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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The challenges of 'Children's Geographies': a reaffirmation

John Horton, Peter Kraftl & Faith Tucker

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I. Introduction

The majority of papers published in this edition of Children's Geographies were first presented at the New Directions in Children's Geographies conference held at The University of Northampton, UK, on 7–8 September 2006.1 At this event, more than 40 research papers were presented by authors from a dozen different countries, and from diverse backgrounds and career stages. Their work addressed manifold aspects of children and young people's everyday geographies in diverse socio-historical contexts. The aim of this edition of Children's Geographies is to provide a snapshot of this diversity. We have sought to compile a selection of papers which – ranging across multiple methodological approaches, conceptual preferences, inherent politics and

conference and, as such, of the contemporary subdiscipline of ‘Children's Geographies’ at large.[2]

By way of an introduction to the following collection of papers, we present three kinds of reflection. First, we consider a handful of critical contemporary responses to the New Directions in Children's Geographies conference. Figuring the conference as a microcosm of, and/or metaphor for, the subdiscipline of ‘Children's Geographies’ itself, we propound these critiques as challenging to (our) subdisciplinary habits, concerns and ways of working more broadly. In particular, we suggest that they require ‘Children's Geographers’ to articulate the challenge of ‘Children's Geographies’; that is, they should prompt us to ask, in what ways should extant work by ‘Children's Geographers’ be conceived as fundamentally challenging to broader contemporary currents and domains of research and enquiry, such as Human Geography and the New Social Studies of Childhood? Second, we develop one set of answers to this latter question, refracting the diverse themes aired at the New Directions in Children's Geographies conference. We list a succession of ways in which the work of ‘Children's Geographers’ ought to ‘talk back’, more frequently and forcefully, to broader domains of theory and practice, and specifically mainstream academic Geography. Third, turning to the edition of the journal in hand, we introduce the papers that follow, and the specific ways in which they implicitly or explicitly extend a number of the challenges detailed in the preceding section.

II. New directions or ‘same old stuff’?

> You see all these conferences, like New Directions in Children's Geographies, … but really it's the same old stuff. (Valentine 2006)[3]
>
> I've been to a few CGs conferences recently – I think I'll save my [conference expenses allowance] for something more challenging. (personal communication, 1/8/06)
>
> Thx for invite but I not planning to do any work about children so I not sure how it will be relevant [sic]. (personal communication, 10/7/06)

As co-organisers of the New Directions in Children's Geographies conference, we reflect

event seemed like a success, in all sorts of ways. Formal and informal feedback from conference attendees was universally positive and congratulatory; our notes from the event are full of new ideas and inspirations forged in relation to the many interesting papers presented and discussions had. Moreover, like dedicated ‘Children's Geographies’ conferences before and since, the conference simply felt good: fostering a culture of relaxed, supportive, engaged discussion; bringing together a subdisciplinary network of familiar faces, research endeavours, intellectual subject positions and friendships.

In these latter respects, the conference can be considered a part of, and/or metaphor for, the subdisciplinary praxis of ‘Children's Geographies’ itself. This being the case, we present the preceding, somewhat critical responses to the New Directions in Children's Geographies conference to disallow (our) subdisciplinary self-aggrandisement and puncture (our) subdisciplinary satisfaction. For we suggest the claims contained therein fundamentally challenge the subdisciplinary habits, concerns and ways of working of ‘CGs’ itself. The ‘same old stuff’ criticism, alone, prompts some troubling, spiralling (self-)reflections …

- Is ‘Children's Geographies’ really composed of recyclings of the ‘same old stuff’? Is the subdiscipline really characterised by a lack of innovation? If so, what, ultimately, are the bases and causes of this lack of innovation?
- Does the ‘same old stuff’ of ‘Children's Geographies’ consist of the ‘same old’ familiar people, rehearsing the ‘same old’ concerns, habits and discussions? In short, is the subdisciplinary milieu of ‘Children's Geographies’ becoming overly familiar, to the point where it can feel ‘unchallenging’ even (perhaps especially) to those closely involved therein?
- Is ‘Children's Geographies’ really so irrelevant for Geographers who are not directly, immediately engaged in ‘work about children’?
- Why do so many ‘Children's Geographies’ conferences go out of their way to promise the new? Does this quest for subdisciplinary New Directions, Emerging Issues,[4] paradigm shifts and neologisms bespeak a problematic relationship with our subdisciplinary past?
- What do policy-makers, undergraduates, new research postgraduates, and those

the promise of the new, of the (non-)challenge of ‘Children's Geographies’? What, indeed, do they make of texts such as this editorial which constantly reflect upon the ‘place’ and relevance of the subdiscipline?

