and what kinds of relationships do we postulate between it and children? ... [T]he key terms, including that of childhood itself, are elusive and laden with culturally biased values of which we may not be aware” (p.TO-ADD PAGE/S). We “speak of ‘natural environment’ ...” Tuan argued, “... as though it were a self-evident phenomenal category rather than a mixed concept with a long and complicated history behind it” (p.TO-ADD PAGE) – a history which he then begins to deconstruct. This is familiar stuff today, now that some of the right-thinking ‘radicals’ of yore have transmogrified into equally righteous, hegemonic and inscrutable “post-modernists” (or whatever). But Tuan wrote this in 1978, and he left me with questions that I have been trying to answer ever since. Each answer, however, seemed to raise more questions. First I explored the ways children “deconstructed” adult constructions of nature, then I delved into the ways they mobilized their artistic imagination to create new natures and most recently I have explored the ways constructions of childhood development were made to naturalize specious conceptions of social development that posited an evolution from natural place-boundedness to cultural spatial-openness (Olwig, 1989, 1991, 2001).

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# Chris Philo on Colin Ward

Ward, C. (1988) *The Child in the Country*. Robert Hale: London. (ISBN 0-70903-322-2) Republished in 1990 by Bedford Square Press in London (ISBN TO-ADD).

**It was the early-1990s, I was lecturing at St. David's University College in Lampeter (now the University of Wales, Lampeter), and two things came together to prompt my interest in Colin Ward's book *The Child in the Country*. Firstly, in preparing my 'Social Geography' option, I decided to include a lecture on the social geography of children.** There was little to consult in the specifically geographical literature, but I quickly came across the work of the anarchist writer Colin Ward – who had penned the remarkable *The Child in the City* (Ward, 1978). Secondly, a cherished colleague of mine at Lampeter was Paul Cloke, an outstanding rural geographer, and his interests encouraged me to start thinking about the meeting-grounds between social geography and rural geography. Discovering *The Child in the Country*, Ward's later book, duly provided me with a bridge between my various concerns (children, social geography, rural areas): I acquired the book and began reading.

While maybe not as path-breaking as his earlier book, I still found *The Child in the Country* to be a compelling read: an attractively written stroll through a rich diversity of materials - imaginative works, social science surveys, polemical accounts, scholarly histories - that together paints a many-textured portrait of country childhoods (chiefly British, and in fact mainly English, ones). Ward lays out the mythologised images of such childhoods, the rosy-cheeked happy children free to play and explore in an idyllic sun-drenched arcadia, but goes on to expose the mundane poverty, hardship and 'isolation' of much that has passed (and continues to pass) for childhood outside of Britain's urban centres. In so doing, he also describes in loving detail the varying spaces, places and landscapes integral to the child's rural world: from 'dens' and dams to buses and schools to

villages and even the intimations of a 'global village' beyond, all examined both in their inward experience (their meaningfulness to, and creative utilisation by, rural children themselves) and their external structuring (in an increasingly privatised, commodified and mechanised countryside). Moreover, he returns repeatedly to the question of "social space" (p.88), of play spaces wherein children might learn 'to be' and 'to do' as much as possible through their own devices. As such, the tension-filled choice which so taxes adults today - between ensuring children's safety and regulated learning, on the one hand, and allowing them independent socio-environmental encounters, on the other; between either chaperoned geographies or ones full of freedom and open doors - is indeed foreshadowed throughout much of the text, albeit rehearsed in a specifically rural context.

On seeing a rather uncharitable review of *The Child in the Country* by an established rural geographer (Gilg, 1991), something which worried me greatly because I felt there to be so much of value that an open-handed geographical reading of the book might reveal, I decided to pen my own extended review essay prompted by its contents (Philo, 1992 & see Jones on p.8). As to how well I did this, how sensitively or insightfully, is another matter: in fact, I now reckon the book to furnish an even better geographical treatment of both changing countryside childhoods and embodied rural children than my discussion back in 1992 recognised. My own paper may have its own limited merits, then, but I would urge readers to try the original book first. It should be regarded as a foundational contribution for anybody starting off as a researcher in the curious but exciting and really quite important intersection between 'geography' and 'children'.

