

# **Children's Lives Across The Anthropocene: reconsidering the place of Modern Childhood in Education Studies through the scholarship of taking *'a wider look around'***

**David Blundell**

The Covering Document to accompany submission of a body of work in partial fulfilment of the requirements of London Metropolitan University for the award of degree of PhD by Prior Output.

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***“The motto here is always: Take a wider look round”***

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics II-1*, 1978: 54e)

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## **Declaration**

None and no part of the work submitted for this award of PhD by Prior Output has been submitted previously for any award at any University or similar institution. Three outputs are the product of collaboration; written statements signed by all collaborating parties on the extent of my individual contribution to the material and the conditions under which the work was carried out can be found in Appendix 1. None of the outputs required ethical approval and all were subject to expert academic editorship and/or peer review. At the time of submission all outputs have been published with ISBN or ISSN numbers, with the exception of Blundell (2017b) which is part of an edited collection and due to circumstances beyond my control will be published in November 2017 (ISBN supplied).

## Abstract

This Covering Document offers a narrative addressing the contributory contexts, thematic coherences, and original contribution to knowledge made by the body of work presented for this award. It discusses the place and importance of critical enquiry concerning childhood and children's lives in the curricula of Education Studies and cognate disciplinary fields. The body of work comprises eight formal outputs from nearly a decade of writing and publication that, in turn, draw on a longer career as teacher and academic. Its trajectory leads to the proposition that the declaration of The Anthropocene encourages us to reconsider and recast Enlightenment modernity and particularly those constructions of human nature and the natural world that inform commonplace thinking about children and their childhoods which, in turn, justify many of the practices, language and time-space organisation structuring educational institutions. The Anthropocene offers a framework within which to understand the historical provenance of the ideological condition identified as 'Modern childhood' and to reflect on its emerging implications for children's lives in times of technological change, intercultural encounter, globalization and climate change. The Covering Document identifies recurrent topical themes in the body of work and offers a rationale for the historical, spatial, and social modes of analysis that are threaded through it. It also offers reflections on the way that the published material addresses its audience as pedagogically mediated content knowledge. The Covering Document asserts that The Anthropocenic proposition revitalises the place of the New Social Studies of Childhood within Education Studies, thereby offering a coherent and relevant direction for further growth that encourages us all to '*take a wider look around*'.

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3.2 Blundell, D., “Education and childhood”, chapter 7 in Isaacs, S.(ed.), Blundell, D., Foley, A., Ginsberg, N., McDonough, B., Silverstone, D. and Young, T., (2014), Social Problems in the UK: an introduction, London: Routledge, pp.117-139  
ISBN: 978-0-415-71999-5

3.3 Blundell, D., (2016), Rethinking Children’s Spaces and Places, London and New York: Bloomsbury, pp.223  
ISBN: 978-1-472-58150-1  
Series editor: Phil Jones, *New Childhoods: attitudes in contemporary society*

3.4 Blundell, D., (2017a) “‘Nature’, childhood, and The Anthropocene: evaluating the challenges for Education Studies”, Educational Futures, 8(1) (February, 2017), ISSN: 1758-2199

3.5 Blundell, D., (2017b), “Eurocentrism, Modern Childhood, and Children’s Globalized Lives”, In Race, R., (Ed.)(November 2017 – in preparation), Advancing Multicultural Dialogues, London: Palgrave MacMillan  
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## **1. Introduction: outlining the Covering Document and six aims for the body of work**

Evidence from recurrent surveys of the quality of children's lives living in the world's wealthiest countries, otherwise known as the minority world, suggest that children and young people living in the United Kingdom experience higher levels of anxiety about relationships, have low levels of optimism about their future prospects, and express an uneasiness about their relationship with schooling and education (UNICEF, 2007, 2013). Indeed evidence suggests that schooling and associated processes identified variously as 'scholarisation' (Mayall, 2012) and 'schoolification' (Arias de Sanchez *et al*, 2012) (see also : Blundell, 2016; Abegglen and Blundell, 2017) dominate children's lives as they spend longer in school environments on a daily basis and start their encounter with formal institutions of education and care at younger ages. So that children's lives and the childhoods they experience seem not only increasingly shaped by the disciplinary habitus of schooling and kindred institutions, but they express mixed feelings, at best, about this.

These circumstances contribute to a grumbling level of anxiety about the quality of children's childhoods and are fit and proper topics for students of education as, by and large, they embark on careers in professions where concern for children and the quality of their childhoods should be central. However, a note of caution should be sounded; the great majority of societies have exhibited concern for the health and future prospects of their young and whilst the focus for concern about children and their lives may shift it is difficult to say whether current concerns are more legitimate than those of previous eras. However, this does not mean that all anxieties give the same grounds for worry or attention, nor that those most prominently in the public eye are necessarily also those most pressing – indeed there are grounds to believe that at a popular level the discourse of anxiety has been dominated by those most articulate groups with the means to promote romantically-conceived notions of childhood that focus on engagement with nature, individual agency and self-realisation rather than the tougher problems of poverty, labour and exploitation.

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The body of work presented here seeks to open up debates around childhood and the quality of children's lives within the context of Education Studies and cognate disciplines in ways that their curricula face up to some of these less tractable challenges and question the seductions of romantic digressions. It does this by offering readers access to the broad, multi-disciplinary field that has grown from critical sociology and anthropology of childhood to become the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC). This is because of a belief that its broad multi-disciplinary base can facilitate students' critical understanding of schooling and the institutions of education through the lens of 'childhood', on the one hand, and of children's lived experience on the other. Thus, the body of work seeks to go beyond the familiar, psychologically-oriented territory of developmentalism to embrace the intellectual affordances of, *inter alia*, the sociological, philosophical, anthropological, human geographical and historical ways of knowing that have coalesced around the New Social Studies of Childhood and that thereby readers are encouraged to 'take a wider look around'. This more ample perspective is certainly to facilitate an enriched understanding of children's lives, but also proposes that, for good or ill, discussions surrounding childhood are seldom *solely* about the biologically immature humans we call children. Rather, it is argued that modernity recruited 'the child' as simulacrum for human nature at large and thus children frequently find themselves centrally implicated in ruminations on spiritual, moral, social, economic, political, and, increasingly, ecological concerns (see **Blundell, 2012** pp. 1-6; and, opening to **Blundell, 2014**) that bear limited direct relation to their everyday lives. The body of work commits itself to revealing this and the paradoxical challenges it can raise not only for children but also educators and kindred professionals.

