



DECONSTRUCTING DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Erica Burman



THIRD EDITION

ROUTLEDGE



Deconstructing Developmental Psychology

How do lived childhoods connect with theories about child development? This fully updated third edition of the best-selling *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* raises many new and compelling questions about the ways in which ‘experts’ have tried to ‘understand’ children. Erica Burman looks beyond the current mainstream frameworks to interrogate the assumptions and practices surrounding the psychology of child development, providing a critical evaluation of the role and contribution of developmental psychology within social practices. The book brings into clear focus how history, geography, culture and politics have shaped the concerns and concepts of developmental psychology and produced powerful, often oppressive, effects for children which extend also to others (families, parents, communities and practitioners) who care for and work with them.

Taking a strong international perspective, the book combines discussions about contemporary research about young children with everyday examples from children’s lives, to explore the major changes in the understanding of children over the past 100 years. New coverage includes an examination of the neuro-scientific research on babies’ brains and related claims on early intervention policies and resilience; the impact of the global economic crisis, migration, changes in technology and their impact, and contemporary families and changing family dynamics with ‘key updates on child abuse and exploitation’. It also engages the debates between childhood studies and child rights, including both the ethical-political and conceptual-disciplinary questions these pose.

This engaging and accessible text provides key resources to inform better professional practice in humanitarian aid, social work, education and health contexts. It offers critical insights into the politics and procedures that have shaped developmental psychological knowledge. It will be essential reading for anyone working with children, or concerned with policies around children and families. It was also be of interest to students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels wishing to examine notions of development in psychology, counselling, social work, international development studies or education.

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Deconstructing Developmental Psychology

Third edition

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Preface to the third edition

This third edition has taken me somewhat by surprise, not only in the sense of how fast the time has passed since 2008, when the second edition of *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* was published, but also in how much has changed – sociopolitically but also within psychology. This version is correspondingly extensively revised and updated to engage with this changed context – although *plus ça change....?*

I have retained the same chapter structure (largely for those who know the earlier editions), but readers will find that the text has changed quite substantially (as well as getting longer). As I noted in the Preface to the second edition, developmental psychology engages a geopolitical situation which remains in the throes of major geopolitical turmoil, both political and ecological. The refugee crisis and transnational migration, which did not appear much in the second edition, now figures in these pages, as well as an awareness of the deepening and proliferation of forms of racism. While neoliberalism continues to penetrate both the gross and intimate aspects of our lives, economic recession (discoursed in Europe, and especially Britain via the retro-kitsch designation ‘austerity’) has changed the definition of childhood as also the structure of families and familial ties. Precarity has become a feature not only of employment but of subjectivity. Alongside the general deterioration in personal and global security, further contradictions and contests around children and childhood have emerged. The twin strands of feminisation and psychologisation remain a continuing preoccupation, that have also marked a key shift in normative models from the culturally masculine detached autonomous mini-scientist of the industrialised labour market to the creative, relational subject of feminised and casualised precarious work.

If the second edition of *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* reflected the rise and impact of children’s rights and childhood studies literatures and debates, this third edition is formulated from a profound engagement with this and a desire to show what they can offer to and for psychology. In this sense it is both a text and a counter-text. An equivalent influence (reflected also in my own changing institutional location) is the proliferating educational literatures, that are increasingly addressing questions of cultural diversity and postcolonial debates. While I would still situate as a companion to this book its (second edition) contemporary, *Developments: Child, Image, Nation* (Burman, 2008a), as engaging in more theoretical detail the resonances between representations of childhood and national development noted here, it is both a matter of relief and inspiration that there are now so many other wonderful texts around, albeit few directly addressing or read within developmental psychology.

So, we might ask, now approaching 22 years since the first edition of *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* was published: what’s the same? What’s more of the same? What’s different?

In terms of what is the same, clearly practices of psychologisation, including the greater incursions of psychological culture, have continued. This has included the continuing regulation of mothering and the pathologisation of the poor, and so these issues get more extensive airing in the third edition. As part of this, we have seen more and more engagement – culturally but also politically – with attachment theory, but with even more neuro-twists that connect neuroscience (or, arguably, neuro-nonsense or neuromythologies) with what has been called neoliberalism (see also De Vos, 2016). The developmental fallacies of ‘catching them young’ that inform early intervention agendas correspondingly become earlier and earlier, while ‘risk’ – like vulnerability – has moved from context to individual body, and now is individualised further into ‘resilience’.

So much of this is in fact more of the same. As I discuss in the pages below, the logic of psychologisation in allying with neuroscience is to evacuate the psyche altogether, such that policies try to influence or support the development of baby brains, rather than minds. We see also how neoliberal, or perhaps better understood as advanced capitalist, processes extend imperatives for individual optimisation and maximisation with a focus on flexibility and agility as well as responsibility. While this has been seen as heralding the demise of class solidarities, I have tried to show some more nuanced and even hopeful instances. Yet national political discourse seems to have increasingly intensified its focus on the regulation of parenting, and especially mothering, making mothers quasi-entrepreneurs in preparing their children for the market while at the same time being sold a form of ‘cruel optimism’ that overstates not only parenting agency but also responsibility.

As a corollary of discourses of risk and vulnerability, discussions of abuse occupy the frame of public discourse around children, with victim/survivor identities foregrounded with explosion of (disclosures of) child sexual exploitation. We might ponder what this reveals about dominant cultures (from the revelations of the abuse perpetrated by the key purveyors of the ‘light entertainment’ industry, and with allegations concerning the most senior political establishment in the UK, to the rape of children worldwide), whilst also being cautious about calls for further regulation and intervention – whether in relation to children, families or those professionals who work with them. Indeed all the signs are that more regulation, in the form of mandatory reporting, is likely to mean less disclosure rather than protecting children and young people.

In terms of what is different, this third edition engages with the rise (and rise) of resilience discourse – as a key corollary of the impact of ‘positive psychology’, alongside a return to moral and moralising notions of ‘character’ and ‘character education’. Of course there are other changes in political context that have certainly affected the conditions of and for children’s lives, including the legalisation of gay marriage/civil partnerships in many countries across the world. In terms of wider discourses of economic development, the feminisation of neoliberalism has give rise to new gendered policy configurations that not only topicalise (rather than marginalise) but also aim to exploit women and girls’ attributed psychological qualities and supposed thrift.

One key shift has been the rapid extension of the impacts of the web and virtuality in everyday life, which are reflected upon in this edition with some consideration of how the digital age now figures in family life; as well as giving rise to new arenas for child activity, creativity but also exploitation and (cyber)bullying. Worthy of critical reflection here is how ‘bullying’ (or what in the US is called ‘mobbing’) remains and indeed is now entrenched as the fundable name for sexual and racialised harassment and transphobic violence, so performing again the very psychologisation that it is supposed to address. In relation to other, reproductive, technologies, new techniques may have been invented and perfected, but there

seems to be no change to the possessive individualist desire to have one's 'own child'. Indeed, a 2016 trend for expectant parents is a complete model baby produced from a 3-D printer as figured from the ultrasound scan (for £400) (*The Week*, 23 Jan 2016: 6).

As the authority of what Cordero Arce (2015) terms 'developmental legalism' is extended, so we need better tools of critique. Childhood studies and child rights debates are not only now reconciling their (considerable) theoretical differences, but are both currently addressing global/local/globalisation questions that bring useful perspectives on and possibilities for developmental psychologists. There are constructive dialogues with child rights advocacy and theory, and southern-based/de-colonial bodies of knowledge that are now emerging. In this sense the disciplinary boundary-marking practices between psychology, education and childhood studies seem somewhat arbitrary and – now that childhood studies has come to acknowledge its plural disciplinary characteristics (as inter-, trans-, multi-disciplinary), I would hope that developmental psychologists could also join in the important discussions that are now taking place.

Indeed a key change in the past decade or so is the increasing visibility and diversity of forms of critical psychology appearing in the (increasingly culturally dominant) English language. Moreover the relationality of these diverse forms as arising from and engaging with different cultural-political contexts are now much more topicalised and theorised. This has also had its reflection in the frameworks for studying children and childhoods within developmental psychology, with new attention to the range and forms of sociocultural and cultural-historical approaches that are gaining more influence – such as the 'everyday life' approach (Norway/Denmark) to studying children's lives, as also the rise of psychosocial studies and narrative methodologies and theory more generally.

So, in terms of what the additional words are doing in this third edition, as well as revisions and updating, I have tried to cover new debates that have resonated both within developmental psychology and within public and social policy domains. Chapter 7, the longest by far in previous editions, remains (by demand, it seems) now longer still, indicating the proliferation of attachment theory across the lifespan as well as into neurology. The greater circulation and debate about Vygotskian approaches is also reflected. And, in particular, debates about what children are and how they should be engaged and reflected in national social policies (as a reflection of international debates) occupy more pages. In particular child rights debates are now taken directly into discussions of the ethics and politics of developmental psychological research, as also the ever-extending focus on child protection, including further critical attention to prevailing approaches to supporting children's participation. In particular the theme of how exclusionary concepts of citizenship and nationality work to exclude many children access from such rights remains unfortunately as relevant as ever. Thus discourses of 'culture' now combine with those around religion to rearticulate colonial legacies alongside the explicit mobilisation of new concepts of active childhood from neoliberal economic policies.

One problem noted by some readers of the second edition was how its engagement with social policy introduced some inevitable parochiality into the analysis. This third edition has, I hope, benefitted from a wider reading, as well as the ways (unfortunately) so much of what occurs in one national context can be read as (an albeit particular) reflection of others. Yet I have been wary of appearing to lay claim to some abstracted, generalised 'view from nowhere' that would reproduce precisely the discourse of masculine mastery that Haraway (1988) roundly critiqued. My cultural-political locations in formulating the arguments in this book are of course constitutive and constraining in many ways, and so it is perhaps an inevitable if also uncomfortable truth that my focus comes from a British context. Yet I would still claim this as a significant arena from which to write, in struggling to formulate critiques that

can be used to challenge Anglo-US cultural imperialism as much as to address and improve the increasingly pressured lives of children and families in the UK.

In general, as previously, this book draws on and attempts to highlight the significant contribution of feminist theory, which in this volume is now explicitly joined by queer, intersectionality and postcolonial studies. While probably insufficiently integrated, my thinking has been informed by recent debates in critical disability studies, including the rearticulation of mental health with disability rights discourses. Readers may also discern features of posthumanism, in particular in offering important angles on received discourses of child-animal (as well as child, human, language) relationships. While none of these are – directly – ‘deconstruction’, they have arisen from the political projects of critique that this has spawned.