**Chris Philo** is Professor of Geography at the University of Glasgow. He has a broad concern for the social geographies of 'outsiders', meaning how spaces and places are implicated in the lives of those peoples who, on all manner of grounds, become positioned as somehow 'misfits' relative to a diversity of social norms and expectations.

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# Samantha Punch on Tobias Hecht

Hecht, T. (1998) *At Home in the Street: Street Children of Northeast Brazil*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. (ISBN 0-521-59869-9)

**Samantha Punch** is Lecturer in the Department of Applied Social Science at the University of Stirling. She is interested in the sociology of childhood; sibling relationships and birth order; migration and household livelihood strategies in Latin America; and childhoods in the Majority World.

**This is a very readable and comprehensive account which focuses on children's perspectives on their lives on the streets of Recife (Brazil). This ethnography is particularly useful because it dispels myths and illuminates some of the contradictions of street children's lives. Street children experience certain freedoms: securing their own food, playing independently and not having to obey adults.** Hecht convincingly portrays how the street children interpret their situation as an 'addiction' consisting of spontaneity, freedom from adult authority and peer solidarity. On the other hand, their lives are full of risk-taking activities such as engaging in unprotected sex, stealing and glue-sniffing. While they survive, are resilient and adapt to their situation, they also suffer many acts of violence and injustice, live difficult lives and are vulnerable to a premature death. The balance of this book is refreshing as it explores both the limits and possibilities of street children as social actors. This is a thought-provoking study which encouraged me to question stereotypical images (Punch 2003) and the media portrayal of street children as a homogenous group.

The two main themes of the book are violence (inflicted on and by the street children) and identity (comparing street children with home children). Hecht illustrates the complexity of violence in street children's lives: it is committed against them by the police and death squads yet they inflict violence on each other during fights and to those in society from whom they steal. One of the interesting findings of this book is that street children in Recife were more likely to be killed by their peers rather than by the police or death squads. Thus Hecht's study shows how the routinised nature of violence in street children's lives has been obscured by the media's focus on their executions by death squads. Hecht reminds us of the hidden violence in their lives (police torture, physical and sexual abuse at home) and the extremes of poverty in the *favelas* (shantytowns). It recognises that they tend to face bleak futures which may consist of early parenthood, prison or death.

Another innovative feature of this book is the comparison of street childhoods with two ideal types of home childhoods: nurturing (poor) childhood and nurtured (rich) childhood. Nurturing children assume responsibilities from an early age and contribute to the economic maintenance of their household whereas nurtured children are more dependent on adults. Poor nurturing children, when compared with rich nurtured children in Brazil, tend to be smaller, have scars, dress in a practical not fashionable manner, are more likely to suffer beatings in their households, have a much smaller home space, are more likely to work, and are not so restricted in their use of space outside the home. Yet both kinds of 'homed' childhoods contrast with the childhoods lived predominantly in the street. Hecht's work therefore enabled me to place street children's lives in the broader context of poor home childhoods in Brazil.

Street children's relationship to institutions is considered from the perspectives of the agencies and the children. Adults perceive institutions to offer street children a solution to their problems yet the street children do not see the agencies as a way of leaving the street but as a respite from it or as a means of receiving some material benefits (a meal, clothing or a place to sleep). Interestingly, Hecht's research found that because the statistics of street children tend to be exaggerated, there were more adults working in agencies for street children than the numbers of children actually living on the streets in Recife.

I enjoyed this book; it challenges traditional notions of childhood lived in the private spaces of home, school and local neighbourhoods. Street children not only inhabit 'adult' public spaces but they also commit 'adult' acts of violence (as well as suffer them) and are difficult to control, thereby upturning notions of childhood innocence. Therefore, *At Home in the Street* provides a vivid, if at times disturbing, account of children's lived childhoods in the public sphere of the street.

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# Elsbeth Robson on Olga Nieuwenhuys

Nieuwenhuys, O. (1994) *Children's Lifeworlds: Gender, Welfare and Labour in the Developing World*. Routledge: London & New York. (ISBN 0-415-09751-7).