This Covering Document is presented as a road map for the body of work submitted for PhD by prior output. Therefore, in accordance with the 'Notes for Applicants', it addresses the *contexts* for the published material, offers a narrative explaining the dimensions and themes that give it structural *coherence*, and discusses the independent and original *contribution to knowledge* that it makes. As a problem to be addressed by research and scholarship, the body of work seeks to challenge knowledge, understanding and practice surrounding childhood and children's lives within education and allied contexts.

This Covering Document begins by offering four interlinked sections that set the body of work in **context**; these explore: how the work is situated within my professional and academic autobiography; the origins, academic status, aims and disciplinary scope of Education Studies; a brief historical and intellectual overview of the New Social Studies of Childhood and its social constructionist commitments; and, a brief examination of policy developments concerning children and childhood over the past 20 or so years and their implications for curricula and the critical study of childhood in Higher Education. This is followed by brief summaries of the eight outputs presented in the body of work; these

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summaries address: their respective origins and academic provenance; their sources of evidence; and, their content in relation to the critical dimensions, key themes and global aims for the body of work.

The next section of the Covering Document presents a series of common themes and critical dimensions as rationale for the **coherence** of the body of work. First there is a discussion of distinguishable, albeit interlinking themes running through the whole corpus. These four themes are: *Education, schooling and the scholarisation of childhood*; *Developmentalism and children's lives as social actors*; *'Modern Childhood', nature and the Anthropocenic proposition*; and, *Globalization, difference, and future childhoods*.

Next, the Covering Document addresses itself to sociality, historicity and spatiality as three complementary ways of knowing that serve to integrate the body of work into a coherent whole. These have their origin in the arguments of geographer Edward Soja for a 'trialectical' approach to understanding social being. Soja proposes that the 'spatial turn' across the social sciences and humanities has brought attention to space, place and spatiality and argues for the enhanced contribution they make to understanding the construction of the social world. Thus, he argues for the incorporation of spatiality as complementary way of knowing to the more familiar disciplinary perspectives on the phenomenology of social being he identifies as *sociality* and *historicity*. This trialectical approach is not only replicated in **Blundell (2016)**, but also across the body of work, wherein an understanding of childhood as a *social* institution is augmented by examination of its *historical* and *spatial* construction. The discussion of coherence is concluded with reflections on the approach to pedagogic engagement with the reader found in **Blundell (2012, 2014 and 2016)** as well as the pedagogic rhetoric of academic texts in general.

The Covering Document concludes with a discussion of the independent and original **contribution to knowledge** found within the body of work.

Global aims for this body of work:

1. To offer a critical foundation for reimagining childhood and children's lives in relation to education and particularly the institution of school;
2. To incorporate the interdisciplinary field known as the New Social Studies of Childhood and its critique of Modern Childhood and associated institutions into the curricula and intellectual habitus of Education Studies;
3. To identify Modern Childhood as symbolic space with historical provenance in the intellectual, economic, political, and industrial circumstances of the European Enlightenment and the relation of this symbolic space to the phenomenology of children's lives and the materiality of their 'lived spaces';

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4. To recognise the diverse and changing global realities of children's lives catalysed by economic and social globalization, technological change, and population movements along with their manifestation in local material encounters;
5. To propose a reimagination of Modern Childhood in light of the declaration of The Anthropocene and its challenge to conventional conceptions of relations between the human and natural world found in modernity;
6. To develop accessible material for incipient and experienced professionals that supports a widening of the scope of the curriculum in emergent multi-disciplinary fields such as Education Studies.

## **2. Contexts for the body of work**

In this section of the Covering Document the body of work is set in a range of contexts addressing its content, origins and purposes. These fall under four headings, respectively: *autobiographical dimensions; Education Studies as nascent multi-disciplinary field; childhood, children's lives and The 'New' Social Studies of Childhood;* and, *recent childhood policy and recrudescant developmentalism within Higher Education curricula.*

### **2.1 Context I: autobiographical dimensions**

My direct interest in the New Social Studies of Childhood began with an invitation to teach undergraduate modules entitled 'Childhood' and 'A Cultural Geography of Childhood' as an Hourly Paid Lecturer at the newly merged institution London Metropolitan University in 2004 – although I had written the latter module specification prior to taking a break from the then University of North London in 2002 to conduct work in community sport development with young people in inner London. However, my interest in multi-disciplinarity, the sociology of knowledge, and culturally diverse childhoods can be traced back further. As an undergraduate I studied Geography and welcomed its rich multi-and inter-disciplinary mix, revelling in this as a necessary requirement in any approach to understanding the complexity of the world. This desire to integrate diverse ways of knowing and take as 'wide a look around' as possible in the hope of exciting young minds also fired a desire to become a primary school teacher at the end of my undergraduate studies. This was a time when primary educators had a quite extraordinary degree of control over the content of the curriculum once the classroom door was shut and, armed with Jerome Bruner's concept of the *spiral curriculum* I relished the opportunity to be both pedagogue and curriculum developer. The schools in which I taught during the late 70s and 80s confronted me a cultural and ethnic diversity that I had not previously encountered in my own schooling;

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furthermore, I recognised that the schools themselves seemed unable to acknowledge or benefit sufficiently from the diversity of experience brought into them every day by the children. This was the era of The Swann Report (HMSO, 1985) and its endorsement of the language of multi-cultural education, but also of conflictual debates between anti-racists and multiculturalists. These were debates that I was able to explore during a period of graduate study in mathematical education under the guidance of academics, including the inspirational Alan Bishop, exploring social constructionist approaches to understanding mathematical knowledge, curricula and pedagogies as culturally-embedded artefacts. A culturalized understanding of mathematics was complemented by exciting research into new mathematical cultural environments afforded by digital technologies and this gave impetus to my MPhil dissertation on children's natural language and learning mathematics in LOGO environments. Looking back, these developments rode the wave of the wider turn towards culture, difference and diversity that emerged during the 1980s under the direction and encouragement of post-structural, feminist, and other critical theorists. I was also introduced to seminal work in Martin Richards and Paul Light's 'Children of Social Worlds' (Richards and Light, 1987) during my time as a graduate student that further enabled an integration and understanding of earlier more intuitive commitments to multiculturalism as a primary school teacher. Nine years of Initial and PG Teacher Education followed, with (mostly) mature students from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds at South Bank Polytechnic/University. This period consolidated particular directions for scholarly interest through the influence of significant colleagues and connections forged between inter-cultural approaches to mathematics and the multi-cultural practice that had informed my classroom practice as a primary school teacher as well as reconnection with my undergraduate studies through what has become identified as the cultural turn in human geography. These are the origins of the interest in Wittgenstein, Braudel et al, along with Edward Soja and the new cultural geographers, whose work contributes significantly to the dimensions running through the body of work and its theorization. During this period I was also a member of an inter-disciplinary and multi-institutional group entitled the Interdisciplinary Research Network of Environment and Society (IRNES). This was a group initiated by doctoral students and early career researchers under the watchful eye of green philosopher and historian Andrew Dobson and sought to bring natural and social scientists into dialogue. This, together with membership of the fledgling 'Green Academic Network' offered an academic context for the development of a longstanding interest in environmental education; this included a project on institutional 'greening' funded by WWF-UK that brought a London primary school and the Education Department at South Bank together to explore mutually supportive innovations in curriculum and operational practices. I worked at South Bank until redundancy in 1997 led to a period where childcare was combined with part-time