It is not, of course, possible to cover all new concepts, theories and debates. In this third edition, I have tried to balance the historical account – with examples that I perceive as still resonant and constitutive – with current work. In preparing this edition I have become acutely aware that not only are many of the source texts I discuss no longer in print (indeed many were merely graphic illustrative historical examples), but also some of the key critiques. So they remain in this text, sometimes quoted at some length, to offer a record of important sources whose influence was not only on me, but on many other critics like me. A further problem is that, with the expansion of the ‘psy complex’, along with the increasing sophistication as well as proliferation of developmental psychology, it has been difficult to confine discussion of a single issue to specific chapters. Readers will note that questions of gender, child rights, migration and child asylum provision, child abuse, models of emotions, sensitive mothering and early intervention come up in various ways across the chapters. So, as is the way with textbooks, I hope each chapter can be read and used independently (to illuminate all these issues) as well as successively and interactively.

Perhaps one further key difference from the first edition is worth mentioning. The concepts and ideas I drew upon and ‘applied’ in the first edition, as a form of practical deconstruction rather than mere meta-methodological critique, have since gained much wider circulation and even cultural traction (Burman, 2012c). I have been emboldened, therefore, to be rather more explicit about the conceptual and methodological commitments informing this work in the hope that this will be informative rather than over-complex.

I hope this third edition of *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* continues to offer a key resource for childhood and educational researchers to scrutinise the developmental claims they may be tempted either to invoke or to refuse. The developmentalist paradigm, at both economic and individual levels – remains powerful notwithstanding the decades of trenchant critique and impending ecological catastrophe attending models of unfettered ‘growth’. It seems likely that children will remain a site of investment for all kinds of hopes, fears and longings. Hence whether in the implicit claims underwriting models of children’s agency and participation or within national and global economic policies, and especially in these days of the marketisation of higher education with imperatives for ‘impact’ and ‘application’, we need to keep critical. As postcolonial critics have long pointed out, the well-intentioned rush to intervene can be less than helpful. But, of course, we must remember that *theory is also a practice*.

Once again I must acknowledge the many friends and colleagues from across so many national and disciplinary contexts who have enriched and inspired my thinking and who are deconstructing developmental psychology in their own ways, as well as Lucy Kennedy and the team at Routledge for their editorial support. Thank you!

Erica Burman

April 2016

Introduction

Commitments, resources and methodological frameworks

Deconstructing Developmental Psychology is a critical introduction to developmental psychology: critical in the sense that it comments upon rather than replaces mainstream accounts of developmental psychology; introductory in the sense that it aims to present in an accessible way a synthesis of various existing critiques and discussions that are often complex and seemingly very specific in their remit, but which have major and important consequences for the project of developmental psychology and for all those involved with practices around children and child development that it informs. This book focuses on the relation between academic research and social policies and practices, in particular to highlight and often question the desirability of the effects of developmental psychological research (and also the possibility of the division between theory and application).

As the title suggests, my aim is to deconstruct developmental psychology, that is to identify and evaluate the guiding themes or discourses that structure its current dominant forms. To identify suggests an active search for patterning, while evaluation implies a process of commentary. I use the term ‘deconstruction’ in the sense of laying bare, of bringing under scrutiny, rendering coherent and perhaps incoherent the moral-political themes that developmental psychology elaborates. That is, to look beyond current frameworks within which developmental psychological investigation has been formulated to take up the broader questions of where these themes fit into the social practices in which psychology functions. I am using deconstruction here not as a formal analytical framework specifically associated with the work of the philosopher Jacques Derrida, but rather to indicate a wider practice of critical interrogation of central assumptions and an attention to how these were framed by their specific sociopolitical context of formation. In this sense, the analysis owes more to the ideas of Michel Foucault than to Derrida, as well as mobilising a range of psychoanalytically-informed analyses (see also Burman, 2015a), while elsewhere I reflect critically upon the uses and limits of deconstruction (Burman, 1990; 2015b) as well as undertake other varieties of it (Burman, 1998a). This practice of critique emerged as part of the ‘textual’ or ‘discursive turn’ of the social and human sciences generally (Weedon, 1987; Belsey, 2002), and it characterised a critical movement within psychology (exemplified by Henriques *et al.*, 1984; Parker and Shotter, 1990; Parker *et al.*, 1995; Burman, 1998a; Parker, 1998) which took as its topic the structure of psychological practice. Similar developments also took place in education, as exemplified by Davies (1994), Dahlberg *et al.* (1999), Hultqvist and Dahlberg (2001), MacLure (2003), Cannella and Viruru (2004), Dahlberg and Moss (2005), MacNaughton (2005) and Nadeson (2010).

In this book I address the discourses that developmental psychology both constructs and informs, using the term ‘discourse’ to refer to socially organised frameworks of meaning that

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define categories and specify domains of what can be said and done. That is, discourses are socially constituted frameworks of meaning that order objects and relationships, and those frameworks both reflect and perform relationships of power. Or as Foucault (1976: 100) puts it: 'It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together'. Thus questions of power and knowledge – what can be known, and in what cultural-historical and political conditions such ideas come to be formulated – are understood as intertwined. This is why Foucault continues: 'There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations' (p. 101–2). It is these 'elements' that I try to critically explore in this book, in relation to how they play out in the role and functions of developmental psychological theories and practices.

Methodologically, what this means is that this book moves between the identification and analysis of broad themes or epistemological paradigms that have structured developmental psychological theory and practice and some more detailed analysis of key or iconic studies around which critical reflection is focused. Such accounts are inevitably shaped by current concerns (this is, in Foucault's famous phrase, a 'history of the present'). I offer motivated readings, the clarity of whose stance may hopefully engender critical evaluation and hopefully engagement and practice. This is a book that aims to help people do things; but what is to be done is a matter as much for reflection as for immediate action; it requires conceptual as well as practical work. Deconstruction (in its Derridean and Foucauldian varieties) is a transformative project, whose resistance to specifying the ends of that transformation is precisely to prevent foreclosure of this.

Whilst the 'discursive turn' has now been extensively discussed (see Parker 2013, 2015; Burman and Parker, 1993; Davies, 1994; Burman *et al.*, 1996; MacLure, 2003), my focus here is on applying these ideas to offer alternative readings of dominant Euro-US, or more specifically Anglo-US, psychology. I will be analysing developmental psychological texts, treating these not as transparent reflections of (logical or empirical) 'truths' but as socioculturally-located texts or *accounts* whose specific form can be understood as having wider significance. My concern with developmental psychological accounts is not simply in terms of the language within which these are cast, although this is important; rather this book addresses how these accounts reflect and engage with the practices associated with them. In this sense the key task here is to explore how, why and in what ways sets of ideas in developmental psychology have functioned outside as well as within its relatively restricted domain.

Developmental psychology exercises a powerful impact on everyday lives and ways of thinking about ourselves. The paradox is that its effects are such that they are often almost imperceptible, taken-for-granted features about our expectations of ourselves, others, parents, children and families, informing the structure of popular and consumer culture as well as explicit technical, official policies (see e.g., Burman, 2012a, 2012b). This means that its norms do not merely describe but they also exercise emotional traction through our own subscription to them. While exemplifying the self-regulating subjectivity that Foucault describes, such internalisation of norms is also not at all surprising. Due to the divide in the West between the public world of work and the private, domestic sphere inscribed by industrialisation, the home and our actions within it carry so much emotional investment that evaluation of relationships and activities conducted within it (as mothers, fathers, children) is deeply felt, and is often a source of anxiety or even fear. A key aspect of the imperceptibility of the permeation of developmental psychological ideas lies in the ways they have structured the standards and even the forms of state intervention that accompany welfare policies of protection and care.

Acknowledging these issues means going beyond the representation of developmental psychological research as scientific and benign in its effects to consider its wider institutional and personal origins, and impact. To take a recent example, a participant in a recent research project on educational impacts of welfare reforms (Bragg *et al.*, 2015) said to the interviewer ‘Tell your professor we are good mothers’. While neither the interview, nor the project, were concerned with evaluating the quality or adequacy of parenting, this participant was clearly responding to the wider ways that poor families are surveyed and judged – in particular mothers. What particularly interested us as a research team was how she was claiming a collective voice to challenge the negative perceptions of welfare recipients as well as mandating us as academic researchers to disrupt that dominant discourse (see also Burman *et al.*, in press). It is this ethical-political mandate to name and so offer resources for resistance to such oppressive discourses that drives this book.

Organisation

The structure of this book reflects the main topics and categorisations employed by many widely available developmental psychology texts. In following this structure, I do not mean simply to reproduce those categorisations, but rather to facilitate the co-ordination of this account with the others. Hence the titles of chapters and headings aim to highlight the discursive construction of topic areas. In commenting on these, the book traces the accounts of development along the quasi-biographical or chronological path typically elaborated by such texts for the notional ‘child’. In Chapter 1, I start by exploring the historical background to the contemporary role that developmental psychology and developmental psychologists have played. This sets the focus for the first major section of the book, Part I, ‘Constructing the subject’, which is concerned with how developmental psychology arrived at and investigates its unit of development. Here, Chapter 2 addresses this in terms of infancy research, Chapter 3 through discussions about social development and Chapters 4 and 5 by analysing historical and cultural influences that inform our conceptions of childhood and the limits of these conceptions.

Part II, ‘Social development and the structure of caring’, focuses on the role accorded to, and particular representations of, families and parents. Chapter 6 examines the ways in which families are discussed in developmental psychological accounts. Chapter 7 analyses the literature on the formation and importance of relationships, and Chapter 8 evaluates the preconditions and consequences of the shift in cultural and academic focus from mothers to fathers.

Part III, ‘Developing communication’, is devoted to the research on how children learn to talk (Chapter 9), and how child language can best be promoted (Chapter 10). Chapter 11 draws on a rather different set of perspectives to argue for the importance of analysing the power relations that structure adult–child interaction, including that of psychologist and child.

Part IV, ‘Cognitive development: the making of rationality’, deals with the roles accorded to Piagetian and Vygotskian theory within developmental psychology. Chapter 12 explores historical and cultural factors relevant to interpreting Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s work, offering some challenges to received understandings of their claims as well as critically evaluating the impact of their work in terms of how these ideas have been incorporated within social practices. Chapter 13 develops this further in relation to the impact of Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s work in educational contexts. Chapter 14 addresses the application of developmental models in the arena of morality through the work of Kohlberg, as illustrative of some of the major difficulties that the cognitive developmental approach involves. This question also brings us back

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to the moral status of developmental psychology and its collusion in the organised amorality of contemporary life. Methodological and political issues posed by the arguments put forward in this book are considered, including further clarification of the scope and limits of its claims (which are also further addressed in Burman, 2008a; 2015b).