***Children's Lifeworlds* is a rigorous, inspiring and challenging work. It is also a very delightful and attractive book. The author (an anthropologist based in the Netherlands) communicates a wonderfully detailed picture of the lives of children in an Indian fishing village through a rich combination of textual description, maps, tables and interview extracts, together with beautiful black and white photographs.** It is, for me, the best kind of ethnography to which we might all aspire as researchers on children, whether seeing ourselves as geographers, anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists or whatever. Olga Nieuwenhuys takes children seriously, yet relates to them with sensitive empathy. Hers is not another study decrying the exploitation of child workers in commercial settings in the 'Third World' (sic). Rather, it is one in which the central focus is the everyday and ordinary work of children, so often dismissed by the adults around them and ignored or overlooked by researchers as unimportant and insignificant. In *Children's Lifeworlds* we hear children speak about their work, their lives and what concerns them. The challenge Olga Nieuwenhuys' work presents for us as researchers is to follow her example and find ways to listen to children, to *see* their work and to perceive their work as *work*.

I guess I empathise with the author - like Olga I found myself as a female, western, childless outsider in an African (rather than Indian) rural community trying to ask villagers what often seemed to them to be nonsensical questions, in order to conduct a piece of social science research worthy of a doctoral thesis (Robson, 2001). I have no doubt she did a better job than I. Similarly, we have both experienced some shift in emphasis from gender to

children, although not in quite the same way and gender remains for both of us a vital thread of analysis.

The most impressive aspect of this book is that children are at the centre of Nieuwenhuys' account - we encounter them immediately in the vignettes of the prologue, while throughout the text extracts of conversations and other qualitative and quantitative data bring them alive to us. It is also an extremely thorough study covering several years and repeat field visits. Olga Nieuwenhuys is also remarkably honest in the account of her fieldwork and thinking. She is not afraid to weave the personal into the account and enrich it by exposing her positionality.

As a writer she achieves a beautifully written work - one that intrigues and draws the reader into her story telling and creative use of language. She is not guilty of sentimentalising or trivialising children's work and thereby opens our eyes. *Children's Lifeworlds* speaks to all of us concerned with children, whether in the global South or North, for everywhere ordinary children do both paid, visible work and unpaid, invisible work and certain groups of children (often the poor and working class) are at risk of exploitation. The work of Olga Nieuwenhuys and others in a similar vein, have certainly been part of the underlying inspiration for my own efforts to account for children's invisible work in parts of Africa (Robson 1996, 2000, Robson & Ansell 2000).

For me *Children's Lifeworlds* is a classic. Certainly Olga Nieuwenhuys' book is ground breaking in substance, as well as exemplary in style and solid in content.

**Elsbeth Robson** is Lecturer in Development Studies in the School of Earth Sciences and Geography at Keele University. She has a broad interest in socio-cultural geography, with particular interest in the geographies of children & young people, geographies of caring & reproductive work, and geography & gender.

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# David Sibley on Lady (Margery) Allen of Hurtwood

Lady Allen of Hurtwood (1968, 1971) *Planning for Play*. Thames and Hudson: London. (ISBN 0-50001-047-1).

**David Sibley** is Professor of Human Geography at the University of Hull. He is a social and cultural geographer with strong interests in social theory and philosophical issues. His primary interest is in reconceptualising spatial problems through the lens of psychoanalysis and social anthropological theory.

**This book is concerned primarily with designs for children's play space in Britain, drawing quite heavily, however, on examples from elsewhere in western Europe and the United States. It was written by a landscape architect in a period which might be seen as a highpoint of the Welfare State, when there was considerable optimism among planners and architects about the possibilities of transforming public spaces to provide better play opportunities for children.**

Particularly, children's play was recognised as a key element of large-scale public housing schemes. Lady Allen shared this optimism to some extent. She wanted to "explore some of the ways of keeping alive, and of sustaining, the innate curiosity and natural gaiety of children...The task is to create a sympathetic environment in which they can flourish" (p.Foreword). She was, however, quite critical of big projects. Lady Allen had visited Emdrup in Denmark in 1945, the site of the first 'junk playground' designed by Dan Fink in 1943 and was inspired by Thomas Sorensen's book, *Open Spaces for Town and Country* (1931) in which he advocated what were later known as adventure playgrounds. Impressed by Danish practice, she clearly had an eye for small-scale schemes which encouraged children's creativity.