… And so on. These anxieties have the capacity to prompt and fuel difficult questions for (our) subdisciplinary practices and futures. Like …

- What kinds of work could/should ‘Children's Geographers’ do, apart from the ‘same old stuff’? What could/should change with/in the subdiscipline? What else could ‘Children's Geographies’ be and do? (cf. Horton and Kraftl 2006a).

- What might ‘Children's Geographers’ do (differently) to ensure that their work has a relevance, currency and vitality in excess of the established networks of the ‘same old’ people and discussions? (cf. Spencer 2005, Hopkins and Pain 2007, Horton and Kraftl 2008).

- What are the major challenges – and, as such, the major bones of contention – of and within ‘Children's Geographies’? That is, how should extant and ongoing work within the subdiscipline be conceived as fundamentally challenging both to those within and those without the subdiscipline? How could and should ‘harder-hitting’ issues, which might perhaps take some of us one step away from our (conceptual) comfort zones, be productively entwined with extant research by ‘Children's Geographers’? (see Vanderbeck 2008, for an excellent discussion of this question).

- How should ‘Children's Geographers’ approach and work on, individually and collectively, from these kinds of questions?

- And (rhetorically, perhaps): why are we so anxious about these kinds of questions? To be sure, these kinds of anxieties characterise(d) other subdisciplines within Geography (such as Feminist Geographies and Geographies of Sexualities). Similarly, such lingering senses of unease continue to be written into concerns about the relevance and direction of the discipline of Geography as a whole (especially in the UK). But, recursively, we worry: to whom does it matter whether or not ‘Children's Geographies’ is relevant? And why/not? We wonder, in effect, whether endless editorialising, commenting, discussing and conference organising – forever in search of the new, the challenging, the golden nugget which resonates somehow ‘beyond’ the subdiscipline (wherever that thither may be located) is

rather, we wonder whether if – after reading this editorial and other pieces like it – the subdiscipline would, could, and critically should look, feel or do anything different.

It is our hunch that ‘Children's Geographers’ should feel reasonably optimistic in approaching the preceding anxieties. For example, we would suggest that the New Directions in Children's Geographies conference did showcase numerous innovative works of scholarship and enquiry which did open out numerous challenging lines of discussion relevant to ‘Children's Geographers’ and many others. Frequently, though, it is our observation that some major challenges of ‘Children's Geographies’ are left implicit; that is, we suggest that one thing which ‘Children's Geographers’ could do more often and effectively is to articulate the ways in which their work should be conceived as challenging and mattering, beyond its own terms and beyond the immediate, familiar subdisciplinary prerogatives of ‘Children's Geographies’ (see also Holt and Holloway 2006). For example, we would challenge readers to articulate the ways in which (their) work within the subdiscipline of ‘Children's Geographies’ should be considered challenging in relation to broader contemporary contexts, such as Human Geography, Social Sciences and the New Social Studies of Childhood. That is: how does ‘Children's Geographies’ matter – (how) does it mount a sustained and important challenge – in/for these broader contexts? For we feel that, in the excited upsurge of research and enquiry regarding geographies of children and young people, ‘Children's Geographers’ have perhaps increasingly neglected to answer this question.[5]

III. The challenges of ‘Children's Geographies’: nine examples

In the remainder of this editorial introduction, we take up just one of the above challenges. We ask, in essence: in what ways should ‘Children's Geographies’ be conceived as fundamentally and fruitfully challenging for broader contemporary domains of academic research such as Human Geography and the New Social Studies of Childhood? The following list represents one, necessarily partial, set of answers to this question. Despite any latent counter-anxieties – and lest we descend into an endless, self-reflexive nihilism – we assume for the moment that ‘Children's Geographies’ retains some identity as an academic ‘subdiscipline’. Similarly, we assume for now that a commitment to challenging both our own political,

methodological and theoretical approaches – and therefore those of researchers somehow conceived as ‘others’ – should be a productive endeavour.