Key themes

A number of key issues have structured the forms and functions of developmental psychology. These stretch across the seemingly (within current formulations) disparate arenas of social, cognitive or language development. While treating each topic separately I have tried to indicate continuities, highlighting the specific forms that the recurring structural themes take within particular domains. The repetition of these issues is in itself evidence not only of their pervasiveness, but also of the greater unity of preoccupations that developmental psychology has informed and reflected, as a vital contributor to modern state practices.

Put briefly, these themes are as follows: first, that tools of measurement produce research objects and research subjects. The particular forms that developmental psychology has taken has been driven by the demand to produce technologies of measurement. These methodological parameters have reflected broader ideological assumptions in selecting and abstracting child and mother as its units of enquiry. (And it should be noted that while my account is cast primarily in terms of biological mothers and fathers, the same literature and debates apply just as – if not more, given professional models – to adoptive or foster parents; see also Cradock, 2007.)

Second, in many respects mothers (and sometimes fathers) have come to replace children as the primary focus for developmental psychological investigation, reflecting wider themes of regulation – in terms of (a) active intervention in (especially) women's lives; (b) indirect impact through women's subscription to developmental psychological accounts about how children develop and what is 'best' for them; (c) the broader impact of developmental psychology as it informs the cultural climate and structure of provision and services available for children (and working mothers). Notwithstanding the many shifts and proliferations in family forms, what remains constant is that it is the adequacy of mothering that developmental psychology is called to regulate and legislate upon, and the continuity with which this issue crops up across the range of topics in developmental psychology is a manifestation of the widespread and routine subjection of, especially, women to the developmental psychological gaze. As we shall see, fathers do not escape this gaze but are subjected to it in rather different ways. It could perhaps be said that we have seen a displacement in developmental psychology from 'the child' to other (responsible) parties engaging with this child, with the moral burden of this responsibility increasingly placed on families, within liberal democracies as much as countries that have no welfare state apparatus.

The third recurring issue is that normative descriptions provided by developmental psychology slip into naturalised prescriptions. These are fuelled by the appeal to biology and evolution, which is called upon in areas as diverse as attachment theory, language development and education. Representations of children frequently function as a projective slate on to which fantasies of nature and its relation to society are inscribed. Yet these fantasies harbour deeply contradictory sentiments.

Developmental psychology makes claims to be scientific. Its use of evolutionary assumptions to link the social to the biological provides a key cultural arena in which evolutionary and biologising ideas are replayed and legitimised. Closely associated with its technologies

and guiding preoccupations has been its use to classify and stratify individuals, groups and populations so as to maintain class, gender and racist oppression. This is a central theme of this book which involves connecting the psychological project of describing individual development, which is usually cast in terms of child development, with policies and practices in international economic development. Developmental psychology forms an explicit resource within international aid and development policy, of course in relation to ameliorating child poverty and abuse and promoting child rights, but also within prescriptions for national development policies. Here we see how concerns around children and childhoods have always been, and continue to be, instrumentalised in terms of the fashioning of future citizens – including the generation of appropriate workers and consumers as well as promoting democratic participation.

A fourth strand within this book concerns the relation between psychology and psychoanalysis. A psychoanalytic reading of developmental psychology offers glimpses into repressed themes of fear that underlie the scientific demand for control and prediction. Psychoanalysis has increasingly been mobilised as a resource to critique psychology (Walkerdine, 1990; Frosh, 1997; Parker, 1997; Parker, 2004), including developmental psychology (see e.g. Henriques *et al.*, 1984; Bradley, 1989; Morss, 1996). Indeed, psychoanalytical approaches form a key resource inspiring the new discipline of psychosocial studies (Frosh, 2003, 2010; Brown and Stenner, 2009; Parker, 2010, 2015), in which the study of maternal subjectivities has emerged as a key theme (Baraitser, 2008; Baraitser and Tyler, 2010). This enables a questioning of what lies behind the privileging of objectivity and control over the ambiguity, flux and ambivalence of the issues raised by caring for, as indeed also working with, children (Billington, 2000; Britzman, 2012).

However, it is important to note that this is a particular reading of the relationship between psychoanalysis and psychology that addresses the particular context of Anglo-US psychology. In other places, Latin America and South Africa, for example, psychoanalysis has been allied with psychology, and even is a dominant form of psychology. Although I argue in this book that psychoanalysis is the repressed other of psychology, this statement refers to a particular history of their relations. Hence there is nothing necessary or essential about the status of psychoanalysis as a critique of psychology. In psychology's Anglo-US 'centres', too, this relationship is undergoing considerable reworking, particularly in relation to developments in neuroscience that (for some) usher in the vista of connecting psychodynamics with neurophysiology and so putting psychoanalysis on a more 'scientific' footing (De Vos, 2011). The so-called 'memory wars' of the mid- to late-1990s around false/recovered memories illustrated new disciplinary alliances between psychoanalysis and psychology (Burman, 1997a, 1998b; Haaken, 1998). Later in this book I discuss the seeming revival of the alliance between psychoanalysis and psychology within current developments around 'attachment'. This has occurred alongside wider cultural-political shifts that have brought questions of emotional regulation and literacy into social policy in new ways (Burman, 2009; Miller and Scholnick, 2015; Emery in press).

The fifth, and final, theme concerns how the selection of children as objects of developmental psychological enquiry leads to a failure to theorise the broader psychological contexts they inhabit, that is, their social contexts. This contributes to individualist interpretations of socially structured phenomena that can lapse into victim blaming, as where mothers or families are treated as responsible for the social ills of the world in which they are trying to rear their children. Where the focus moves beyond the individual to consider class and culture, these have frequently, explicitly or implicitly, been treated as responsible

for failures of child development or education, while the motivations or resources drawn upon by those who make such evaluations all too often remain unexamined. This book attempts to open up these structural themes for scrutiny, together with their underlying assumptions and the practices to which they give rise.

How to read this book

Children and childhood are rhetorically invoked in multiple ways for sometimes divergent or contradictory purposes. Similarly, there are various ways of approaching developmental psychology: from the point of view of the child, from that of parents and families, and from the position of professionals or agencies directly or indirectly involved with children. While written from the third position, accounts are usually cast in terms of the first approach, of what the child is, does and what it will do next. In this book, I adopt the second position and explore the consequences of this, that is, from the position of parents and families, for a focus on the child. These consequences are pervasive both for adults who do (and do not) care for children, as also for professionals involved with services for children. In fact, I will be taking the child-centred focus of developmental psychology as itself a topic of enquiry and critique.

This book therefore concentrates less on ‘facts’ that developmental psychology has unearthed than on how particular topics arise as interesting areas of enquiry. The perspective I am adopting is to look at developmental psychological knowledge as constructed within social practices rather than as a distinct content area. This means that this book is not only concerned with what developmental psychology has ‘found’ and the claims that it makes, but also considers the significance of the types of research and research outcomes in three ways: the circumstances in which the research was carried out; the social and political influences that made the topic seem relevant; and the role and impact of that research. In other words, developmental psychology is treated as a topic of enquiry in its own right, with objects and subjects of study (children, families, mothers, teachers, social workers, child therapists, etc.) constructed in relation to it.

My aim in this book, then, is to pose questions about what is all too often assumed to be given or obvious. For example: why is developmental psychology always presumed to be about ‘the child’? What are the consequences of this for the theory and practice of developmental psychology? How would this be different from discussing ‘children’ or ‘contexts in which people grow and change’? This book challenges the common-sense view of developmental psychology, treating this view as itself a resource through which to explore developmental psychology’s project and practice.

In accordance with this perspective, I frequently refer to ‘the child’, the ‘individual’ or the ‘subject’ of developmental psychology using the feminine pronoun ‘she’. This practice departs from the conventions once used in many psychology textbooks – certainly the ones I read as a student where the child was referred to using at best the ‘generic’ masculine pronoun ‘he’. In more general terms, this can lead us to consider *whose* development we are talking about – that of an individual? An abstract ‘knower’? Everyone’s development? (Are there claims to universality here?) Does it reflect all cultures? Classes? Men’s and women’s experiences? What are the consequences for developmental psychology of its forgetting of gender as a structuring dimension of development, instead of talking generally about children? Indeed, should we not be specifying *which* children we are making claims about? Even the seemingly innocuous ‘arrow’ of time can be critiqued for its cultural masculinity (in the form of asocial individualism):

The arrow metaphor expresses three contemporary explanations of developmental change: (1) biology, which launches movements; (2) an ideal solution to a cognitive task, which serves as the target for development; (3) linearity, which ensures continuity of travel. Arrows describe linear thought and linear development in a universal child. Arrows are also, of course, typically associated with aggression, domination, imposition of a view and penetration of an influence. An arrow expresses development as a push towards change, not as a force that simultaneously transforms and is transformed.

(Scholnick, 2000: 34)

Here I want to note that the structure of this book departs from that of other more conventional developmental psychology texts by not having a chapter on gender. In part this is because gender issues are addressed throughout the text, and indeed feminist perspectives have been a key inspirational source for its arguments. But there are three other important reasons. First, gender issues infuse discussions of developmental psychology and child development so thoroughly that they cannot be simply relegated to a specific chapter. Rather their complexity is generated by the gendered structuring not only of childhood, but also of parenthood, and other kinship and caregiving relationships, as well as grandparenthood and professional relations. On this last point, we too often forget that professional titles obscure how childminders and carers, nurses, health visitors, teachers and social workers are primarily women – and indeed the gendered character of this relationship can enter in covert and negative ways as when professionals attempt to ward off gendered identification with a neglectful or abusive parent they are working with by being unduly punitive (Dutton Conn, 1995; Featherstone, 1997).

The second reason is more analytical, but also makes a critical intervention. The discipline of psychology was given timely rejuvenation by the rise of ‘sex difference’ research in the 1970s – relying on research practices that were both methodologically and politically suspect, and confined to understandings of sex/gender that presume what they claim to study (see Kitzinger, 1994): i.e. treating gender as (in its apparently ‘finished’ form) a stable, fixed, singular identity framed within dominant discourses of heteronormativity. Developmental approaches to gender development have functioned as a key route by which to legitimate such conceptions, reading on to the development of the child the normative story of the emergence of adult gendered and (hetero)sexed categories. Put this way, its function in closing down the emergence, and appreciation of the emergence, of new or alternative forms of sexed/gendered subjectivities becomes clear. Hence, the sufficiency of the narration between biology and culture – that sex is what is between your legs and gender between your ears – comes into question. In particular, Butler’s (1990) influential account has authoritatively displaced the notion that sexuality or sexual orientation is something that comes after or is organised in relation to a prior gender identity. Not only is the social role theory of gender insufficient, Butler argues, but it also consolidates a static view of sex/gender relations. What is needed is an analysis that allows for the fluidity of gender as a situated but materially constrained performance.