The first chapter of *Planning for Play* thus contrasts inhumane and child-unfriendly housing developments - illustrated by a Le Corbusier inspired estate in Sarcelles, France, a massive high-rise development in Glasgow, captioned "a kind of psychological pollution" (p.14), children playing around the lifts in a block of flats, and so on - with intimate pictures of children playing with bricks and other building materials, with captions like 'Twilight and shadow' and 'Manual skill' (p.16). She comments that children's "delightfully messy occupations ... make planners, who are mostly tidy-minded, unhappy" (p.16). Her view of the child's

relationship to the built environment is very similar to that of Colin Ward (1978, and see Philo on p.15 and Hart on p.6). The rest of the book illustrates a number of schemes, or what Lady Allen calls experiments, which demonstrate the virtues of small-scale child-centred designs. Most of these examples come from cities in Sweden, Denmark and Britain, with a few additional ones from Philadelphia and New York. Notably, they are not just for able-bodied children. There is an interesting section on sympathetic designs for disabled children which emphasises their abilities rather than their disabilities, although the language used to describe the disabilities of children with learning difficulties would now be considered quite inappropriate.

One of the most striking features of *Planning for Play* is the role of the local state. London County Council, for example, was developing Swedish-inspired play parks from 1959 and the Greater London Council initiated *One O'Clock clubs* for mothers and young children in the London Parks in 1964. Lady Allen, inspired primarily by Scandinavian practice, envisaged the local authority architect performing a central role in providing child-centred play facilities. She identified problems which are now seen to be of central importance for children, particularly the threat of road traffic to children's independent mobility. However, the main message of the book is that much could be done by architects and planners to harness the creativity of children and, at the same time, strengthen local communities. Her examples of good practice are mostly ones that involve parents and other adults rather than being exclusively child spaces. What she could not have anticipated, however, was the assault of central government on the local state which now make the realisation of such schemes difficult or impossible.

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# Tracey Skelton on Claire Dwyer

Dwyer, C. (1999) Veiled meanings: young British Muslim women and the negotiation of differences. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 6(1): 5–26.

**This article is path-breaking because there is so little written within geography about teenage girls, in general, let alone about young Muslim girls. Clare's work provides theoretical and empirical material to close these gaps.**

I first came across Claire's work during the process of editing *Cool Places* (Skelton & Valentine, 2000 and Morgan on p.15) and reading her chapter 'Contested identities: challenging dominant representations of young British Muslim women' (Dwyer, 2000). Her work offers a sophisticated consideration and analysis of the complex intersections of gender and 'race' as they affect, and are affected by, young British Muslim women. Her work focuses on this group of young women's self-narrations and identities, and persistently challenges stereotypical representations and perceptions of and about these girls.

The article considers the ways in which the girls negotiate their identities within the school environment. Two schools were selected for this study which was also Clare's Ph.D. research (Dwyer, TO-ADD YEAR): a local comprehensive school (Eastwood) with a strong multicultural ethos; and a selective girls' school (Foundation) in which the majority of pupils come from professional families and in which those of Pakistani origin are in the minority. Claire worked with pupils using in-depth group discussions, ethnographic work and individual interviews. From her empirical work Dwyer examines the intersections of race, gender and class as a context for understanding young British Muslim women's constructions and contestations of their identities.

She shows through an analysis of the young women's wearing, interpretation and discussion around the veil and hijab that the girls are playing with signifiers of identities. They are resisting stereotypical assumptions and trying to forge new identities in the face of control from parents, communities, their peers and their own interpretations and understandings of Islam.