In what follows, we reflect upon the New Directions in Children's Geographies conference, as metaphor and microcosm for the subdiscipline at large. We suggest a number of key ways in which extant work by ‘Children's Geographers’ could be conceived as fundamentally challenging beyond the confines of the subdiscipline itself. What follows is not intended to be revelatory; nor is intended to be an agenda for ‘Children's Geographers’ (like Matthews and Limb 1999) or a completist overview of ‘Children's Geographies’ (like McKendrick 2000). Rather, the following list is intended as a reaffirmation, and perhaps a reminder. For it is our contention that the following challenges are practically ever-present in the extant work of ‘Children's Geographers’, yet these challenges have become so embedded in subdisciplinary practices and discourses that they are, now, effectively implicit and taken-for-granted. As a point of departure, some of these challenges – and there are many others besides – are surely as follows; in each case, we propose one or more keys, summative question(s) which might prompt further reflection about and within ‘Children's Geographies’.

1. ‘Missing’ children and young people

A concern to attend to experiences, issues and geographies of children and young people hitherto overlooked by Human Geographers was foundational to the subdiscipline of ‘Children's Geographies’ (James 1990, Philo 1992). Some version of this concern – to address the ‘missing’ geographies and voices of a quarter of the population – surely remains axiomatic to most ‘Children's Geographers’. However, we wonder if one consequence of the upsurge and subdisciplinary coherence of ‘Children's Geographies’ has – ironically – been the dilution of this politicised axiom. For it is our observation that, as ‘Children's Geographies’ has prospered – with its own journal, its own conferences, its own dedicated, self-perpetuating niches of scholarly activities – the majority of (what might, for the sake of argument, be called) ‘mainstream’ work in Human Geography proceeds largely as it ever did, largely unaffected by the challenge of ‘Children's Geographies’. Thus, for example, as others have recently noted, children and young people remain a problematically absent presence in most chief accounts of Economic Geography (Crewe and Collins 2006), Political Geography (Philo and Smith 2003; Skelton 2008), Urban Geography (Jones 2006), and so forth, despite preponderant work by ‘Children's Geographers’ salient to these very themes. Likewise,

relatively little has yet been said about children and young people in the substantial Social Scientific literatures regarding embodiment and consumption.

Perhaps the existence of a distinct subdiscipline is part of the problem: perhaps ‘Children's Geographies’ is seen as sufficient in ‘taking care of the kids’? Perhaps, therefore, ‘Children's Geographies’ needs to re-sharpen its critical edge. Perhaps, that is, ‘Children's Geographers’ are most challenging and relevant to broader domains of theory, research and practice when we articulate criticisms which seem simple, obvious and taken-for-granted in the context of our own subdiscipline. In other words, let us not forget to constantly problematise the absence of children and young people from broader contemporary ways of knowing, writing and researching the world.

So: why does it matter that children and young people are very often absent from broader epistemologies in Human Geography? And: what would a Human Geography – (re)invigorated with an acknowledgment of young people – stand to gain?

2. Alterity, otherness, interrelations

An attentiveness to social and cultural differences, diversities, identities and inter-relations has been a major theme of work by Anglo-American Social and Cultural Geographers, at least since the 1990s (see Philo 1992, Pile and Rose 1992, Rose 1993, Harvey 1996). Indeed, the inception of subdisciplinary work regarding children and young people was part and parcel of this attentiveness (James 1990; Sibley 1995; Holloway and Valentine 2000).

However, in this context, the body of work we call ‘Children's Geographies’ can be conceived as an underused resource regarding the nature, detail and spatial manifestations of alterity and interrelations between ‘others’ in two senses. First, simply, it is our observation that many ‘Children's Geographers’ have published empirical work regarding children or young people's social and cultural geographies which potentially extend, challenge or complexify many ‘mainstream’ Social/Cultural Geographical or Social Scientific explorations of ‘otherness’; however, in practice, the work of ‘Children's Geographers’ has tended to receive very limited ‘airplay’ in these broader contexts. Second, furthermore, it is easy to take-for-granted the truism that doing ‘Children's Geographies’ typically, and structurally, entails (adult) researchers placing themselves in encounters with research participants who are preconceived as somewhat socially/culturally ‘different’ as a result of their relative youth. We suggest

nature of this difference, albeit often obliquely via considerations of research conduct, methodology and ethics (for example, consider, in this light the many ‘top tips’ for research with children and young people collated by Gallagher 2005). In short, then, ‘Children's Geographies’ might be conceived as a resource of empirical data and reflective practice which seeks to apprehend the difference that age – and, then, other lines of social/cultural difference – makes (see Horton, this volume). However, again, we suggest that this potential challenge of ‘Children's Geographies’ remains latent and underexplored beyond the confines of the subdiscipline itself.

So: how can the knowledges produced about children's and young people's geographies challenge, complement or extend the fundamental changes heralded by other forms of social/cultural difference within Human Geography since the 1990s?