Moreover, we should ask why it is that gender should function as the key axis of difference, often figuring in texts as a separate chapter whereas, for example, notions of classed or racialised/ethnic positions do not. Without minimising the current significance of gendered identities and positions in structuring how we might feel and act, and feel able to act, as well as structural positions and possibilities, it is worth pausing to consider how the privileging of gender can work in paradoxical ways: as the prototypical axis of difference it comes both to represent other such differences (and so is in danger of assimilating ‘race’ or class issues to the parameters taken by gendered analysis – which may well be related owing to axes of

power, but are not identical) but thereby is also in danger of occluding these differences (see Burman, 2005a; 2015c).

For these reasons, unlike other treatments, the approach taken here does not focus on identity (and in that sense, as discussed later in this chapter, is not ‘child centred’ – see also Burman, 1998c, 1999) but rather interrogates the disciplinary imperatives to generate accounts of subjectivity in such terms. Indeed, as suggested, we might question why we should focus on gender, rather than, say, ‘race’ or class. An endless vista of proliferating identities or positions thus opens up, revealing yet again a key limitation of psychological models that treat individual experience as a possession or property rather than the outcome of structural positions and relationships. In this sense, as Squire (1989) highlighted long ago now, psychological models of gender – including within feminist psychologies – recapitulate many of the political problems that have beset feminist theories and practices: the problem of identity politics and the infinite regress of multiple categorisations and possible identifications. Currently, prompted in particular by black feminist activism and theory, the notion of intersectionality is being used to understand the mutual inter-relations or configurations of multiple axes of identity and positioning, which might be organised around racialisation or age or (dis)ability as much as gender (see Nayak, 2014; Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006; Greenstein, 2015).

All of these features are very much at play within articulations or configurations of children and childhood, including children and young people’s own identifications (Burman, 2013a). So it is for all these reasons – both in relation to an impossibility for sufficient topicalisation and also the exclusions it would necessarily perform – that I take gender, like other sociostructural positions and conditions, as informing and constituting the psychological theories and practices discussed here. For readers who want a more explicit approach there are, however, many fine texts discussing the psychological development of gender and sexuality (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers, 1992; Greene, 2003; Shefer *et al.*, 2006; Magnusson and Marecek, 2012).

Throughout the book, I will be drawing links between conceptual and methodological debates within the discipline and their effects within the practices in which developmental psychology participates. Developmental psychological knowledge informs a number of professional practices involved with health, education and welfare that touch many, if not all of our, lives. It informs everyday popular understandings with, for example, notions of emotional intelligence increasingly circulating in self-help but also in professional and policy contexts. These rely on notions of child development, as well as claims about (more and less) desirable models of communication (Burman, 2008b).

In particular, developmental psychology forms part of the knowledge base within so-called developed societies for postnatal support, health visiting and social work, as well as education and law, giving rise to what Cordero Arce (2015) has termed ‘developmental psycho-legalism’. Notwithstanding the tension between child rights and developmental psychological arenas, notions of ‘need’ and ‘competence’ still rely on developmental psychological expertise for their definition and determination. For example, on what basis do law courts arrive at an understanding of what constitutes a child’s ‘best interest’? Or, when is a child deemed to have sufficient understanding to be legally responsible for their actions? What underlies an education welfare officer’s opinion that a child’s ‘social and emotional needs’ will be better catered for outside mainstream school? What criteria do adoption agencies use in evaluating whether or not adoption is likely to be successful? What intellectual resources and expertise do legal and welfare professionals turn to when they seek to determine children’s competence to participate in decision making? As is discussed in the following chapters, these are some

of the ways in which developmental psychology reverberates far beyond the theory or the experimental laboratory, as well as beyond the pages of child advice magazines, chat shows, online forums and toy shops.

To facilitate the connection between the arguments elaborated within the book and the general implications for theory and practice that flow from them, each chapter has suggestions for further reading, and practical demonstrations or activities that exemplify its key points. These activities can be used to structure individual or group work. They are based on my experience of teaching students of psychology, early childhood education, nursing, healthcare and youth and community work, and involvement in training teachers, social workers, educational psychologists, counselling psychologists and psychotherapists. They are intended as a resource that can be adapted or extended to a variety of audiences and contexts.

Cultural constructions

As already mentioned, the approach here is not the ‘child-centred’ variety generally found. (Indeed this book interrogates what ‘child centredness’ is.) Rather, the starting point is that children and childhood are *constructed*; we therefore have to study not only ‘the child’ but also the context (that is, the interpersonal, cultural, historical and political situation) that produces her. This book focuses on families and cultural-political practices; on the ways in which parents, and in particular mothers, are positioned in relation to children; and the effects that cultural prescriptions for ‘good mothering’ as relayed through developmental psychology have for women. It might be a surprise to some readers that it was Jean Piaget (1950) who said: ‘Child psychology is a branch equally of sociology and psychology, since the social environment is an integral component of development’. More recently, Goodnow and Collins (1990: 10) commented: ‘For us an exclusively child-centered focus is limited. Child development is not the whole of developmental psychology. Moreover, parents are interesting in their own right. Their experiences, satisfactions and development are topics to be explored without any necessity to justify the exploration on the grounds of effects on children’. Indeed, in addition to the rise of childhood studies over the past 30 years, as key discipline in its own right, parenting cultural studies is now emerging as a specific topic and arena of study (Lee *et al.*, 2014).

The developmental psychology generally studied is usually conducted on, and written by researchers from, Western societies. Indeed, it is typically Anglo-US, and the bulk of this work is North American – although it exerts its influence throughout the English-speaking world. Thus the West is not only a geographical region (with significant class and ‘race’ variations), but also a form of knowledge practice (Venn, 2000).

This point prompts a word on terminology. In this book I shift between formulations that try (inadequately) to grapple with this problem of the globalisation of specific, culturally privileged understandings. Thus, while I sometimes write of the West (meaning Europe and the US), I also sometimes refer to North–South relations which highlights the geographical distribution – across hemispheres of the world – of wealth, poverty and privilege (yet there are many political and economic ‘norths’ and ‘souths’ within the regional and political North and South). At other points I use the stark but I think rather telling descriptor of ‘richer versus poorer’, and sometimes ‘(over)developed versus developing’ – both sets of comparisons working to draw attention to their relational character (whereby the inferiorised or attributed immature status of ‘developing’ countries arises from the historical and current power wielded by ‘developed’ or more accurately – in terms of wealth and

overconsumption – ‘overdeveloped’ countries (Nandy, 1984). While there are problems with all these formulations, they do at least highlight a key set of issues that – contrary to the universalised claims of most developmental psychology – we cannot ignore. So although there are clearly problems of egocentrism in talking of ‘Western’ societies (which are, for example, east of the Americas, and north of Africa), I retain this usage as a reminder of the constitutive relationship between orientalism and occidentalism as well as, I hope, affording a direct connection between psychology and post-colonial theory (see also Burman, 1997b; Hook *et al.*, 2004; Hook, 2012; David, 2011; Mills, 2014; Siddiqui, 2016).

In the main, then, in this book I draw on culturally dominant Anglo-US sources, not because I wish to subscribe to the same assumptions, but rather because we need to analyse the structure of the dominant approach in order better to comment on its implications, especially in terms of its impact in formerly colonised countries whose psychological services (and perhaps psychologies) are moulded by that colonial legacy. The recent expansion of literatures critiquing the globalisation of childhood and highlighting local variation is very welcome (Hopkins and Sriprakash, 2016; Twum-Danso Imoh and Ame, 2012; Kroll and Meier, 2014; Quinn and Mageo, 2013; Wells, 2015; Wells *et al.*, 2014). However, there is a longstanding (but until recently relatively separate and philosophically different) Soviet tradition (Valsiner, 1988), and of course a Western European one. Later in the book I comment on the selective importing of Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s work and their subsequent insertion into existing practices. This offers a prime example of the cultural and philosophical tensions between different strands of developmental psychology.

This book focuses primarily on infancy and early childhood. Traditionally, developmental psychology has not only concerned itself with plotting the growth of individuals, but has also compartmentalised the human lifespan so that ‘development’ is usually portrayed as confined to early life, and psychological change during and after adulthood is limited to intellectual decline. In this, developmental psychology follows, and perhaps even informs, the earlier focus of UNICEF and other international child aid organisations on the early years of children’s lives. This has since been revised, with child rights and UNICEF now addressing the position of older children and young people. Moreover, the category of childhood has also expanded – especially in richer (over)developed societies – for significant reasons that will be touched on later. While ‘development’ may have now come to be seen as a ‘lifespan’ affair, this tends to magnify rather than resolve the problems of naturalising the lifespan in the name of extending the trajectory of developmental progress. Yet lifespan models – in emphasising the significance of cohort and generational effects – were methodologically important in demonstrating the inevitable cultural-historical influences on individual development (Baltes *et al.*, 1980; Sugarman, 1990; Berk, 2007) and allied to earlier critiques challenging the individualism of dominant psychology (associated with the dialectical psychology movement initiated by Klaus Riegel [1975, 1977, 1979]). In this book, I will be principally problematising developmental psychology’s study of the child as an isolated individual, rather than solely criticising the focus on childhood as a life stage. Nevertheless, the arguments elaborated in relation to childhood throughout this book also apply to the assumptions guiding the models of adulthood and ageing. These wider applications have been addressed by Lichtman (1987). Hence it could be even argued that lifespan psychology has played a role in deconstructing developmental psychology (B. Fozooni, personal communication).

Finally, this book highlights the nature of the normative assumptions guiding developmental theory and research, and assesses the role these play in informing understandings of ‘the child’ or ‘the parent–child relationship’ in relation to both the professional and non-professional social practices that developmental psychology informs.

Claims and disclaimers

While it may be tempting to treat this book as just a commentary on, rather than a contribution to, developmental psychology, I will end by reiterating my claim that it should also be considered as part of developmental psychology. *A deconstruction of developmental psychology is no less a part of developmental psychology for that.* These ideas should not be marginalised as ‘outside’ the discipline, for this would perpetuate the image of developmental psychologists as unreflexive, anti-theoretical empiricists. This book – now in its third edition – has been written from a long engagement with and deep commitment to the ethical, political, epistemological and methodological concerns that drive developmental psychology, as well as its impacts upon its users, as clients, practitioners or other kinds of subjects. I do not claim that we should dispense with development, nor surrender claims to development – on which many ethical demands for justice and self-determination rely. Rather we need to be vigilant about the range of intended and unintended effects mobilised by claims to development, to be mindful of whose development is being privileged and, correspondingly, whose is marginalised.