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lecturing and community development work with children and young people through the medium of sport. Policy interventions by the New Labour government, elected in 1997, emphasised linkages between education, sport and a raft of social objectives associated with children and young people and so the time seemed right to build social capital resources through the facilitation of community sport clubs and the empowerment of both volunteers and local former sports-players through qualification and employment. Thus the idea of developing an early Foundation Degree in Community Sport Coaching emerged that not only equipped this relatively under-recognised group of community workers with useful knowledges and skills, but also endorsed their status as professional social pedagogues. The paper by **Blundell and Cunningham (2008)** comes from this period and represents an attempt to develop a theoretical understanding of community sport coaches' work through the spatialized analysis of Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith, 1991). Full time employment at London Metropolitan University followed and a shift towards leadership of Education Studies and the promotion of critical childhood themes within its curricula. This was followed by appointment to a secondment as facilitator for the University's Children and Young People Strand. This was one of three cross-curricular thematic strands that sought to bring together diverse disciplinary fields through common curricular interests and required me to work with colleagues across the arts, humanities, social and natural sciences to share ideas and promote interdisciplinary research and teaching programmes. The strand was beginning to make headway when a strategic change of direction and management heralded its demise. The formal invitation to begin writing for students about my teaching around the theme of childhood also came in 2008 from Simon Pratt-Adams and Richard Race; from this emerged *Education and Constructions of Childhood* (**Blundell, 2012**).

## **2.2 Context II: Education Studies as nascent multi-disciplinary field**

London Metropolitan University first validated a programme of study entitled Education Studies as part of a modular humanities degree in the early 1990s under its predecessor institution the University of North London. With the demise of the BEd route to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) around 2002, undergraduate study in education was re-validated as a single honours programme at the University. This pattern was repeated in many of the 'post-92', 'new' or more latterly, 'modern' universities across the UK and a sizeable majority now offer Education Studies with various curricular and professional orientations, epistemologies and traditions. Whilst many students take these courses because their aspiration is to teach, a sizeable number of others have no such intention and these are swelled by those for whom the discipline serves as an eye-opener on schooling and they turn their attention to other career pathways. Education Studies is, therefore, a relatively young

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disciplinary field with varying degrees of family resemblance to teacher education, but also distinct differences, not least in offering a critical, multi-disciplinary space for the exploration of education and cognate areas that conceives pedagogic professional practices and identities in the broadest terms. At LondonMet the curricular philosophy has been constructed around a commitment to educating graduates as incipient critical professionals and offering them formal disciplinary languages that will enable them to understand the practices, theory, policies and politics that shaped their own experience and look beyond to take on professional roles as critically-informed, imaginative and confident public intellectuals. We believe that students as incipient educators (whether in formal settings or a wide range of other social pedagogic guises) should be afforded critical access to challenging disciplinary material embracing the traditional disciplines of sociology, philosophy, history and psychology. However, a more complete understanding of the educational *behemoth* benefits from a wider and richer range of intellectually rigorous disciplines; this embodies an aspiration to see Education Studies transcend its status as solely a degree course to become a disciplinary field in its own right through a confident embrace of *multi-disciplinarity*. This is not unique to LondonMet and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) benchmarks are clear about how broad a church Education Studies is and authorize moves towards greater criticality:

Education studies has evolved from its origins in teacher education to a subject in its own right ... [and] is concerned with understanding how people develop and learn throughout their lives, and the nature of knowledge and critical engagement with ways of knowing and understanding. It offers intellectually rigorous analysis of educational processes, systems and approaches, and their cultural, societal, political, historical and economic contexts. (QAA, 2015)

This body of work therefore represents an attempt to expand and deepen the disciplinary breadth of theorization, the incorporation of research evidence and encourage the critique of policy found within what is already the broad multi-disciplinary field that is Education Studies (see Aims 1, 2, and 6). Thus, it aims to augment the critical toolkit available for its students as they embark on professional careers but also to promote a culture of research and scholarly activity within the field that embraces student and academic alike. **Blundell (2017a)** serves as an example of this and is published with *Educational Futures*, the journal of the British Education Studies Association (BESA), as contribution to achieving this goal.

### 2.3 Context III: Modern childhood, children's lives and The 'New' Social Studies of Childhood

Concern about the condition of childhood is a commonplace staple of news output and topical debates. There is periodic publication of material suggesting that children's lives are subject to increasing stresses and strains associated with some, or all, of the following: technological change, educational standards and schooling pressures, early sexualisation, pornography, paedophilia, unhealthy food, dietary disorders, knife and other violent criminal activity, limited access to the natural world, so-called 'islanding' (see **Blundell, 2016pp.111-5**), and the curtailment of their freedom and movement ... (**Blundell, 2012, foreword; Abegglen and Blundell, 2017**). Additionally and alongside these much publicised and debated themes lies the refractory and growing reality of poverty that many children face (**Blundell, 2014**) (see Aims 1 and 2). All this is set against a background of globalization in which assumptions about the relatively constrained geographies of children's lives expressed through cultural and familial connections are rapidly becoming unhelpful and even irrelevant as local and global become fused (**Blundell, 2016, Chapter 8; Blundell and Cunningham, 2017**) (Aim 4).