3. Everyday spatialities

An attention to younger people's spatialities has been essentially omnipresent in work which describes itself as ‘Children's Geographies’, whether through the trope of cognitive place mapping (Matthews 1984, 1992, Spencer et al. 1989), broadly Social Geographical accounts of spatial identity and belonging (Holloway and Valentine 2001), or later Cultural Geographical versions of spacing (Harker 2005, Gallacher 2006). In effect, then, ‘Children's Geographies’ can be conceived as a dense cataloguing of multifarious ways in which spatialities matter in/for children and young people's everyday lives, and the complicated-ness and socio-political import of such mattering (cf. Massey 1998, Katz 2004). Although this may seem a banal truism for ‘Children's Geographers’ ourselves, we suggest that this close, empirical, evolving attentiveness to the importance of everyday spatialities ought to be challenging and revelatory when contemplated from the standpoint of other contexts of research and enquiry (cf. Jones 2000, Cloke and Jones 2005, Horton and Kraftl 2006a, Kraftl and Horton 2007).

On one hand, ‘Children's Geographers’' various apprehensions of the everyday importance and politics of spatialities ought to be challenging to many Sociologically oriented accounts of childhood and youth – notably those proceeding under the rubric of the New Social Studies of Childhood – which frequently lack an explicit attention to spatiality (as noted by Holloway and Valentine 2000 and Philo 2000, amongst others). One the other hand, ‘Children's Geographers’' diverse empirical reflections upon spatiality ought to be valuable in the context of contemporary theorisations of space,

2005, Marston et al. 2005, Thrift 2006) which – one feels – would frequently be complicated and/or extended by engagement with the kinds of everyday spatialities with/in which ‘Children's Geographers’ work and reflect. For instance, two contemporary lines of geographical research in particular would – without essentialising the places of childhood in any sense – stand to gain from greater cross-referencing with ‘Children's Geographies’: geographies of architecture (Kraftl 2006, cf. Jacobs 2006) and especially the home (Blunt and Dowling 2006); and, geographies of mobility (Urry 2007). However, again, the efforts of ‘Children's Geographers’ (evident in the work of Brown et al. or Pike, this volume, for example), and the very significant challenges presented therein, have very often been conspicuously absent from these broader contemporary domains of research and enquiry.

So: how might ‘Children's Geographers'’ detailed and explicit attentiveness to everyday spatialities be invested into ongoing discussions about space, place and everydayness in Human Geography?

4. Mess, honesty, immaturity

It seems to us that one notable, loosely defining characteristic of many ‘Children's Geographers’ is their willingness to publicly reflect, often deeply and critically, upon their own research practices and encounters and, thereby, themselves (for recent examples, see Gaskell 2008, Pyer 2008, or see Horton, this volume). No doubt largely because of the potentially ethically problematic, and frequently emotionally charged, nature of research with children and young people, we note that many ‘Children's Geographers’, seemingly more than their contemporaries, tend to do this kind of critical self-reflection relatively readily, almost as a kind of subdisciplinary rite of passage. Most notably, numerous reflective accounts of the ethical complexities of Geographers' research with children and young people bespeak – even if obliquely – the nature and particularities of the kinds of research encounters which are central to doing ‘Children's Geographies’ (for example, Aitken 2001, Barker and Smith 2001, Morris-Roberts 2001). We suggest that these kinds of accounts – increasingly commonplace in ‘Children's Geographies’, but perhaps relatively unusual in other Social Scientific subdisciplines – are more broadly challenging in at least three senses.

First, such narratives begin, perhaps only modestly, to unveil the messy, fallible, faltering nature of research-in-practice, actually quite far-removed from the neat,

many academic accounts, textbooks, etc. (Game and Metcalfe 1996). Second, such histories allow, or even encourage, academics and researchers to present more honest, reflexive accounts of themselves – vulnerabilities, uncertainties, failings, faux pas and 'warts and all'. Third, our acknowledgment of the above prompts a number of more difficult philosophical questions, circling around our essential 'immaturity' in the face of the world's irreconcileability (do we always, or ever, really know what we are doing? Can we ever know what is going on in a given circumstance? Can we ever anticipate all of the ethically problematic possibilities of a situation?) (Lee 1998, 2001). To date, the majority of this kind of reflection by 'Children's Geographers' has tended to be inward-looking, oriented towards a limited subdisciplinary community, and towards relatively immediate concerns such as research training. However, we suggest that 'Children's Geographers'' willingness to own up, with increasing honesty – although not of necessity any greater objectivity – to the nature of research practice poses significant, as yet unrealised, challenges for many other domains of Social Scientific research, where the passions, realities and fallibilities of doing research – in 'real life' – remain relatively underplayed, or even unspeakable (Widdowfield 2000).