However although the wearing of the veil (one if the items of clothing discussed by the young women themselves) might offer the girls some element of resistance or security Claire poses potential contradictions which the young women must, and indeed seem to be, facing. Drawing on existing and historical debates, Dwyer asks what wearing the hijab actually means, or might be interpreted to mean, in the context of racialised and patriarchal dominant discourses present in Britain. She states: "While wearing the hijab may give an individual a sense of power or security, these re-workings of the veil as resistance remain complicit within the 'rhetoric of the veil' - the suggestion of an active and dangerous feminine sexuality which must be constrained." (p.19).

The article gives an insight into the dilemmas and choices young British Muslim women make within the context of school environments. The quotations from the young women (and I would have liked to have read more of these) show that these young women are working through complex meanings of their identities in the context of wider social and cultural discourses - they battle with stereotypes and forge positive senses of self.

**Tracey Skelton is** Lecturer in Human Geography at Loughborough University. Her research interests connect feminist geography, cultural geography, development studies and cultural studies. She is interested in geographical debates about methodologies, sexualities and 'race'. She co-edited *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures* with Gill Valentine (2000).

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# Fiona Smith on Sophie Bowlby

Bowlby, S. (1990) Women, work and the family: control and constraints. *Geography*, 75(1):17-26. (ISSN 0016-7487).

**Fiona Smith** is Senior Lecturer in Human Geography and Director of the Out-of-School Childcare Research Unit at Brunel University. She is Book Reviews Editor of *Children's Geographies* and co-edited the Special Edition of *Childhood* on the theme of The Spaces of Childhood (2000). She is interested in children's geographies, geographies of caring and women's employment.

**In 1990 I was a final year student at Manchester University. I had spent the previous three years being taught entirely by men as there were no women human geographers in the department. Looking back on the taught part of my degree, I cannot remember any emphasis on women or children in any of the courses I took. I can distinctly remember the day I was sitting in the department's library when I came across an article that changed the way I thought about Geography. It also shaped the direction of the postgraduate research I subsequently undertook.**

The article in question: 'Women, Work and the Family: Control and Constraints' was written by Sophie Bowlby and published in *Geography*. It discussed the ways in which mothers' labour market choices and access to paid work are constrained by the lack of appropriate childcare in Britain. It sets the scene by exploring the impact of the socio-spatial separation of the domestic and work spheres in the nineteenth century on women. It goes on to discuss the growth of married women's paid employment in the twentieth century, highlighting that almost half of all mothers work part-time, that participation rates are strongly linked to the age of the youngest child and that women's lifetime earnings are considerably reduced by having children. This article is therefore groundbreaking as it was one of the first to highlight the ways in which children's and mothers' geographies are inextricably interwoven.

The article was written at a time when skills shortages and the predicted 'demographic timebomb' were forcing politicians to publicly declare that the 1990s would "be the decade of the working woman" (p.17). It was also a good time to be a final year student. Employers were falling over themselves to seduce young graduates like me into well-paid jobs with good prospects. However, reading this article highlighted the potential problems someone like me would have in retaining such a job. I became increasingly aware of the

inequalities that lay ahead and, perhaps for the first time, really began to understand the link between the 'personal' and the 'political' that I had read about in feminist texts. I thus decided to take Bowlby's final section on the 'potential contributions of geographical research' to this area seriously. One year after graduating, I started a Ph.D. with Sophie on 'The Geography of Out of School Childcare' (Smith, 1996) and have been involved in researching childcare provision ever since. In 1996 I was lucky enough to receive one of the ESRC's 'Children 5-16 Research Programme' grants, which gave us the opportunity to explore with children how they would like to be involved in the development of childcare services (Smith and Barker, 2000). This research has influenced childcare policy at both the local and national level by highlighting the importance of enabling children to participate in an empowering and not tokenistic way in the development of the childcare services they use, endorsing Bowlby's claim that "research by geographers can play a useful role in developing childcare policies" (p.25).

Finishing as I started on a personal note, Bowlby's article now makes an even greater impact on my life as I am coming to terms with being a new mother. The complex geographies of women who wish to/have to remain in work following the birth of a child are no longer simply the focus of an interesting set of research questions, but a significant part of my day-to-day life. In my neighbourhood there is only one nursery which takes babies and young children. It is not easily accessible without a car and currently has a long waiting list (women in my ante-natal group who tried to book a place when they were 6 months pregnant were told they were already too late!). Moreover, at £800 per month per child is only an affordable option to those on a high income. It is clear therefore, that a decade on from the publication of Bowlby's original article, there is still a long way to go and a considerable contribution to be made by geographers.