The evidential base for this concern found in the body of work draws on the findings of successive Innocenti Reports for United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2007 and 2013), 'The Good Childhood' research reports for the Children's Society (2009), and The Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010), amongst others (**Blundell, 2012; Blundell, 2014; Blundell, 2016; Abegglen and Blundell, 2017**). However, it is worth noting the more guarded findings of The Cambridge Primary Review led by Robin Alexander, that whilst concerns may be justified, their terms and effects require further debate and research.

The body of work submitted for this doctorate by prior output is catalysed by this climate of concern and seeks to encourage critical enquiry around childhood and the quality of children's lives that questions the meanings, provenance, and legitimacy of many of the commonplace discursive assumptions attaching to childhood (Aim 1, 2, 4). Furthermore, as the opening sentences of **Blundell (2014)** declare:

No social group figures as consistently or frequently in the discussion of social problems as do children. This is not merely because external problems impact upon them and the quality of their childhood or even that children and young people are themselves often seen as problematic, it is also because children are uniquely hailed as a source of hope in the search for solutions to any number of society's problems. (**Blundell, 2014, p. 117**)

The body of work presented is firmly committed to incipient professionals as a particular reader audience and encourages them both to think critically about many of the underlying assumptions about children and childhood, and thereby to 'take a wider look around' in

pursuit of understanding from which to address the concerns about young people that seem to beset us (Aim 1). The material is broadly embedded in the field of scholarship known the New Social Studies of Childhood and takes on its social constructionist ontology with the conviction that this offers opportunities to exert critical leverage on ingrained common-sense notions, such as developmentalism as justification for the separation of children from much of everyday life. At the least, the body of work seeks to challenge the naturalness of these assumptions by demonstrating their location within social, historical and economic contexts. However, it also recognises and explores what several critics in that field see as the shortcomings of such a position. That said, it is rooted in enough years of teaching these topics to recognise that many students come to studying childhood from what could be described as a broadly naïve-realist position and find their encounter with social constructionism difficult, even baffling, and may be resistant to it.

It is therefore useful to examine the history (albeit, recent) and provenance of the arguments found in the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) that run through the material. As a self-conscious field of study, a genealogy for the NSSC can be traced to the critical sociology of the late 1960s and 70s whose embrace of civil rights and sexual liberation movements questioned the central position afforded developmental psychology and structural functionalist sociology in the humanities and social sciences.

From these points of departure, the field has come into its own over the past 25+ years; however, there are deeper roots that can be traced back to the questions arising from anthropology and anthropologists such as Malinowski and Mead in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1930s Margaret Mead encouraged us to question some of the fundamental assumptions about growing up and the meaning of youth within society through her anthropological studies in Western Samoa. Her work suggested that although presented as cross-cutting universals, certain canonical beliefs about the nature of adolescence found in Western societies did not apply where cultural mores and social realities could be very different. This suggested that the ways in which, as a convenient basic term, we might call human biological immaturity is expressed and accommodated within a particular society might not solely be driven by ‘natural’ forces whose universality placed them beyond the contingencies of human culture (see Mead, 1928) and that biological facts might always be subject to cultural interpretation. This reopens a longstanding debate within the social sciences between biology as a structural factor on the one hand, and the place of human cultural agency in the construction of the human subject on the other that is not confined to the study of immaturity, but is central in the arguments of feminists, disability rights, gay liberation, and the broad gamut of civil rights’ movements. In their classic exposition of social constructionism, Berger and Luckmann (1962) link this to the work of German sociologist Scheler and his distinction between the concepts of *dasein* and *sosein*.

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By asserting that Western understandings of adolescence and youth had little or no meaning in the Samoan communities she studied, Mead was not disputing the facts of biological immaturity (*dasein*) but proposing that the ways in which those facts are rendered meaningful along with the assumptions and expectations concerning what it means to be young (*sosein*), can be very different. In their seminal exposition of the New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood, Prout and James address a comparable point about the distinction between biological and cultural facts:

The immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture ... It is these 'facts of culture' which may vary and which can be said to make childhood a social institution.

For them this authorises a social constructionist understanding of the phenomenology of childhood, in which children themselves play an active role as constructors of their lives:

"It is in this sense, therefore, that one can talk of the social construction of childhood and also ... of its re- and deconstruction. In this double sense, then, childhood is both constructed and reconstructed both for children and by children." (Prout and James, 1990, 1997 and 2014: 7)

This championing of children as competent, agentic social actors runs through the NSSC and is axiomatic within this body of work. Berry Mayall, as a leading sociologist of education, has contributed to the emergence of the NSSC throughout and so is well-placed to identify this commitment to children's agency as a core strand in its genesis and growth. Mayall identifies roots in the work of North American scholars with an anthropological and psychoanalytic leaning. These include the psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim and developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner, whose study entitled 'Two Worlds of Childhood: US and USSR' (1970) recognised cultural, social, and political dimensions that complemented the psychological in shaping the childhoods experienced by children; thereby proposing that differences in development could be understood in terms of variable patterns of socialization. This work promotes an interactionist account for human development whereby people are seen as being active in the construction of their circumstances rather than being deterministically subject to them. In consequence, opportunities opened up to examine children's lives through their social fabric rather than in terms defined through the individualised determinism of solipsistic, psychological forces. Thus a warrant was provided to assert the agency of the 'competent' child as social actor that is fundamental to the arguments championed by, *inter alia*, Prout and James (1990, 1997 and 2014; and, described in 'historical' reflection on the sociology of childhood by Moran-Ellis, 2010) - explored and discussed throughout **Blundell (2012)**, **Blundell (2014)**, and **Blundell (2016)**. Here is Bronfenbrenner in a chapter entitled 'Children's Institutions as Contexts for Human

Development’ in which the arguments for what he terms an *ecological* approach to understanding childhood and human development are presented:

[u]nfortunately for our purposes, most investigations of development in institutions have, in keeping with the characteristic focus of the traditional model, concentrated on psychological outcomes for the individual with almost no attention to the structure of the immediate environment, or in our terms, of the microsystem in which the individual is embedded. Little information is provided about the complex of activities, roles, and relations that characterizes the institutional setting and differentiates it from the more common developmental context of family and home. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 132)

Bronfenbrenner’s more ecological understanding pre-figures an interest in taking a wider, more synchronous view for which the ‘spatial turn’ can be regarded as emblematic and authorises the emergence of Human Geography’s sub-discipline of *children’s geographies* with its interest in the spatiality of both children’s lives and institutions of childhood. It also resonates with the claim made by Michel Foucault for the growing interest in the synchronous or spatialized imagination when approaching social phenomena (Foucault, 1986). Further, this approach is particularly present in **Blundell (2016)** along with the social constructionist position that runs through **Blundell (2012)**, **Blundell (2014)**, **Abegglen and Blundell (2017)** and **Blundell and Cunningham (2017)**.