So: how might 'Children's Geographers'' sensitivity to the messiness and fallibility of research (with children) be taken up outside the subdiscipline? More importantly, how might such knowledges contribute to a challenging of neat, academic understandings of researching in the (uncontrollable) world, and of simply being in the world (Harrison 2008) (and not only in ways which reinforce contemporary concerns with nonrepresentational geographies)?

5. Emotion and affect

The hitherto-often-unregistered importance of emotions and/or affects in social, cultural and political geographies has been widely rehearsed by a range of contemporary Social Theorists (for example, Williams 2001, Thrift 2004). Subsequently, there is an ongoing preponderance of conference/publication activities wherein diverse Human Geographers have begun to detail some of the ways in which emotional/affective aspects of everyday lives matter, fundamentally, conceptually, ethically and politically (Bondi et al. 2005, Anderson and Smith 2006). We note that a number of 'Children's Geographers' have made key contributions to this nascent context, notably via reflection upon their experiences of being/working with children, or via reflection upon their own childhoods and/or adulthoods (Robson 2001, Jones 2001, 2005, Aitken 2005);

important subtext in a growing array of work by ‘Children's Geographers’ (Harker 2005, see Woodyer or Horton, this volume).

We feel that, as the preceding examples suggest, ‘Children's Geographers’ ought to be well-placed to contribute, in a number of challenging, critical ways, to broader contemporary theorisations of emotion/affect. First, simply, the extant/ongoing work of ‘Children's Geographers’ offers an array of detailed, empirical reflections upon emotions/affects in the contexts of everyday issues and spatialities – that is, diverse quotidian empirical extensions/nuances to the kinds of virtuosic theoretical treatises which characterise much contemporary theorisation of emotion/affect. Certainly, the diverse empirical work of ‘Children's Geographies’ details numerous, specific, situated kinds of emotional/affective experience, and their diverse manifestations as, for example, nostalgia, reverie or trauma. Second – as outlined in Challenge 4, above – the work of ‘Children's Geographers’ often entails a relatively significant commitment to critical self-reflection regarding, for example, research methods/ethics. We suggest that the process and outcomes of this body of self-reflection might be conceived as a resource illuminating the emotional geographies of research practice, ethical decision-making and, for example, encounters between ‘adults’ and ‘children’. Third, we feel that ‘Children's Geographers’ ought to have much to say about the manufacture, patterning, consequences and power of particular affects and/or emotions, via their extensive extant reflection upon the representations and discourses (and – we would conceive – affects) of ‘childhood’ itself (cf. Kraftl and Adey 2008).

So: in which ways might the multiple emotions and affects of/in ‘Children's Geographies’ (and children's geographies) exemplify, question or refine the treatment of emotions/affects in the Social Sciences?

6. Temporality and becoming

Over the last decade there has been renewed attention, amongst Anglo-American Human Geographers, to the temporality and processual nature of spaces (or, in acknowledgement of this processuality, ‘spacings’) (May and Thrift 2001, Thrift 2006). The work of ‘Children's Geographers’ seems to us to offer – relatively straightforwardly and obviously – a range of potential challenges and extensions to this conceptual context. First, so many accounts produced by ‘Children's Geographers’ are explicitly and directly concerned with the time-space routines and repetitions which (in domestic

learning during childhood (for example, see Horton and Kraftl, forthcoming). Second, much 'Children's Geographies' is, practically by definition, concerned to register and explore the spatial manifestations and complexities of different temporalities – be it conceived as em-bodily becoming, developmental stages, social transitions, 'growing up', 'coming of age', or simply 'going on' (for diverse examples, see Valentine 2003, Tucker 2003, Horton and Kraftl 2006b, or see Brown et al. or Woodyer, this volume). Third, relatedly, 'Children's Geographers' concerned with the social construction of childhood have often (perhaps implicitly) been concerned to uncover how discourses/representations of temporality can be of constitutive and political importance in contemporary societies and childhoods; for example, biological accounts of developmental time, and sociological accounts of youth transitions have frequently been critiqued in this way (for example Philo 1997, Holloway and Valentine 2000). Fourth, a number of 'Children's Geographers' have been concerned to reflect on the ways in which temporality matters as a marker and constituent of social/cultural difference, for example in terms of the complexities of generations, inter-generational relations, lifecourses and the manifold geographies of 'age' (Punch 2002, Hopkins and Pain 2007, Vanderbeck 2007). However, to date, 'Children's Geographies' has seldom figured as an explicit focus for reflections on temporality and processuality in/of Human Geography – except, of course, through a kind of categorical sub-disciplinarity ('dealing with the kids').