The reception of this book so far has indicated that it has been read as both a critique of developmental psychology (Palmary and Mahati, 2015) and as a renewal of it (see Miller and Scholnick, 2015; O’Dell, 2015; Athan and Reel, 2015); as engaged alongside other psychologies that offer challenging and different resources that undermine the hegemony of the Anglo-US forms that dominate globally (Crafter, 2015; Claiborne *et al.*, 2015), and as a challenge to the more and less subtle ways developmental psychological assumptions and discourses influence other professional practices (in psychotherapy for example, Avdi, 2015) and cultural practices (Gordo López *et al.*, 2015). It has been criticised for being too parochial in the locatedness of its particular examples, as originating from the global North (Claiborne, 2010) and yet this critical attention to its own locatedness has been hailed as being precisely one of its analytical strengths (Palmary and Mahati, 2015).

All these readings are possible and, arguably, necessary. They illustrate how, in a more formal sense, a deconstruction of developmental psychology destabilises the binary between what is inside and outside psychology (which itself owes much to the psychologisation of culture generally), and also between what is part of psychology or an alternative to it. The struggle remains to take forward the arguments that this book, drawing on a much larger body of theory and activism, addresses to psychology from inside as well as outside the discipline. Hence, in their analysis of child migrants to South Africa, Palmary and Mahati (2015) demonstrate the practical importance for children and families in displacing the traditional developmental psychological focus on the child to attend instead to cultural consequences of the context of emergence for its practice, in particular to prompt analysis of the exclusions and pathologisations so produced. Similarly, O’Dell *et al.* (in press) are taking this project forward to pose three sets of questions oriented around, first, deconstructing developmental ‘tasks’; second, locating development, and third, the limits of adulthood. These, in turn, give rise to more specific, empirical and analytical, investigations focused around the following questions: (1) How is normative adulthood assumed and naturalised? What are the ‘tasks’ of adulthood (such as becoming a parent or managing an ageing body)? How can these be opened up to critical scrutiny? (2) How is adulthood configured within particular geopolitical spaces? How is normative adulthood located within intersections of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, geopolitical location? (3) How do taken for granted assumptions about adulthood position some as unable to claim adult status? Who are seen to be ‘adult’ and what about ‘others’ who transgress normative adulthood?

Far from proscribing the possibilities of developmental psychology, then, my focus here is rather to highlight the limits of existing theories and practices. As Adlam *et al.* (1977) outlined in their landmark analysis, the question of the relations between individual and social change – which includes both that of the (pre)figuration of models of subjectivity, and of individual and social resistance to change – is far too vital to leave only in the hands of psychology. But it is *also* a psychological question. Parker (2007) has claimed that the proper domain of the psychological remains unclear, and I suggest that this is particularly true of the domain of developmental psychology. This remains a key political question. Yet there seem to be few arenas of enquiry and critique both inside and outside psychology that contemplate this question.

This call to deconstruct developmental psychology is part of that project. Commentaries on the practice of psychology have for too long been seen as the province of sociologists and historians. There is now increasing recognition that behind the mask of detached, disinterested objective research lie interpretative and subjective features that, as is the way of repressed material, exert their influences in forms of which we are not aware. Rather than condemning developmental psychology to serving and reproducing this unconscious agenda, this book invites a move towards awareness of the historical and current reasons for the particular ways developmental research has been structured. This should enable a more informed reevaluation of the possibilities and problems of developmental research.

The resources I have drawn upon in writing this book have been feminist and poststructuralist ideas (and in particular the feminist reworkings of poststructuralist ideas). While the portmanteau term ‘poststructuralism’ is not philosophically tenable – indeed it obscures significant differences between theoretical models, including some (at best) tensions if not incompatibilities – nevertheless such syntheses of Derridean deconstruction, Foucauldian genealogy, semiotics and Lacanian psychoanalysis have been fruitfully applied as tools of denaturalisation of current forms of order and ordering, in particular by feminists (Belsey, 2002; Weedon, 1987), and specifically in relation to psychology (Henriques *et al.*, 1984). Donna Haraway’s (1987, 1988) discussions of how the history of science has mirrored and perhaps prefigured forms of gendered and racialised colonisation, alongside that of the non-human have been particularly influential, and her comments on the status of such arguments are relevant here:

Not just anything can emerge as a fact; not just anything can be seen or done, and so told. Scientific practice may be considered a kind of story-telling practice – a rule-governed, constrained, historically changing craft of narrating the history of nature. To treat a science as a narrative is not to be dismissive, quite the contrary. (Haraway, 1989, 4–5)

Indeed, the project is to take these narratives very seriously indeed. Now other conceptual resources have emerged to take forward this critical project in diverse directions, including black feminist theory (Nayak, 2014), postcolonial theory (Mills, 2014; Siddiqui, 2016), psychoanalysis (Neill, 2011), queer theory (Tosh, 2014), child rights and student ‘voice’ (Davidge, 2016) and critical disability studies (Greenstein, 2015).

In both dimly perceived and consciously developed ways, the history of my own (multiple and contradictory) subject positionings within developmental psychological discourses has been instrumental in the elaboration of this account. I, as author, am necessarily as subject to the power of the discourses which developmental psychology produces and reproduces as the putative children and families I discuss in this book. I, like everyone else, cannot stand,

or rather speak, outside them. But together we can try to describe and analyse their consequences, and maybe by such reflections and interventions we can create new ways of doing developmental psychology.

To end with Foucault (1976) again: ‘Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are ... Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it’. (p.100)

Further reading

- Burman, E. (2008a) Dis/placing development, Chapter 1, in *Developments: Child, image, nation*, London: Routledge, pp. 27–46.
- Burman, E. (2015a) Developmental psychology, in I. Parker (ed.) *Handbook of critical psychology*, London: Routledge, pp. 70–84.
- Burman, E. (2015b) Limits of deconstruction, deconstructing limits, *Feminism & Psychology*, 25, 2: 408–22.
- Burman, E. (in press a) Towards a posthuman developmental psychology of child, families and communities, in M. Fleer and B. Van Oers (eds.) *International handbook on early childhood education and development*, New York: Springer.
- Burman, E. and MacLure, M. (2011) Deconstruction as a method of research: Stories from the field, in B. Somekh and C. Lewin (eds.) *Theory and methods in the social sciences*, 2nd. London: Sage, pp. 286–94.

1 Origins

How animals, humans, colonial and gender dynamics structure the study of childhood

Despite its popular appeal and assumed policy relevance, the status of developmental psychology is not clear. Some say that it is a perspective or an approach to investigating general psychological problems, rather than a particular domain or subdiscipline. According to this view we can address all major areas of psychology, such as attention, memory, cognition, emotions, etc., from this perspective. The unit of development under investigation is also variable. We could be concerned with the development of a process, or a mechanism, rather than an individual. This is in marked contrast with the popular representations of developmental psychology which equate it with the practicalities of child development or, more recently, human development (with the rather late recognition that development is a 'lifespan' affair, Baltes *et al.*, 1980; Berk, 2007).

These paradoxical, mixed conceptions of developmental psychology testify to different aspects of its history. This chapter will show how deeply the discipline of developmental psychology, and indeed psychology itself, has been structured by its history. For if we look at the origins of developmental psychology we begin to get a picture of (a) the social movements from which it arose; (b) the social movements in which it participated; (c) how these have set the terms of developmental enquiry that reverberate even now.

This chapter takes seriously calls to generate a 'critical social history of developmental psychology' (e.g. Bronfenbrenner *et al.*, 1986), to elaborate how modern developmental psychology arose in the late nineteenth century to answer particular questions that related to evolutionary theory and anthropology as well as philosophy. In so doing, developmental psychology participated in social movements explicitly concerned with the comparison, regulation and control of groups and societies, and is closely identified with the development of tools of mental measurement, classification of abilities and the establishment of norms. It is associated with the rise of capitalism and science, subscribing to a specific gendered, alienated and commodified model of scientific practice (Parker, 2007). All of these features are reflected in the terms of developmental research, including the reproduction of the division between rationality and emotion.

Child study

Ideas about children's nature and characteristics of course long pre-date modern psychology, and these were consistently concerned with how best 'to ensure that the person immanent in the child will become a responsible cultural heir and fulfil the necessary destiny envisioned for him by the family and the society' (Borstelmann, 1983: 35). That is, moral or political concerns have long been at play in the address to, and conceptions of the

‘future generation’ – whether in terms of property inheritance, national economic policy or planetary sustainability. The new psychology of the mid- to late- nineteenth century placed itself within and between various disciplines: natural history, anthropology, physiology and medicine. Most accounts take Charles Darwin as the author of the first child study with his ‘Biographical Sketch of an Infant’, which, though published in 1877, was based on notes made in 1840 (Riley, 1983; Rose, 1985; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989). Not surprisingly, Darwin’s interest was in the relative contribution of genetic endowment and environmental experience – identifying the characteristics that differentiate humans (and human children) from animals, placing great weight on human ingenuity and creativity, especially as exhibited in language. Yet this complex interiority accorded to children, installing the romantic aura of spontaneity and loss – loss of history, while the embodiment of history occurred alongside and precisely by virtue of the evolutionary psychology that positioned the child as pre-human.

Darwin’s ‘sketch’ was one among many early observational, diary studies of young children. Indeed, the child study movement was a mid-nineteenth-century phenomenon flourishing across Europe. As Sally Shuttleworth (2013) discusses, many others had been conducted earlier, including by women, but these have been eclipsed from the history of developmental psychology, while Darwin himself hesitated to publish it as he was worried about appearing concerned with a feminised and unscientific topic. Yet, in retrospect, both Darwin’s study and the importance it has been accorded can be taken as prototypical of the form developmental enquiry was to take. The infant is depicted as a biological organism abstracted from its familial and material environment. By virtue of being very young, and having had less opportunity to learn, the infant is seen as close to nature, devoid of the trappings of adult training and (Western) ‘civilisation’. In contradictory ways, romantic and scientific models combined to locate within the child both *more* knowledge (‘the child is father to the man’) and (by virtue of the child’s lesser and different understanding) the *route* to knowledge (see also Taylor, 2013). In this, the emerging developmental psychology naturalised the romantic idea of children as innocent bearers of wisdom by producing them as objects and subjects of study.