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# Chris Spencer on Robin Moore

Moore, R.C. (1986) *Childhood's Domain: Play and Place in Child Development*. Croom Helm: London, Sydney & Dover, New Hampshire. (ISBN 0-85664-936-8).

**You are hooked from the very first photos and captions you chance upon (p.96):**

**Lisa said the idea was to see who could balance the longest on the street sign: “I hold the record” she added, above a picture of Lisa and another equally smartly dressed girl going for the record on the sign which proclaims the manicured, sterile grass to be ‘Avonside Avenue’.**

Or the rather surreal sight of “Simon in his ‘best hiding bush ... because you can get inside it’ in Tunstall Park” (p.125): boy’s head visible midst the neat greenery of the public park. And step further through the park, and we meet Lisa again (p.109): two girls perch precariously on an ornamental column, under the caption: An impromptu stage: Dawne and Lisa playing ‘statues’ on the bird table in the rose garden

Still other photographs record Andrew and his sister chatting on the steps by their house - a Mill Hill niche wedged between the private indoors and the public domain beyond their homesite boundary (p.83); a girl squeezing through an impossibly small space: “There’s a gap between the garages you can get through ...” (p.61); and Amanda on the giant tyre swing in the local adventure playground in the woods (p.135).

Several things to note straightway: only in this last instance are the children at play in the (adult-designated) play areas of town; whereas in each

other instance we see children creatively using the affordances of adult-designed environments, for purposes quite other than those for which they had been intended.

The captions reveal an author attuned to the needs and activities of children in the urban environment; and one who clearly has the trust of the children whose “secret domains” he has photographed for us to understand.

As the book’s text confirms; he was trusted by children (and their parents) sufficiently to enter these domains and came back with all kinds of anthropological data on the everyday imaginative lives of children as they create play spaces for themselves out of whatever their locale affords them. Resilience, humour, ingenuity and resourcefulness characterise these children; and their confidences to Robin Moore celebrate the richness of what they find (sometimes aching so, as when different children, unbeknowns to each other, successively take him to the same hidden gardens that “no-one else knows”).

Expeditions, discussions, drawings of favourite places: all are analysed in such a child-aware way that you are drawn along through what is in fact the report of Robin Moore’s three study sites, to his final insights and recommendations for more child-sensitive planning. Which in the end amounts to a plea for more spaces to be un-planned so the imaginations of children can play free.

**Chris Spencer** is an environmental psychologist at the University of Sheffield; and author of *The Child and the Physical Environment* (1989). Current work includes children’s use of town centres as a resource and future work will be with children who live in the country.

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# Colin Ward on Ruth Finnegan

Finnegan, R. (1989) *The Hidden Musicians*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. (ISBN 0-521-36066-8).

Colin Ward is a celebrated anarchist writer. He is best known among geographers for *The Child in the City* (1978) and *The Child in the Country* (1988). His life and work is celebrated in the Festschrift, *Richer Futures* (Worpole, 1999).

Both *The Child in the City* (1978) and *The Child in the Country* (1988) can be bought for £1.75 (plus postage if being sent outside the UK) from Freedom Press Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX.

**The then Professor of Comparative Social Institutions at the Open University (UK) examined the part played by music-making in Milton Keynes, the town where she lived, without making assumptions that some music is serious and some is not. She found it to be a major dominant, mutually supportive, aspect of the geography of children, youth and families.**

Salvation Army bands, the Sherwood Sinfonia, the families dressing up for 'County and Western' night, church choirs, the Morris Men, the Jazz and Folk scene, and over one hundred rock groups involve overlapping networks of performers. When you consider the people hiring venues, arranging gigs, negotiating with visiting soloists, drawing up programmes, ferrying their children to rehearsals and carting tonnes of equipment around, let alone packing in the audiences, you realise that a vast proportion of the population anywhere is directly involved in the great human activity of music making.