So: how can the multiple and conflicting entanglements of temporality, spatiality, practice and power through which children's lives are constituted be usefully re-figured to underscore broader conceptions of the lifecourse, social difference, relationality and everyday life within Human Geography? In short, how does 'Children's Geographies' challenge Human Geography, and cogent Social Scientific disciplines, to address the difference that 'age' makes?

7. Doing politics and participation

As already suggested (Challenge 1), many 'Children's Geographers' have been, and continue to be, principally driven by a politicised imperative to attend to the too-often neglected and disenfranchised voices and experiences of children and young people. Perhaps the most successful and challenging intervention made by 'Children's Geographers' in the context of broader domains of Social Scientific theory/practice over the last decade has been via consideration of children and young people's

Here, the specific work of Geographers regarding children and young people has come to be widely cited and influential in broader contemporary discussions regarding political agency and tactics for enabling the participation of 'hard-to-reach' groups (for instance, Pain 2004). This body of work is well-used as a 'toolkit' of participatory, often innovative, techniques and approaches (see Children's Geographies vol. 6 issue 1). However, in addition, we suggest that the key challenge posed by this body of work lies in its capacity to prompt open, more broadly challenging questions regarding the nature of academic work per se. For example, this body of work should make us wonder: to what extent do our actions as academics match our political commitments (Vanderbeck 2008, Barker 2008, Gallagher 2008)? In the context of our work as academics, what matters, and what is useful and/or affirmative? What should we be doing? What could/should be the nature of the relationship between academic research, researchers, theory, policy, politics, research participants? And so on. Importantly, these kinds of questions have the capacity to challenge and unsettle far beyond the immediate subdisciplinary context of research specifically with children and young people. Yet, critically, the nature of research with young people, as it is constructed by university ethics committees and local/global laws – indeed the socially and legally mediated relationship between adults and children – could allow 'Children's Geographers' an opportune position from which to consider how and why participatory geographies proceed.

So: how do the complexities of research with children chime with broader trends towards participatory research in contemporary Human Geography? What challenges might 'Children's Geographies' – and the inter-personal relations, encounters, events and responsibilities which they throw into sharp relief – pose to the political and practical momentum gathering around participatory research? Moreover, what should now be learnt more broadly from the numerous specific case studies of children and young people's 'participation' – or non-participation (as in Wake's paper, this volume) – which are now available to Social Scientists?

8. Teaching and learning

A number of recent, important subdisciplinary contributions have challenged 'Children's Geographers' to contribute more significantly to contemporary debates and practices regarding teaching and learning (see, for example, Catling 2003, 2005, Standish 2004). We suggest that 'Children's Geographies' ought to be well-positioned to do this, in at

past and present (Ploszajska 1994, Gagen 2004, Kraftl 2006, Newman et al. 2007). In contemporary understandings of teaching and learning – in diverse settings, and oriented towards diverse age groups – the considerable importance of environments for teaching and learning is recognised; however, to date, ‘Children's Geographers’ – even those whose work has specifically concerned spatialities of/for education – have very seldom contributed to these understandings. Second, it is increasingly argued that ‘Children's Geographers’ could and should contribute understandings of (young) learners' own concerns and lifeworlds, to support the development of curricula and (especially active learning) activities which are more effectively and engagingly learning-centred. In the UK, for example, a handful of innovative examples of curriculum development have sought to introduce learners' own geographies into Geography lessons taught to both very young children and teenagers (Catling 2003, 2005, Tucker 2006). Fran Martin's paper in this volume explores the issue in respect to primary school education in England.

The potentially very challenging contributions of ‘Children's Geographers’ to understandings of and developments in teaching and learning are, as yet, in their nascent stages. So: how might the ‘lessons learned’ about the geographies of education and/or the education of geographies challenge both extant understandings as to the spaces and place of education, and the ways in which ‘Children's Geographies’ might matter to learning about Geography more broadly?