As Shuttleworth (2013) highlights in her comprehensive analysis, there was a crucial interplay between literary, popular and political, and emerging scientific discussions of childhood. She documents not only parallel preoccupations but also significant mutual influences between literary and scientific (psychiatric and psychological) treatments. This mutual influence relativises (in the sense of both identifying the relatedness, but also destabilising the truth claims) of each. Indeed, Shuttleworth claims that ‘Literature initially led the way’ (p. 359), so rendering the scientific status of models of childhood open to question as being far from independent of culture and period. These ‘intricate patterns of exchange’ (Shuttleworth, 2013: 359) between scientific and literature authors were very direct. Victorian novelists (George Eliott, Henry James, Charles Dickens) and the new psychiatrists and psychologists (James Sully, G. H. Lewes) who were formulating empirical accounts about children were in close contact with other, exchanged ideas, and influenced each other – in some very direct ways. For example, Lewes and Elliot were long-standing lovers, Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Darwin were cousins. This, perhaps surprisingly dense, matrix of relationships did little to clarify the status of the object of study (whether literary or scientific): ‘At the very point in time when childhood became of such intense interest to psychology, however, it seems, paradoxically to disappear’ (Shuttleworth, 2013, p. 355).

Moreover, the perspective underlying this project partakes of the theory of ‘cultural recapitulation’, that is, that the individual in her or his lifetime reproduces the patterns and

stages of development exhibited by the development of the species – ‘ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny’. The study of infants in the mid-nineteenth century, along with that of ‘primitives’ and of natural history, was motivated by the quest to discover the origins and specificities of mind – that is, the human adult mind. Yet, significantly, this study – in its attributions and attempts to fathom the intricate complexity of the newly discovered child mental life – was only focused on elaborating a subjectivity accorded the middle-class child.

Of humans and animals

Tracing the history of the relations between child and animal saving (whose institutional forms in Britain saw the former occurring after the latter), Monica Flegel comments:

[A]lthough the representational linkage of children with animals could be employed to highlight the helplessness and defenselessness of both, it also served to register anxiety about the perceived depravity of the children of the poor. Precisely because the ‘child of nature’ could be both helpless and dangerous, both guileless and ‘savage’, and both dependent and independent, it could be used to register complex and often contradictory reactions to childhood and endangered childhood. (Flegel, 2009: 43)

Indeed, this enterprise was related to similar ventures in anthropology and animal observation that were closely allied with European (and particularly British) imperialism, maintaining the hierarchy of racial superiority that justified colonial rule, or what Foucault (1976) called the ‘perversion-heredity-degenerescence system’ (p.119). The child of that time was equated with the ‘savage’ or ‘undeveloped’; since both were seen as intellectually immature, ‘primitives’ and, as Shuttleworth (2013) details, children were studied to illuminate necessary stages for subsequent development. As James Sully wrote in his 1881 article ‘Babies and science’:

The modern psychologist, sharing in the spirit of positive science, feels that he must, being at the beginning, study mind in its simplest forms. ... [H]e carries his eye far afield to the phenomena of savage life, with its simple ideas, crude sentiments and naive habits. Again he devotes special attention to the mental life of lower animals, seeking in its phenomena the dim foreshadowing of our own perceptions, emotions, etc. Finally, he directs his attention to the mental life of infancy, as fitted to throw most light on the later developments of the human mind.

(Sully, 1881, quoted in Riley, 1983: 47)

In addition, the apparently bizarre beliefs and behaviours of both ‘primitives’ and children were seen as relevant to the understanding of neurotic and pathological behaviour. As well as recapitulationism, Lamarckism (the belief in the heritability of acquired characteristics) underlay the new developmental psychology. Here it was the experience, rather than innate predispositions, that was seen as reproduced in childhood and in dreams. A set of equivalences was elaborated whereby the conception of the child was related to the ‘savage’, who, in turn, was seen as akin to the neurotic. Comparison between child, prehistoric ‘man’ [sic] and ‘savage’ presupposed a conception of development, of individual and of evolutionary progress, as unilinear, directed steps up an ordered hierarchy.

This confirmed the intellectual superiority of the Western male, while the non-Western (male or female) could be figured as less important than his or her evolutionary predecessor.

Shuttleworth (2013) discusses the vogue for studying monkeys popularised by Frank Buckland and also George Romanes (who has been seen as Darwin's successor). (She also points out the long historical association between children and monkeys in Western Europe that predates evolutionary theory, dating back to the sixteenth century.) An indicative example was an 1894 edition of the magazine *Pall Mall* with a photograph of the English explorer Richard Garner in Africa, entitled 'A stroll with Aaron and my slave boy' where Aaron is the named primate being studied. As she notes, '... the native is here quietly disregarded in order to celebrate the bond of man and monkey' (p. 260). So while, according to recapitulationist theory, the child was being figured as repeating evolutionary process in its own developmental trajectory (ontogeny repeats phylogeny), in terms of interest and status a monkey companion appeared to trump a 'native' human.

In the colonial centre of Victorian Britain, classed assumptions were also racialised and subject to species interpretations. Flegel (1989) hints at how assumptions about appropriate family relations may even have entered into the increasing tensions and separation between the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and its supportive predecessor the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), as indicated by the view expressed in 'The Child's Guardian' (a NSPCC publication) in 1887 that, 'The choice of these parents to care for animals before their children is a sign of their savagery, of their failure to respect and protect the sanctified space of the home' (quoted in Flegel, 2009: 63).

Flegel traces the connections and eventual institutional divergence of these two key organisations and associated social causes. Perhaps precisely because both the animal and child had been portrayed as mute innocents and so defenceless against cruelty, they eventually came to be represented as competing with each other for the claim on Victorian compassion. Hence, 'Although animals and children began the century as companions, they ended it as adversaries' (Flegel, 2009: 72). In so doing, as we shall see, not only was the child worthy of salvation separated from the animal, but also from their family.

Scientific progress

In such ways the project of individual (child) development became tied to a wider model of social and economic development that was being violently imposed (via colonial invasion and occupation) as well as intellectually formulated. This model in turn reinscribed the gendered and racialised privilege of the cultural masculinity of the West as the normalised model of the nation state (Walkerdine, 1993). 'Progress' is a key term that ties individual, social and national development together, as post- and anti-developmental critics of international economic development have noted (Sachs, 1992; Mehmet, 1995; Rahnema with Bawtree, 1997).

The specifically Darwinian notion of natural selection, however, emphasises variability rather than uniformity. While Darwin's subscription to recapitulationism and Lamarckism was equivocal and implicit (Morss, 1990: 14–6), these were the features taken up to structure the emergent developmental psychology. It should be noted that these views were widely held and that, among others, both Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget subscribed to them in their writings.

While Darwin's study can in many ways be taken as prototypical (in various senses) of several others conducted by researchers such as Taine, Preyer and G. S. Hall in the 1880s (Cairns, 1983; Riley, 1983), John Morss (1990) argues that the effect of Darwin's work within the emerging developmental psychology was, paradoxically, to reinforce pre-Darwinian versions of biology, focusing on heritability rather than variation. Child study 'societies'

soon flourished across Europe and the USA, observing children, weighing and measuring them, documenting their interests, states, activities. This development reflected the increasing importance of science – and a particular model of science at that – not only as a set of procedures for conducting research, but as a set of practices associated with the modern (quasi)secular state.

The gendered division of labour and the scientific gaze

The child study movement ‘observed’ children. Guidelines on how to go about this emphasised the importance of being objective. In doing this, a split or opposition was created in the process of knowledge construction – a gendered division. This also reflected the inferior position accorded women within models of competence and maturity – as closer to children and ‘primitives’. Fathers were seen as having the necessary detachment and rationality to engage in scientific endeavour and mothers as too sentimental to participate. In his article (which was partly satirical – both of the practice of studying babies and of the current interest it was inspiring), Sully (1881) commented on the new phenomenon of the ‘psychological papa’:

Men who previously never thought of meddling with the affairs of the nursery have been impelled to make periodic visits thither in the hope of eliciting important psychological facts. ... [T]he tiny occupant of the cradle has had to bear the piercing glance of the scientific eye. The psychological papa has acquired a new proprietary right in his offspring; he has appropriated it as a biological specimen. This new zeal for scientific knowledge has taken possession of a number of my acquaintances.

(Sully, 1881, quoted in Riley, 1983: 48–9)

Various commentators have noted how the emergence of child psychology coincided with industrialisation (Foucault, 1973, 1976, 2008; Kessen, 1979). This brought about the separation between home and work, in turn engendering domestic labour as ‘women’s work’ in the process of also consolidating the separation of women’s and men’s roles. Hence, in terms of the early child study movement, as a ‘scientific’ enterprise, women were excluded because they were declared constitutionally incapable of regarding their children with the requisite objectivity. The mother’s approach to infants:

[U]nfits her from entering very cordially into the scientific vein. She rather dislikes their being made objects of cold intellectual scrutiny and unfeeling psychological analysis. ... To suggest a series of experiments on the gustatory sensibility of a small creature aged from twelve to twenty four hours is likely to prove a shock, even to the more strong-minded of mothers.

(Sully, 1881, quoted in Riley, 1983: 48–9)

Even if she does want to participate, her efforts are to be treated as suspect and as more of a handicap than anything else:

If the mother gets herself in time infected with the scientific ardour of the father, she may prove rather more of an auxiliary than he desires. Her maternal instincts impel her to regard her particular child as phenomenal in an extra-scientific sense. She ... is predisposed to ascribe to her child a preternatural degree of intelligence.

(Sully, 1881, quoted in Riley, 1983: 48–9)

Little had changed 50 years later, as early introductory psychology textbooks indicated:

Many experimental psychologists continue to look upon the field of child psychology as a proper field of research for women and for men whose experimental masculinity is not of the maximum. This attitude of patronage is based almost entirely upon a blissful ignorance of what is going on in the tremendously virile field of child behavior. (Murchison, 1933: x)

The equation between science and masculinity was so strong, and research practice so ‘virile’, as to be able to counter the supposedly feminising tendencies that proximity to children produces. Shuttleworth documents the struggle between men and women for control over this knowledge, expressed also in the rash of periodicals on parenting and childhood that emerged in the late nineteenth century, that she compares with the struggles happening at that time also between doctors and midwives.