In her final paragraph, Ruth Finnegan reflects that "... the reality of human beings is to be found not only (maybe not mainly) in their paid employment or even their thought, but also in their engagement in recognised cultural practices ... [a]mong the most valued and, it may be, most profoundly human of such practices in our society is that of music" (p.341).

To me, her book is an anarchist text, illuminating Kropotkin's concept of a society in which "harmony would result from an ever-changing adjustment and readjustment of equilibrium between the multitude of forces and influences [which] would represent an interwoven network,

composed of an infinite variety of groups and federation of all sizes ... temporary or more or less permanent – for all possible purposes" (Kropotkin, 1987, p.62).

When worthy citizens who organise local community organisations pause and reflect on their labours, they regret the apathy and indifference that they see around them. But as David Donnison pointed out, there is something questionable about the assumption that "people want to spend their time making friends and neighbours rather than because they have shared interests" (Donnison, 1992, p.vii).

We can define the two possibilities as communities of propinquity and communities of interest. In practice, of course, plenty of us, for different reasons, belong to both. The two kinds of community coalesce in the local worlds illuminated by Ruth Finnegan's magnificent book. And yet for twenty years, the amount of a school's income devoted to music has been falling, and central government thinks that the collapse of export markets was the result of imperfect teaching of literacy and numeracy. In real life more millions of foreign currency have been won for the balance of payments by popular musicians who despise the officially-approved values, than by our declining manufacturing industries.

Many of the memorable moments in children's lives are of those occasions when they are not treated as children: when some skill or ability is universally respected in performers of any age. This is one of the glories of music-making, for performers and listeners alike.

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# Hilary Winchester on Sarah James

James, S. (1990) Is there a place for children in geography? *Area* 22(3): 278-283. (ISSN 0004-0894).

**This is a small article which asks a big question – ‘where are the children in geography?’ To me it asked a parallel question to that posed by Monk and Hanson’s (1982) paper – ‘Where are the women in geography?’. While Monk and Hanson could pinpoint the gender-blindness of much contemporary research in human geography, it was more difficult to track and explain geography’s myopia towards children.** Partly their invisibility stemmed from their ‘natural’ association with women and from their legal status as minors. There was also a widespread assumption that their use of space was similar to that of adults, just as all adults’ use of space had been considered to be adequately explored and explained by studying male behaviour.

Apart from the big question, the rest of the paper is not memorable. It has a tripartite structure which is instantly forgettable, focussing on children’s socio-spatial relationships, spatial behaviour and environmental cognition. In posing the question at that time, James was part of the groundswell of geographers examining at a group level geographies of marginalised groups and at an individual level their varying experiences of place.

In response to that paper two major comments were raised. Firstly, David Sibley (1991) drew attention to the philosophical point that children were agents in making their own space. In

Winchester (1991), I argued that children also structure the lives of those around them, as anyone who drives ‘Mum’s taxi’ will know. The second major comment moved from the empirical to the theoretical – James (1990, 282) argued that children’s lives and spaces are circumscribed (perhaps deliberately) by a complex set of power relations. I argued (Winchester, 1991, 359) that the power of family and state were crucial in children’s geographies while Sibley (1991, 270) argued for a more social constructionist viewpoint to identify the “different meanings of childhood associated with age, gender, culture, place and time”.

This paper was to me one of the triggers in generating an enlivened and empathetic study of social geographies imbued with an awareness of difference with all its political complexities. Since then, there have been some wonderful geographies of children - empirical, constructionist and theoretical - many of which have been mentioned in this primer. One of the newest and most exciting lines of research has huge relevance to children. In 1990 hardly any geographies were thinking about bodies. A decade later there is a growing literature on embodiment (see, for example, Teather, 1999). Given that children are often defined, identified and labelled by their immature bodies, such work has huge potential to illuminate the differences of children’s experience of place.