9. Engaging ‘other’/‘youthful' subdisciplines and currents of research in Human Geography

Whilst ‘Children's Geographies’ undoubtedly developed as part of Geographers' earlier attention to alterity and social difference (Challenge 2), the subdiscipline has not enjoyed the recognition of earlier fields of enquiry – most notably Feminist Geographies. Significantly, Feminist Geographies was also subject to debates around legitimacy, relevance and its/their relationship with the broader discipline of Geography. Yet Feminist Geographies have arguably now gained a degree of acceptability and recognition matched neither by ‘Children's Geographies’, or other, similarly recently developed geographies of otherness (for instance, Geographies of Sexuality). The causes of such differential uptakes can be attributed as much to disciplinary ‘turns’ and ‘returns’ (Pain 2006), fashions, and the sociologies of knowledge production, as they can to the particular tenets of individual subdisciplinary inquiry. Nevertheless, the

actors, materials, places, cultures, lifestyles, and so on) are variably situated within the broad and self-proclaimed ‘inclusive’ field of academic Geography.

Working from the above generalisation, we contend that if the challenging of ‘Children's Geographies’ is to occur, then this could proceed somehow in relation with ‘other’ geographies in at least three ways. First – and with extreme care, lest subdisciplinary divisiveness, bitterness and antagonism be somehow evoked – ‘Children's Geographers’ might seek to explore how their assumptions, politics and theorising could be usefully and productively aligned with, for instance, Feminist Geographers and Queer Theorists. This may seem an obvious point, given that some early work in ‘Children's Geographies’ emerged from feminist geographies of parenting (as summarised by Rose 1993). Our suggestion is, though, that ‘Children's Geographies’ retains at a fundamental level some similar basic assumptions (for instance, around participation and ‘voice’). We are not insinuating that these politics are somehow the same, or that all geographers of difference should ‘club together’ against some greater evil: far from it. Instead, we propose that in light of developments in these subdisciplines over the last decade (and especially the proliferation of cross-cutting theories and methodologies in each) may mean that the distinctions between different geographical subdisciplines such as Feminist and Children's Geographies are less clear-cut, and perhaps could (and should) develop from their earlier congruencies.

We would – with many others, surely – wish to see whether greater, newly invigorated, but always partial collaborations between ‘Children's Geographers’ and other geographers of difference might be productive. This process (which continues in an albeit limited way in recent conference session collaborations) is less about forging a simply political ‘common ground’ than about enabling room for multiple challenges and creativities that may emerge from conversation with one another. For one example: current theorising about both temporality (Sothern 2007) and play (Brown 2007) by Geographers of Sexuality has many similarities with critical theoretical work in ‘Children's Geographies’ – but also much more to offer to our conceptual reflections upon both issues. Such collaboration may, indeed, be a critical way to both ‘challenge’ ‘Children's Geographies’ from ‘without’, whilst recognising that its ‘roots’ are entangled amongst other geographies of social difference.

Second, and far more simply, ‘Children's Geographers’ may seek to ‘learn from’ the experiences of Feminist Geographers in their (personal and collective) struggles to find

which will in all likelihood always preclude under-18-year-olds (and, in reality, under-25-year-olds) having a formal voice in academia, ‘Children's Geographers’ may wish to adopt a number of similar tactics to ensure that the subdiscipline is more challenging to mainstream Geography than at present.

Third, and in doing the above, ‘Children's Geographers’ should, surely, be party to a gathering holism within contemporary Social Geographies – a drive to promote more holistic, yet sensitive, dynamic and multiple, senses of how differences matter, in combination – what Hopkins and Pain (2007) term ‘inter-sectionality’. This move should not simply entail the inclusion of additive social categorisations like ‘age’, ‘gender’, ‘sexuality’ as a mandatory footnote for every piece of empirical research (Horton and Kraftl 2008); rather, ‘Children's Geographers’ should be well-placed to contribute to discussions about how intersecting forms of difference come to matter in the course of everyday lives.

So: what might be gained from aligning geographical studies of children and young people with the geographical study of other forms of difference?

To reiterate, the preceding list is intended to illustrate a number of different ways in which the work of ‘Children's Geographers’ might ‘talk back’, more frequently and forcefully, to broader domains of theory and practice. We have selected a diverse array of challenges: some might be considered relatively ‘mature’, where ‘Children's Geographers’ have already significantly contributed to broader discussions (e.g., Challenge 7); other challenges are far more nascent, and we include them as examples of areas where ‘Children's Geographers’ could and should continue to do more (e.g., Challenge 8). No doubt there are many more ways in which ‘Children's Geographies’ should be conceived as challenging; no doubt your own list would look somewhat different.