To summarise so far, there are five ways in which the child study movement of the late nineteenth century prefigured the terms of developmental enquiry. First, it set out to investigate the mind, conceived of as singular, separate but universal. Second, the mind was seen as instantiated within the study of the development of the minds of children. Third, it researched knowledge, viewed as a natural and biological capacity – that is, subscribing to an assumption that there is a normal core of development unfolding according to biological principles, principles secured through comparison and discussion of the link between children and animals. Fourth, it participated in the newly emerging state practices of education, welfare and medicine. Fifth, it institutionalised the ancient split between emotion and rationality, played out in the gendered practice of scientific research.

However, while the early child studies clearly privileged biological and universal questions concerned with the development of species, race and mind, there was still room to look at children’s emotional proclivities and personalities. But by the 1930s clear lines of demarcation were being drawn between the elaboration of developmental norms for diagnostic use (seen as the domain of general psychology and medicine) and psychoanalysis (seen as the arena of the particular personality traits and specific idiosyncratic processes). The contrary and complementary relation between psychology and psychoanalysis came to reflect the split between the rational, conscious, uniform, individual subject of modern psychology, and the emotional, unconscious, contradictory, fragmented mental states associated with psychoanalysis (Urwin, 1986).

The rise of psychology to meet the demands of prevailing social anxieties

The late nineteenth century was a time of social upheaval and unrest all over the world, with revolutions brewing across Europe and anti-colonial revolts throughout the world. In England, for example, increasing urbanisation brought about by rapid industrialisation produced the appalling conditions of the Victorian slums, while the poor health of army recruits for colonial wars made the physical state of the general population a matter of widespread concern. Here we see how the colonialist imaginary connecting children, women and ‘primitives’ meets the regulation of the working classes at ‘home’:

Fears for the military prowess of the imperial army were exacerbated by the Anglo-Boer War, with the attendant discovery of the puny physiques, bad teeth and general ill-health of the working class recruits. Motherhood became rationalized by the weighing

and measuring of babies, the regimentation of domestic schedules and the bureaucratic administration of domestic education. Special opprobrium fell on 'nonproductive' women (prostitutes, unmarried mothers, spinsters) and on 'non-productive' men (gays, the unemployed, the impoverished). In the eyes of policymakers and administrators, the bounds of empire could be secured and upheld only by proper domestic discipline and decorum, sexual probity and moral sanitation.

(McClintock, 1995: 47)

Politicians and the emerging social scientists focused their attention on the 'quality' of the population, in particular on those sectors of society considered unstable and unruly. The concern with the quality of the 'stock' and with the moulding, and ameliorating, effects of environmental conditions was reflected in the 'nature–nurture' couplet which was invented by Francis Galton in 1875, and which has since become the widely adopted formulation through which to pose questions about the origins of knowledge and learning in psychology. This early focus on change is somewhat ironic when it is recalled that 'nature–nurture' originated as a way of describing the *immutability* of human behaviour.

It has been widely documented (Meyer, 1983; Walkerdine, 1984; Hendrick, 2003; Rose, 1990) that the establishment of compulsory elementary schooling in the 1880s in England (and around the same time in France) reflected popular anxieties about 'pauperism' (seen as a trait rather than a set of circumstances) and crime. Popular education was seen as rectifying these tendencies by inculcating good habits, or at least keeping potentially disorderly groups busy and under scrutiny. Reading of the Bible was considered especially important, as well as learning skills suited to one's gender and station in life (Hunt, 1985).

It is important to note here that such conceptions were not uncontested, or rather the criminalisation of the practices of the poor itself speaks to a particular set of transformations in the creation of a waged labour economy. In his meticulous documentary analysis of the trials of the London poor, Linebaugh (2003) shows how from the eighteenth century onwards the customary practice of workers being allowed to take home waste materials (whether the 'chippings' from ship-making or the tobacco and sugar from the lucrative spoils of early colonialism) was gradually outlawed. By such means workers were forcibly deprived of considerable sources of extra 'in kind' resources, on which their economic status had depended. These matters became warrants for hangings and, later, transportations to the 'new world', while the forced erosion of this custom of privilege and 'perquisite' was central to the creation of an urban 'working class' whose labour would power the Industrial revolution.

The notion of 'degeneracy' that now attached to the further impoverished poor elided mental and moral qualities to the extent that the object of political anxiety and scientific intervention became the 'feeble-minded', who came to signify physical, moral, mental and political disintegration. In terms of the increasing currency of social Darwinist ideas (applying notions of 'survival of the fittest' to human societies), the fact that poorer sections of the population were reproducing at a faster rate than the educated middle classes provoked fears of contamination and upheaval equivalent to those of colonial occupiers seeking to maintain their rule. A state-of-the-art *Handbook of Child Development* (Pintner, 1933) still devoted a chapter to 'The feeble-minded child' in which there is a discussion of relation between feeble-mindedness and the then emerging discourse of delinquency. It ends with the following:

Since feeble-mindedness is not a disease that we can hope to cure, what methods are to be adopted to lessen the enormous burden that feeble-mindedness places on the community?

The only procedures seem to be training, segregation and sterilization. Training all the feeble-minded as much as possible to reduce their liability to the community. The segregation of as many of them as possible is wise in order to diminish the chances of feeble-minded offspring. The segregation of feeble-minded women of child-bearing age is particularly necessary. ... Perhaps the percentage is increasing in view of the very noticeable modern trend among the more intelligent families to limit the number of offspring, with little corresponding limitation among the less intelligent families.

(Pintner, 1933: 837)

Arguably, versions of such sentiments are still at play today. Along with the alignment of 'intelligence' and class position, we can see where many current social preoccupations around poverty, disability and diversity as 'burdens' to the state come from, not only in relation to the eugenic policies whose apotheosis in Nazi occupied Europe led to the genocide of Jews, Roma people, gay men and lesbians, and other classes of people considered mentally or morally deficient (as well as the mass murder of communists and other political dissidents), but even now in discussions of the rights of learning disabled people to have children, and of course national and international policies on population management and control.

Controlling and regulating those social elements considered potentially incompetent or unruly presupposed the means to monitor them. Nikolas Rose (1985) discusses how 'individual psychology' emerged to fulfil this role of classification and surveillance. The psychological individual was a highly specified and studied entity whose mental qualities and development were understood by virtue of comparison with the general population. So knowledge of the individual and the general went hand in hand: each required the other, and each was defined in terms of the other. The division of the mad from the sane, the criminal from the lawful and educable from the ineducable, shifted from moral-political criteria to the equally judgemental, but scientific, evaluation of mental testing.

Catching them young: mental testing and the production of the normal child

The psychology of the individual, then, was the forerunner of the arenas now known as personality and developmental psychology, and depended heavily on testing for both its knowledge base and functioning – though psychology did not achieve its monopoly on testing without a struggle (Rose, 1985). Individual psychology in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western Europe reflected and translated the social preoccupations with population quality and mental abilities into policy recommendations, prescriptions on infant and child management, and education. As Donna Haraway (1989: 236–237) notes: 'Comparative psychologists have been extraordinarily creative in devising testing situations and technology: the testing industry is central to the production of social order in liberal societies, where the prescriptions of scientific management must be reconciled with ideologies of democracy'. But the technology of testing both requires and relies on the very institutions that permit its administration. Hence 'individual psychology' became central to the existence of the mental hospital, the prison, the school and the child guidance clinic. The emergence of both the individual and the child as objects of social and scientific gaze was therefore simultaneous.

Developmental psychology was made possible by the clinic and the nursery school. Such institutions had a vital role, for they enabled the observation of numbers of children of

the same age, and of children of a number of different ages, by skilled psychological experts under controlled experimental, almost laboratory, conditions. They thus simultaneously allowed for standardisation and normalisation – the collection of comparable information on a large number of subjects and its analysis in such a way as to construct norms. A developmental norm was a standard based upon the average abilities or performances of children of a certain age in a particular task or a specified activity. It thus not only presented a picture of what was *normal* for children of such an age, but also enabled the normality of any child to be assessed by comparison with this norm.

(Rose, 1990: 142)

By virtue of producing the unit of enquiry, the standardisation process set up a reciprocal dependence between the normal and abnormal: it is the normalisation of development that makes abnormality possible; and vice versa – in the sense that the special education system has always deeply structured, rather than merely supplemented, the mainstream schooling system (Ford, 1982). So, despite the current image of ‘special’ schools as some extra or distant facility drawn upon in exceptional circumstances, they are what make mainstream schools ‘mainstream’: that is, the latter function as ‘normal’ schools precisely because they are bounded by institutions for those designated as ‘abnormal’. In 1956 a book appeared by an erstwhile president of the British Psychological Society, C. W. Valentine, entitled *The Normal Child and Some of his Abnormalities*, which went through 11 reprints up to 1974. As the editorial foreword by Professor C. A. Mace puts it, the book sets out to answer a question of great concern to parents and teachers today: ‘*Is this child “normal” or shall I take him to the clinic?*’ (Mace, in Valentine 1956: 9). Hence ‘the clinic’ becomes the arbiter of ‘normal’ development through its position as the domain of its converse, ‘the abnormal’.

Moreover, this process of normalisation prompted a naturalisation of development, overdetermined by two related factors. The new psychology’s claims to be a science of the mental sought to emulate medicine’s status as a science of the body. This emulation was expressed within the confounding of the notions of medical with mental through the hybrid notion of mental hygiene. This endowed a scientific legitimisation upon practices of social regulation, social division and (supposed) reform.

Kindergarten cops: the naturalisation and regulation of development

There were two key ways in which development was naturalised: the creation of the notion of ‘mental life’, and the medicalisation of mental life, via the subsuming of the mental to the physical. First, the notion of mental age underlying IQ tests, considered as analogous to chronological age, assumed that ability could be distributed (at quantifiable and equal intervals) on a quasi-physical scale. The work of North American psychologist Arnold Gesell was highly influential in drawing up the norms and ‘milestones’ that underlie developmental health checks, and in promoting a maturational view of development as a process of natural unfolding whereby development is equated with growth. The blurb to the fourth (1971) edition of *The First Five Years of Life* (Gesell, 1950) claims that it contributes ‘more than any other book to the foundations of systematic developmental psychology’. While (in contrast to more behaviourally oriented positivist researchers) he favoured ‘naturalistic’, clinical interviews over psychometric tests, Gesell presented descriptions (or what he called ‘characterisations’) of development as absolutely age graded. Years and months dictated capacities and achievements. The following example, while meant to ring a lighter note, highlights more general themes. The abstraction of developmental time is associated with that of exchange,

such that developmental maturation is linked to the return on a financial investment. Child development parallels capitalism: 'Three is a delightful age. Infancy superannuates at Two and gives way to a higher estate' (Gesell, 1950: 40).