By setting out the case for a more anthropological approach to account for childhood, Bronfenbrenner also challenged the dominant reading of socialization as the *sociologically*-informed, but subordinated structural complement to the *psychologically*-informed child of developmental psychology. Thus, in speaking of ‘ecological models’ and ‘development-in-context’, Bronfenbrenner opens to the door to other possibilities that, arguably, offer more complete, holistic accounts for the facts of children and young people’s lives than found in a more rudimentary developmental psychology.

Meanwhile, in Europe Mayall cites important contributions made by scholars from Scandinavia. Leading these was Jens Qvortrup, whose leanings towards Marxism sought to admit historical, economic and social policy and understanding of childhood especially in terms of children’s relation to the world of work. As Berry suggests, “[f]rom a Marxist point of view, children can be regarded as a social class, in that, their relations to the world of work is as an economically exploited group”. For Qvortrup and associates this rendered more visible the commonplace moral distinction between unpaid ‘work’ at school (that is typical for children’s lives in minority-world settings) and the more pejorative connotations of ‘labour’ for many in the majority world (see Mary in **Blundell, 2016** – Chapter 2 – and **Abegglen and Blundell, 2017**). This dualistic distinction underpins an understanding of children’s lives in minority world settings where along with the home, school is the institution with overwhelming dominance in their lives.

This formal, academic assertion of children's subordinated status based on Marxist analysis, found an echo in popular movements seeking to promote the commitment to listening to children found in documents such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) and acting on the wrongs and injustices that children themselves identify (**Blundell, 2012**: chap 8). The clear sense that children's lives vary greatly across economic and social circumstances was complemented by acknowledgement that childhood changes over time and from generation to generation; hence, the significance of Philippe Aries, along with other historians, and their use of an historical logic to understanding the construction of childhood and schooling found in **Blundell (2012)**. The work of German sociologists in particular explored changes in the ideological conditions under which they had grown up and that informed their childhoods. Historically, relations between constructions of childhood and the modern nation state have been anything but *ad hoc* because of the importance attaching to the proper reproduction of the populace (see **Blundell and Cunningham, 2017**). The years of Nazi-rule were no exception to this and so Mayall along with Zeiher and others opened up research into inter-generational relations and differences (Mayall and Zeiher, 2003) that were all too apparent as Germany addressed the disasters of the Second World War.

In the UK much of this work came together through a series of seminars convened in the 1980s under the direction of anthropologists Judith Ennew and Jean La Fontaine at The University of Cambridge. These seminars marked a point of departure for a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of childhood not just in economically developed or minority-world settings but with attention to the circumstances of children living in the majority world (**Blundell, 2016**: foreword). Amongst the most significant outcomes of these initiatives was the publication of some of the papers presented at them under the editorship of an anthropologist named Allison James and sociologist Alan Prout (James and Prout, 1990, 1997 and 2014) in a volume entitled 'Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood'. James and Prout's edited volume set a benchmark for this emergent critical study of childhood and children's lives that has spawned a considerable and growing field of scholarly endeavour (see **Blundell, 2012**, pp.161 *et seq*; **Blundell, 2014**; **Blundell, 2016**: pp.18 *et seq*). Prout and James' (1990, 1997, 2014) own introductory chapter not only offered a rationale for a sociologically informed approach to the study of childhood, but did this through their declaration of what they called 'A New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Childhood'. This set out six propositions (see **Blundell, 2012** pp.161 *et seq*) intended to direct research agendas and was informed by a social constructionist ontology that broke with what they saw as the dominant and dominating accounts based on developmental psychology and socialization theory from structural functionalist sociology. Prout and James argued that these two complementary and mutually reinforcing discourses

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of human ontogenesis scripted and authorized a raft of professional and institutionalised practices in material and ideological settings that constructed the child as in the process of *becoming* fully human rather than being a complete, agentic social actor. Prout and James' intervention sought to offer a view of children and childhoods unconstrained by the phenotype of 'the child' and its naturalised, universal discursive constructions; rather, their work admitted notions of cultural difference and intersectionality with other sociological variables that supported productive analysis in familial, school, care and other institutional settings (see **Blundell, 2012**). Summing up their work, Mayall (2012) identifies three key themes: *first*, an assertion of children's status as social actors (**Blundell, 2016**, Chaps 1, 2 and 5); *second*, that childhood is socially-constructed and a social institution, not the rational, universal and natural condition presumed by developmentalism (**Blundell, 2012**, pp.161-3; **Blundell, 2014**, pp.118-125; and see pp. 22 et seq here); *third*, that children's lives are best understood through research methods based on ethnography (**Blundell, 2016**, *passim*).

Although first published over a quarter of a century ago, Prout and James' work continues to influence teaching and research, a fact confirmed by the re-publication of this seminal work in 2014 as a declared 'sociological classic'. This vein of scholarship, research, and critical theorisation has expanded in rhizomatic fashion beyond its origins in the sociology of childhood and is now frequently styled as 'The New Social Studies of Childhood' (NSSC); thereby acknowledging the broad multi- and inter-disciplinary field that has grown and coalesced around it. Prout and James' rationale for their New Paradigm sought to establish an agenda for research and scholarship that would challenge what they saw as dominant and dominating accounts of childhood as a natural, universal human condition. For them, physical growth had become rationalised through the conceptual telos of development in a move that subordinated socio-cultural differences to the facts of biology. This ambition to catalyse a re-imagination of childhood is revealed in the sixth of their propositions and its deliberate appeal to Giddens' concept of the 'double hermeneutic' as provocation for debate around the meaning of childhood and the materiality of children's lives:

Childhood is a phenomenon in relation to which the double hermeneutic of the social sciences is acutely present ... That is to say, to proclaim a new paradigm of childhood sociology is also to engage in and respond to the process of reconstructing childhood in society. (Prout and James, 1997: 8).

Thus, social constructionism is fundamental to the tactical deconstructionist position advanced by the NSSC and it runs through this body of work. These tactical interests extend to its use as pedagogical catalyst for readers and students.