IV. Special edition papers

The papers that follow represent a snapshot of the diversity of material presented at the New Directions in Children's Geographies conference. They are thematically, stylistically, conceptually and methodologically various, and were prepared by authors from diverse backgrounds, and at diverse career stages. Nevertheless, the papers

Geographies', along at least one of the lines detailed in the preceding section. First, Tara Woodyer provides a thoroughgoing reflection upon the concepts of embodied practice and heterogeneous/hybrid geographies, as they relate to children's everyday geographies. In so doing, and through a sustained consideration of some specific moments of playing-in-practice, she prompts Children's Geographies readers to draw from, and critically engage with, broader contemporary theorisations of play, embodiment, performativity, materiality and spatiality. Second, John Horton presents a deeply personal, reflective consideration of some ethical complexities of (being a male adult) doing research with children. In essence, the paper argues that too many chief accounts of research ethics have tended to efface the messy, complex, troubling, excessive and affective nature of research in practice, and that beginning from this kind of mess might demand different, more honest, less certain ways of thinking and writing research ethics and intergenerational difference. Third, Belinda Brown et al. present findings from a major empirical investigation of children and young people's spatial behaviours and 'pathways to independent mobility' in the South-east of England. They suggest that these data unsettle some contemporary societal fears and media discourses regarding limits to younger people's spatial/social learning and mobility, especially as they pertain to gender. Fourth, Alan Metcalfe et al. explore the complexities of the school lunchbox. Through vignettes, talk from Anglophone online communities and popular cultural bits and pieces they suggest that the ostensibly small, quotidian, taken-for-granted object of the lunchbox should be understood as a 'container' for manifold social/familial relations, meanings, spatialities and subjectivities; in so doing they gesture towards the complexity of children's everyday spatial practices in general. Fifth, Jo Pike offers a complimentary, yet rather different, apprehension of some everyday spatialities of UK schoolchildren's lunchtimes. Pike's analysis of empirical material and participant observation vignettes is developed through a reading of some of Michel Foucault's work; in so doing she provides a provisional commentary on the relevance of 'classic' social theory to current social situations and issues. Sixth, Sue Wake presents a reading of literature regarding children's garden programmes in North America. The paper suggests that these well-intentioned, ostensibly child-centred, programmes and environments are too-often colonised by adultist interests and discourses; thus the paper questions the extent to which well-meaning 'participatory' projects actually match children's needs and wishes. Finally, Fran Martin presents a thought-provoking reflection upon the potential implications of extant work by 'Children's Geographers' for the teaching and learning of

UK, she challenges ‘Children's Geographers’ to envisage and contribute to the development of ‘ethnogeographical’ curricular interventions.

Notes

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Readers may find it instructive to read the present assortment of papers in conjunction with two additional collections from the same conference in the following journals: Built Environment (2007; vol. 33, no. 4), and Mobilities (forthcoming 2009).

Transcribed verbatim from Valentine's oral presentation. As Vanderbeck (2008, p. 3) notes, Valentine summarised this point on her Powerpoint presentation with the statement ‘same old stuff: it's so boring’.

As per the Emerging Issues in Children's Geographies conference held at Brunel University, London, in June 2005 (see Children's Geographies, 4(3) and 6(2)).

We might speculate on the reasons for this neglect: perhaps ‘Children's Geographers’ have simply begun to take-for-granted and/or leave implicit the rationale for, and challenge of, their work; perhaps ‘Children's Geographers’ have habitually drawn inspiration from other sources but have not habitually ‘talked back’ to those same sources; perhaps it is the nature of a relatively young subdiscipline – thus ‘Children's Geographers’ have thus far been mostly concerned with intra-subdisciplinary debate and positioning, and thus far devoted rather less time to reflecting upon the subdiscipline's broader, enduring impacts; or perhaps ‘Children's Geographers’ have habitually fallen back upon self-sustaining intra-subdisciplinary networks and patterns of debate and discussion but have seldom taken ‘Children's Geographies’ elsewhere.

Related Research Data

Intergenerational Geographies: Age Relations, Segregation and Re-engagements
Source: Geography Compass
Editorial: Theorising other childhoods in a globalised World
Source: Children s Geographies
You Could Truly Be Yourself If You Just Weren't You: Sexuality, Disabled Body Space, and the (Neo)Liberal Politics of Self-Help
Source: Environment and Planning D Society and Space
Timespace
Source: Unknown Repository
Reflections on geographies of age: a response to Hopkins and Pain
Source: Area
Children's personal geographies and the English primary school geography curriculum

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