Second, the production of the individual mirrors the incorporation of the mental within the medical: the natural has to be closely scrutinised to prevent it lapsing into the pathological. The presumed equivalences between mental and physical development systematised the scrutiny of children, extending beyond the measurement of apparent to hypothetical qualities, and beyond the child to the family in ways that are now central to welfare policies. Note how the emphasis on care subsumes the mental within the physical and reinforces the role of the expert as empowered to make family interventions in this extract from the aptly (but unironically) titled *Handbook of Child Surveillance*:

Child health surveillance is a programme of care initiated and provided by professionals, with the aim of preventing illness and promoting good health and development. ... [A]lthough we have described some of the methods of early detection in detail, we have also stressed the importance of primary prevention and of working with parents as the most effective means of helping children.

(Hall *et al.*, 1990: x)

The normal child, the ideal type, distilled from the comparative scores of age-graded populations, is therefore a fiction or myth. No individual or real child lies at its basis. It is an abstraction, a fantasy, a fiction, a production of the testing apparatus that incorporates, that constructs the child, by virtue of its gaze. This production, rather than description, of the child arose from the technologies of photography by which hundreds of children doing the same tasks could be juxtaposed, compared and synthesised into a single scale of measurement, from one-way mirrors through which children could be observed, and of psychometric tests. The production and regulation of children extended beyond testing environments to the settings by which children were cared for and instructed. Gesell (1950) provides plans of the prototypical nursery school, the complex design of which is structured around a hidden child observation room (see also Roberts 2016 for an analysis applied to the 'discovery' of adolescence). All child behaviour is available to be documented, to become normalised into child development, and child development came to inform the mundane minutiae of childcare.

Not all children were the objects of such fascination though. Early photographic records of colonial travellers in Africa are virtually devoid of children (contrasting with the contemporary saturation of images of African children within Western media). Indeed, Beinart (1992/2013: 225) notes that 'many Europeans regarded children as a less interesting species of local fauna ... photographs of pets and dead "game" greatly outnumber those of children'. This was perhaps indicative of the general infantilisation of Africans within the colonial imagination (as 'less developed' than Westerners), as indicated also by the demeaning address to African men as 'boys'. Beinart's study of nineteenth and early twentieth-century photographs of mothers and children taken by European colonialists to Africa documents equivalent regimes to 'improve' and regulate through maternal education and, especially, intervention:

The notion of saving the sick African child through health interventions appears as an extension of educational programmes of transformation. Acceptance of Western medicine for the child, according to this reading of the images, places on the child's kin an obligation to acknowledge the dominance of Western scientific thought.

(Beinart, 1992/2013: 237)

While Beinart reminds us that such photographic records reflect colonialist desires (rather than actual effects), nevertheless they do illustrate the increasingly political role accorded children as “go-betweens”, whose image grew in importance in the colonial lens as the need to establish a dialogue increased in the face of the growing movement for self-determination in the colonies’ (Beinart, 1992/2013: 237). Stoler’s (2002) analysis of the colonial archive of the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) illustrates both pictorially and conceptually how the colonial authority saw the intimacy and everyday features of children’s daily lives as vital to scrutinise and monitor in order to maintain control. This extended even to minute specification of the level of permissible physical contact the ‘native’ women nannies and even wet nurses could have with the babies and children in their care. This scrutiny and responsibility, as Newberry (2010) notes, continues to this day – so linking the post-colonial state with themes from its colonial past. For, as Urwin and Sharland (1992) also argue, based on their analysis of the British child guidance movement of the 1920s to 1930s, the organisation and arrangement of the body was taken as the route to the regulation of the mind.

Jagged edge? Conflicts and continuities

Let us reflect for a moment on what this attention to historical and cultural political specificity of the contexts in which developmental psychology emerged might mean. In drawing out these connections, no causal determination can be attributed to the psychological study of children, but rather this is simultaneously both a reflection of the wider preoccupations and an instance of strategies developed to further them. As Valerie Walkerdine puts it, political motivations cannot be said to have:

caused in any simple sense certain developments in the science of the individual. Rather each should be taken as mutually implicated, making and remaking the other possible, intertwining to produce a discursive and political nexus. The rational, the savage, the animal, the human, the degenerate, the normal, all become features of the modern scientific normalization and regulation of children.

(Walkerdine, 1984: 173)

Moreover, highlighting the continuities between past and present forms of developmental psychology should not lead us to underestimate shifts and conflicts between them. The child study movement, based on the accumulated observations of individual children and inspired by evolutionary ideas, focused initially on questions of heredity. But soon afterwards its attention was devoted to the role of education in alleviating or compensating for the deficiencies of heredity (Riley, 1983). Cyril Burt is now infamous for the falsification of his twin studies (Hearnshaw, 1980; Rose *et al.*, 1984), but was responsible in large part for creating the profession of psychology in Britain. (Later, the British Psychological Society, which condemned Burt, was under pressure, against the background of a revival of streaming and testing in British schools, to rehabilitate him.) While adhering to a notion of a fixed, quantifiable and heritable cognitive capacity, he also subscribed to a staunch environmentalism by which hereditary dispositions could be mitigated. Philanthropic and innatist perspectives can coincide with as well as contradict each other.

With the impact of behaviourist ideas from the 1910s onwards, environmental – meaning school as well as family – influences became the main focus of developmental psychological accounts. Child training accompanied improvements in sanitation and social reform. Education (of the child and the parents) gradually superseded segregation as a strategy of

demographic management – though, as the above examples indicate, it was nonetheless regulatory. If anything, a strategy of education rather than segregation required a commitment to greater intervention and control. It should nevertheless be recalled that many of the founding fathers of statistics, and of individual psychology, such as Galton and Pearson, were in the forefront of the eugenics movement in Britain. Rose (1985) discusses in detail why and how the more ‘enlightened’ ideas of the reformers prevailed over those of the eugenicists even before those ideas were further discredited by their application in Nazi Germany, and Ulfried Grutier (1987) documents the flourishing of psychology in Nazi Germany. The point is that modern psychology came of age with the political utility of mental testing. As Lewis Terman, himself responsible for the development and popularisation of one of the foremost standardised tests, asserted in 1920:

It is the method of tests that has brought psychology down from the clouds ... that has transformed the ‘science of trivialities’ into the science of human engineering. The psychologist in the pre-test era was, to the average layman, just a harmless crank, but now that psychology has tested and classified nearly two million soldiers, has been appealed to in the grading of nearly two million children, is used everywhere in our institutions for the feeble-minded, delinquent, criminal and insane, has become the beacon light of the eugenics movement, is appealed to by congressmen in the shaping of national policy on immigration ... no psychologist of today can complain that his science is not taken seriously enough.

(Terman, quoted in Olsson, 1991: 191)

While hailed by some as the forum in which to resolve age-old philosophical questions about what knowledge is innate and what acquired, the emergence of modern developmental psychology was also prompted by other more pragmatic concerns to classify, measure and regulate, in particular, those populations deemed a social threat to the prevailing order. Hence the division between theory and its application becomes unimportant, since the social need for the technology and data provided by individual psychology constituted the condition and rationale for its existence (Ingleby, 1985). This continues with the drive towards increasingly biological explanations for societal problems, as indicated by Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) in the child development text entitled *From Neurons to Neighborhoods* – itself an interesting title for eclipsing the focus on children’s mental life that is its topic. Increasingly national and international policies propose early intervention policies and programmes as the answer to resource limitations. As we shall see in Chapter 2, these return the responsibility for the conditions and efficacy of development back to precisely those least supported to deal with this. Yet this infusion of scientific enterprise with social-political agendas is not, of course, specific to psychology nor to the development of testing. Richards (1997) concludes from his detailed assessment of psychology’s relationship with scientific racism as follows:

Psychology may be better seen reflexively as an arena in which the cultural ‘racial’ pre-occupations of Europe and North America have been articulated and played out. There are many such arenas, from the street to the theatre, the school to the concentration camp. What is different about Psychology is that it has, until very recently, seen itself as the site where such issues can be submitted to truly scientific, objective, scrutiny and research. The articulation and playing out of cultural concerns in Psychology thus acquired a rather refined character precisely because it was supposed to be something

else – dispassionate objective science. Ironically this rendered the underlying anatomy of the issues peculiarly visible.

(Richards, 1997: 309)

Discussing World Bank policies, Helen Penn (2012) notes how early intervention programmes, in their claims to generate both ‘economic returns and better brains’ (p.81) recall resonances with colonial rule that are not, she argues, merely coincidental:

The problems are always those of the recipient and never those of the colonizer. Whatever their claims to do otherwise, like the colonizers before them, the World Bank acts to suppress local views and understandings of childhood in its own narrow economic interests. (p. 90)

Alongside the question of who is perceived to have problems and who the answers, is the question of which kind of childhood is recognised and recommended – in which methodological issues come to the fore as well as political assumptions. Miriam Tag (2012) analyses the assumptions underlying policies of social investment, including human capital theory and developmental psychology linked with brain research, showing how they fall foul of a key logical error of abstraction that underlies universalisation and that thereby also suppresses local specificities or renders these into mere variation. In turn, she suggests, this renders the development of local, context-specific, indicators more difficult. Not only does this presume comparison is possible according to these measures, it also assesses state ‘progress’ on achieving these goals. Hence quantification becomes a key universalising mechanism, which also presumes that the international goals are universally meaningful.

Science, as the tool of reason and progress fostered and harnessed by the modern state, put into practice enlightenment philosophies of protection and care of citizens, the realisation of which presupposed greater monitoring and control. Even the authors of the early child studies were quick to move from observation to advice, from empirical ‘fact’ to social application. As Kessen (1979), in his now classic article ‘The American Child and other Cultural Inventions’, pointed out:

Tolstoy said that there is no proletarian literature; there has been no proletarian child psychology either, and the ethically imperative forms of child psychology, our messages to practice, have ranged from pleas for the equitable treatment of all children to recipes for forced assimilation to the expected forms of child behavior. Once a descriptive norm has been established, it is an antique cultural principle to urge adherence to it.

(Kessen, 1979: 818)

What is perhaps different about standardised testing is that the moral evaluation which underlies the description is rendered invisible and incontrovertible through the apparent impartiality of statistical norms. Their administration, through the power of the institutions, enforces statistical description as moral-political prescription. As Tag (2012) comments:

In particular, the quantification and numerical representation of indicators is strongly related to their claim for universal meaning (Heintz, 2007 and 2008). The development of international indicators is based on the assumption that childhoods worldwide are comparable – and comparable in relation to the standards set by the indicators.

(Tag, 2012, p.48)