Social constructionism is concerned to replace a concern to discover essential, positive *truths* about human beings and the social world with an interest in *meaning* and its expression in those practices and languages through which social realities are constructed. This leads us not only to see positivistic theories and the quest for essential ‘truths’ as interesting phenomena in themselves, but also to view positivism itself as a historically and culturally-situated way of making *useful* meanings about the world. Thus, why these ways of seeing have been accorded their status as reliable sources of meaning becomes no less a subject for our enquiry than mediaevalists working today might regard Scholasticism and its world view as historically emblematic for a raft of economic, social, and geographical circumstances. Social constructionism does not seek to discredit, reject or supersede older theories by more accurate or comprehensive ones (in the way that positivists or falsificationists might pursue a research programme), but demonstrate that their meaning and usefulness should be understood in relation to the circumstances of their provenance. Thus, for the social constructionist, Piagetian stage-theory and the developmentalist approaches it authorises are to be understood as *ways of seeing* biological immaturity that come out of particular historical and social conditions that, in turn, underpin the construction of particular institutional realities (these are presented in **Blundell, 2012 and 2016**, and **Abeglen and Blundell, 2017**). In short, developmental theory is not seen as standing alone as Olympian truth, but is located within particular landscape of meanings, and that following Wittgenstein’s motto, understanding the theory and its ‘landscape’ implicitly requires us to ‘take a wider look around’. Thus, the body of work makes a case for greater attention to the historical, and particularly the field of intellectual history, in Education Studies and allied areas, such as early childhood and/or youth studies. This offers a response to Berry Mayall’s concern that these nascent disciplinary areas have exhibited “*a strong bias towards practice-implications*” rather than deeper engagement with “*the complex themes and explorations involved in studying a social phenomenon*” (such as childhood and children’s lives) (Mayall, 2012). There is an understandable and justified interest in preparing students for the challenges of practice, but their preparation to take on its challenges benefits from a deepening and broadening of their understanding through social constructionism and the critical ‘breathing space’ it affords.

As a strategic manoeuvre, the deployment of the New Paradigm has shaped and driven the growth of this emerging area of scholarship and directed it into a widening field of disciplinary activity. The material presented in this body of work has sought to take up this challenge and champion the contribution the NSSC can make within Education Studies and allied fields. Driving this is a conviction that The New Social Studies presents a way of seeing children and childhood that more closely fits the facts of difference encountered in a globalizing and increasingly uncertain world. Moreover, that because of this, conventional

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institutional arrangements increasingly show the strain, particularly in their relations with young people and how they see their lives. The chances of productive intercultural dialogue seem thereby to be enhanced through the respect for difference that can be inferred from social constructionism (**Blundell, 2017b**) (Aim 4). This does not mean that agreement is impossible; rather, it seeks to facilitate useful and workable responses to biological immaturity by acknowledging that these begin with negotiations over meaning. For educationists, a particular focus for this critique of conventional constructions of childhood might revolve around the place of schooling as the dominant institutionalised condition for education and especially where processes described as ‘scholarisation’ (**Blundell, 2012, 2014, and 2016; Abegglen and Blundell, 2017**) and ‘schoolification’ (**Abegglen and Blundell, 2017**) give grounds for growing concern. This is because social constructionism invites opportunities to think about children’s lives in ways that can expand the curriculum of Education and cognate areas and apply purchase in challenging eurocentric standpoints where they exist (**Blundell, 2017b**) (Aims 3, 4). This work is not marginal and can be seen as lying within the realm of what the philosopher Eduardo Mendieta has termed the ‘de-colonial turn’, as a “... *multi-front approach that aims to dismantle eurocentrism, but not simply through a mere rejection of Europe, or the fiction of the West. The decolonial turn means to think with, through, and beyond the ‘Western’ canon ...*”, in this way avoiding both “... *a simplistic and untenable anti-Westernism and equally simplistic and untenable Third-Worldism*” (Prieto-Rios and Koram, 2015). Mendieta represents a growing interest in what its advocates term ‘Latino/a Philosophy’ in US universities; these philosophers challenge the dominance of what they see as hierarchised, white male philosophical agendas and particularly their focus on language and mind.

This interest in exploring decolonised ways of knowing finds its way into the study of childhood through the work of thinkers and activists such as Affrica Taylor and associates and their use of feminist and queer theory to challenge the naturalization of childhood and its reification of Western norms (**Blundell, 2016; Abegglen and Blundell, 2017; Blundell, 2017b**). It should be said that these recent developments in the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) have challenged the pre-eminence and sufficiency of social constructionist approaches to understanding childhood because of both their apparent neglect of materiality and social inequity on the one hand (see, *inter alia* Taylor, 2014) and their reinforcement of nature – nurture discursive dualisms, on the other (Prout, 2005).

The body of work acknowledges these emerging critiques of Prout and James et al’s original commitment to social constructionism (**Abegglen and Blundell (2017), and Blundell (2014, 2016, 2017b)**); yet, it retains a commitment to social constructionism not simply because it seems too early ‘to throw the baby out with the bath water’, but also because the social constructionist position represents a heuristic tactic in challenging the

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commonsense, (frequently) naive realism of developmentalist narratives that continue to dominate so much reflection, practice, and theorization across Higher Education and, by extension, the pattern of children's lives. Paraphrasing Wittgenstein at the end of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Wittgenstein, 1922: 6.54), it is necessary to ascend the ladder of criticism before it can be kicked away!