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**What would we expect if we asked sports fans throughout the world to define their favourite sporting moment? Some truly world-class achievements would generate a broad base of support (e.g. Jesse Owens successes at the Berlin Olympics in 1936), whereas other moments would have more restricted support among interest groups defined by place and event (e.g. the English have a tendency to reminisce about a certain football/soccer event in 1966).** So too, the collection of 'classics' that have been described in this book. Few would object to the inclusion of Roger Hart's *Children's Experience of Place*, or Chris Philo's *Neglected Rural Geographies*, although eyebrows may have been raised at the inclusion of Hilaire Belloc and many of those who are English-(only) speakers are likely to have had yet another reminder of their limited reading range by the inclusion of Heinemeijer & de Sitter's, *Buurt, Jeugd en Vrije Tijd*. On the other hand, readers may already be lamenting the absence of William Michelson and colleagues (who edited *The Child in the City* in 1979), Hill and Michelson (whose essay *Towards a Geography of Urban Children and Youth* was published in 1981) Mayer Hillman (who, alongside the geographers John Adams and John Whitelegg published *One False Move: A Study of Children's Independent Mobility* in 1990), Helen Roberts (who, with Susan Smith and Carol Bryce penned *Children At Risk* in 1995), Sarah Holloway and Gill Valentine (whose *Children's Geographies* was published in 2000), Stuart Aitken (whose *Geographies of Young People* reached the bookshelves in 2001) and, in particular, the inexplicable omission of Colin Ward's seminal *The Child in the City* (Architectural Press, 1978). McKendrick (2000) provides bibliographic details of these works.

Quibbles aside, this collection has involved reviewers from throughout the Global North - Australasia, Continental Europe, UK and North America - while also reviewing work that focuses on Asia (Nieuwenhuys on p.17) and South America (Hecht on p.16). The reviewers include long-established figures (Hart, Katz, Ward), prominent figures of late (Aitken, Holloway, Matthews), and emerging researchers (Jones, Punch, Robson). Five contributors to this book also had their own works reviewed (Hart, Katz, Philo, Skelton and Ward), although the remit of the exercise - to review a source of personal inspiration - ensures that no-one is reviewing their own work! The adage that geography is too important

to be left to geographers alone is supported by the breadth of scholarship that is covered; the works reviewed include those of philanthropists (Rowtree on p.12), environmental psychologists (Wood & Beck on p.10), landscape architects (Lady Allen of Hurtwood on p.18), psychoanalysts (Winnicott on p.3), poet-essayists (Belloc on p.4), anthropologists (Nieuwenhuys on p.17), and anarchic educators (Ward & Fyson on p.6).

No doubt your reading will have furnished you with a better understanding of the geographies of children, youth and families. Karsten has challenged some of the tenets on which 'modern children's geographies' is founded (p.9); the significance of personal experience in shaping academic interests is evident in the writing of Jones (p.8) and Matthews (p.11); inspiration has been drawn from popular literature (Cunningham on p.4), other academic subject areas (Aitken on p.3), and other subject fields within geography (Philo on p.15); children's geographies has also been shown to contribute to wider concerns, fueling Olwig's interests in environmentalism (p.14) and informing debates on the relationship between global and local (Holloway on p.7); while much of the writing speaks to the 'global' child, some of the reviews tease out the particularities of different childhoods, e.g. Brazilian street children (Punch on p.16), Indian village children (Robson on p.17) and Muslim girls (Skelton on p.19); 'relevance' has been emphasised by pleas to write for school teachers (Morgan on p.13) and planners (Sibley on p.18 & Spencer on p.21), while more generally Hart calls for engagement beyond academia (on p.6); the roots of much interest with children arose from a concern with family life and the relevance of 'family' is shown to persist, e.g. the influence of children on mothers (England on p.5 and Smith on p.20) and the ways in which family life impacts on the child (Katz on p.10 and McKendrick on p.12) - Ward extends the point to demonstrate the need to consider the wider worlds of children in society (p.22). Although a celebration of these new geographies, it is not an uncritical collection, as illustrated by Winchester's qualified criticism of James' paper illustrates (p.23).

A better understanding of the field is but a welcome bonus. The main objective is to introduce readers to the field and to whet her/his appetite for more. Here's looking forward to an extended 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition in ten years time.

#### References

McKendrick, J.H. (2000) The geography of children: an annotated bibliography. *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research*, 7(3): 359-387.

# Children's Geographies

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