#### **2.4 Context IV: recent childhood policy and recrudescing developmentalism within Higher Education curricula**

Despite the emergence of the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) and its social constructionist and de-colonialising agenda outlined above, policy for children and childhood over the past twenty or so years in the UK and USA has been closely framed around education and care agendas that are linked to economic restructuring and re-alignment with neo-liberal macro-economic goals. Along with changing constructions of femininity, the family, and work, there has been a wider-professionalization of what is explicitly identified as a 'children's workforce' devoted to young children's care and education. These developments have catalysed changes in 'institutions of childhood', such as schools, nurseries, playgroups, before and after-school provision, junior sport and special interest clubs but also introduced a relatively new institution in the Children's Centre. 'Chalked-up' as examples of left-of-centre radicalism by the Blair-Brown New Labour governments, policy interventions, such as Sure Start/Every Child Matters (UK) and No Child Left Behind (USA), required rapid and comprehensive workforce development overseen by the erstwhile Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) that has seen a proliferation of qualifications and curricula in universities, Further Education Colleges and schools. The years of Coalition government (2010-15) broadly witnessed a 'normalization' of this provision, albeit with continuing concerns about standards and quality and the extension of centralised inspection regimes; however, since the General Election of 2015 and the return of a majority Conservative government there is evidence that continued austerity is impacting on the sustainability of the Children's Centre agenda that may, in turn, affect recruitment and the diversity of professional courses. However, these new courses, such as Childhood Studies, Early Childhood Studies, Youth Studies, along with Education Studies have been relatively cheap to introduce and run in the so-called 'new' or 'modern' universities and 'HE in FE' sector which have contributed significantly to meeting the challenge of wider access and the enlargement of Higher Education with the expectation that it will 'deliver' a high qualified, flexible workforce through university education. These pressures do not solely come from UK domestic interests, but are increasingly set within global discourses originating from trans-national organizations such as *Children's Lives Across The Anthropocene: reconsidering the place of Modern Childhood in Education Studies through the scholarship of taking 'a wider look around'*

as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (**Abegglen and Blundell, 2017**) and the pressures applied across all phases of the curriculum by its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2017; Laukkanen, 2006).

These economic and policy goals and the institutions they authorize are constructed around normative, essential template forms that include ‘the child’, ‘a good childhood’ and ‘the pupil’ through which institutional and professional languages, theories, goals and practices can be framed and the biological immaturity of children and young people can be directed and managed to achieve normatively-conceived adulthood (**Abegglen and Blundell, 2017**). The international dimension underlines concerns about the uncritical deployment of Eurocentric norms and justifies the critical attention they receive. The ‘psy-disciplines’ largely remain central to the theoretical justification for these processes of direction and management and their interpretation of growth as ‘development’ that, in turn, installs *developmentalism* as the dominant ideological frame for children’s institutionalised lives. Development offers an account for biological immaturity that seems readily assimilable to social and economic goals that include the provision of an appropriately socialized workforce. Moreover, it finds overwhelming acceptance and currency, not only within professional settings and the childhood institutions of economically developed societies - such as the UK, USA, and much of Europe - but also as concomitant to economic globalization and cognate developmentalist discourses seeking closer alignment of majority-world economies with neo-liberal norms (see Aitken *et al*, 2007) without regard to local differences or traditions. Arguably, this is because both child and economic development take their lead from physical growth and fetishize its individualised linearity to the detriment of synchronous processes of social and ecological relations through which ‘flatter’, more networked realities are experienced and transacted. Against this background it seems to have been hard for the criticality found in the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) to gain a foothold in many curricula as recruitment imperatives, NSS (National Student Survey) standings, and DLHE (Destination of Leavers from Higher Education) outcomes have increasingly imposed a performativity agenda on Higher Education.

It would be wrong, however, to claim that against this background there is no interest in critical scholarship amongst academics working in areas closely associated with the children’s workforce agenda. Accordingly, it should not be assumed that these professionals do not share a desire to challenge ethnocentric accounts for childhood and the understandings of children’s lives that developmentalist ideologies can authorise (Aims 1 and 6). The body of work presented in this submission proceeds from an assumption that the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) has much to offer academics working in vocationally-oriented courses and institutions. This is not least because its global and transnational standpoint speaks to the social and cultural diversity frequently and increasingly

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found amongst the student body in those Higher Education settings, but also that this diversity brings with it a global-connectedness through family, community and friendships. It is motivated by the belief that this binary division between academic/critical and vocational/professional is not only unhelpful, but a betrayal of academics' convictions and, as a missed opportunity to pursue relevance, can represent a failure of the Higher Education sector that both 'old' and 'new' university curricula need to recognise and respond to. The work proposes that a full-blooded turn towards 'difference' and the embrace of diversity in pursuit of social justice, has yet to be felt fully in institutions and their understanding of children's lives not only because of the continued inertia effects of universal and naturalised discourses of the child and childhood (**Blundell, 2017b**), but also the challenges that much of the literature of social science present to students. Therefore, the material presented in the submission represents an attempt to render the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) in terms that: speak to the interests of students in these still relatively new and emergent disciplinary areas; support academic staff as they seek to expand and articulate their curricula; and, offer resources for the many key workers who seek to secure equity and social justice through their work (**Blundell, 2012, p.176**)(Aim 1).

### 3. Summaries of the outputs

This section of the Covering Document offers brief summaries of the outputs in this body of work. Each one locates the output in time and academic circumstance and outlines the principle sources of evidence drawn upon.

**3.1 Blundell, D., (2012), Education and Constructions of Childhood, London and New York: Continuum, pp.205**

**ISBN: 978-1-8470-6025-9**

**Series editors: Simon Pratt-Adams and Richard Race, *Contemporary Issues in Education Studies***

Education and Constructions of Childhood was published early in 2012 as part of the Contemporary Issues in Education Studies series with the intention that it would contribute a ‘bookshelf’ of critical published material explicitly aimed at students of this emerging multi-disciplinary field. The book adopts a broadly historical approach to understanding the social construction of Modern childhood and although its principal point of origin is the seminal influence of Enlightenment philosophers and educationists, it explores continuities with religious doctrines concerning children that predate these. The book places the construction of educational practices and institutions informed by Romantic discourses of childhood in relation to more industrially driven, utilitarian public childhoods sustained and (re)produced by mass schooling. The book establishes historical narrative as an interpretive frame not

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only for understanding childhood, but also its social construction. Readers are encouraged to enter into reflections on the text with the author at key points (see Section 6 of this Covering Document). Education and Constructions of Childhood was reviewed in the Times Higher by Sandra Leaton-Gray, she wrote:

“[t]his will enable students to gain a thorough understanding of the interconnectedness of different aspects of the literature. Chapter 6, entitled "State schooling and the construction of 'public childhoods'", is particularly well written in this regard. It provides a historical perspective on publicly funded education in England, including dame schools, compulsory schooling after the 1870 Education Act, the discovery of the "ineducable child" and connections with public health policy and empire.” (Times Higher Education, 2012)

These reflections encourage rumination on the immediate content, but also stress the importance of incorporating synchronous dimensions in order to comprehend the phenomenology of Modern Childhood. This is consistent with the Annalers’ project to understand historical changes in sensibility and mentalities and provides a tangible instance for the application of Wittgenstein’s motto: *‘take a wider look around’*. Sources informing Education and Constructions of Childhood include published theoretical and empirical literature on critical childhoods, secondary historical sources not only on childhood, but also on education, economy, and society as well as literary material and policy drawn from grey literature. The overall outcome is not only an educational history of childhood, but also an historical interpretation of children’s lives in schooling and its kindred institutions. (Aims 1, 2, 3, 6)

**3.2 Blundell, D., “Education and childhood”, chapter 7 in Isaacs, S.(ed.), Blundell, D., Foley, A., Ginsberg, N., McDonough, B., Silverstone, D. and Young, T., (2014), Social Problems in the UK: an introduction, London: Routledge, pp.117-139**

**ISBN: 978-0-415-71999-5**

This chapter is situated within the terms of the New Social Studies of Childhood to embrace a broad discussion of children, childhood, schooling and education written for undergraduate students of sociology, social policy, criminology as well as Education and addresses them through a reflexive pedagogy that opens up dialogue with the reader (see Section 6 of this Covering Document). It begins by identifying the paradoxical position that children occupy, as not only impacted by social problems but also all-too frequently either demonised as their cause or hailed as redemptive solution to them. It seeks to offer a summative outline of several key themes found in what has become known broadly as the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) and invites students to take their studies further. The chapter is concerned to promote an approach to thinking about children, childhood and education

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through a social constructionist ontology and provides the grounds for readers' critical deconstruction of dominant essentialist understanding based on the naturalised, universal and rationalistically conceived ideal type found in developmentalism. In this a shift towards a more sociologically and culturally-informed understanding is encouraged that embraces difference, diversity and intersections with a range of sociological variables. It touches on the historical roots of modern childhood and questions oft-repeated notions of childhood in crisis as well as the fitness of policy responses to child-poverty, inequality and social injustice. (Aims 1, 2, 4, and 6)

**3.3 Blundell, D., (2016), Rethinking Children's Spaces and Places, London and New York: Bloomsbury, pp.223**

**ISBN: 978-1-472-58150-1**

**Series editor: Phil Jones, *New Childhoods: attitudes in contemporary society***

**Blundell (2016)** offers a spatialized approach to understanding the social construction of childhood and children's lives and addresses a number of topical concerns through its curation and narration of published research. Its argument proposes and explores the relationship between Modern Childhood as an ideological condition inhabiting and delineated as symbolic space as well as its realisation in the form, everyday details and spatialized practices of material institutions of childhood. The book draws on theorists working in human geography and other social sciences to offer readers an entree to the languages of the 'spatial turn' across the social sciences and its particular deployment in critical approaches to childhood institutions and understanding children's lives. It combines innovative theorization concerning space, place and spatiality with original published research from the Children's Geographies literature along with grey literature and pedagogic examples drawn from teaching. There are also original transcripts of interviews conducted with researchers concerned with place and children and young people's identities. The work is enframed by emergent theorization concerning spatiality and encourages both understanding of childhood and its cultural geographies (see 3.1.2 above) alongside curiosity about children's lifeworlds (see 3.1.3 above) Research themes include: scholarisation and the subordination of childhood to pupil-hood; children and outdoor play; children's intersecting identities and relational spaces of institutions; childhood and encounter with the natural world; globalization and childhood in 21<sup>st</sup> century worlds, incorporating broadly post-human theorization and discussion of the Anthropocenic proposition and some of its implications. **Blundell (2016)** facilitates readers' thinking about children and childhood, but also seeks to build readers' fluency with critical languages through active dialogue with research findings, themes and methods. Thereby, it seeks to encourage greater attention to *Children's Lives Across The Anthropocene: reconsidering the place of Modern Childhood in Education Studies through the scholarship of taking 'a wider look around'*

space, place and spatiality in Education Studies, Early Childhood and cognate social-professional disciplines. (Aims 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6)

**3.4 Blundell, D., (2017a) “‘Nature’, childhood, and The Anthropocene: evaluating the challenges for Education Studies”, Educational Futures, 8(1) (February, 2017) ISSN: 1758-2199**

This paper follows the presentation of two papers over the summer 2016. First, a seminar paper entitled *‘Forests, Wilderness and the Junkyard: ‘Nature’ and some cultural geographies of modern childhood’* at a London Educational Research Network for Social Justice seminar at Kingston University (12.5.16); and, second a conference paper with this title at the British Education Studies Association conference at the University of Wolverhampton (1.7.16). The article begins by identifying the commonplace presumption that there exists a special relationship between children and nature along with the belief that children’s well-being is harmed when denied access to it. It locates these concerns within the normative conditions of modernity, but recognises that just as nature occupies a contested condition within the Enlightenment imagination this translates into dualistically contested constructions of childhood. The paper draws on an emerging literature beyond Education Studies to introduce the Anthropocenic proposition for readers along with what researchers see as its implications for normative assumptions about the relations between the human and natural world that are increasingly under scrutiny as the impacts of climate change and environmental despoliation become clearer. It argues that the collapse of clear distinctions between ‘the human’ and ‘the natural’ has profound implications for the legitimacy of naturalised constructions of childhood and asks whether their translation into normalised institutional practices of education and schooling will continue to be justifiable as the 21<sup>st</sup> century unfolds. (Aims 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6)

**3.5 Blundell, D., (2017b), “Eurocentrism, Modern Childhood, and Children’s Globalized Lives”, In Race, R., (Ed.)(November 2017 – in preparation), Advancing Multicultural Dialogues, London: Palgrave MacMillan ISBN: 978-3-319-60557-9 (hardback) and 978-3-319-60558-6 (e-copy)**

This chapter is written for an edited collection examining ways to open up and advance dialogue and debate around multiculturalism. The chapter proposes that although multiculturalism attracts widespread adherence across professional contexts, it remains a contested concept and frequently operates without revealing or declaring the normative, Eurocentric constructions of biological immaturity found in the ideological condition

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identified as Modern Childhood. It presents historical and cross-cultural evidence drawn from the literature of childhood studies and children's geographies to suggest not only the culturally-laden rationalising assumptions of naturalness and universality upon which developmentalist constructions rely, but also that the concept of culture at the heart of social constructionist accounts is not, itself, independent of ethnocentric biases. The chapter seeks to move towards the sort of 'de-colonial' (see Eduardo Mendieta's remarks in Section 2 of this Covering Document) and post-humanist position found in the work of Affrica Taylor and Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw (2015) and the possibilities for the invention of diverse constructions of childhoods that are existentially more inclusive for children and predicated on genuine dialogues across differences despite the accompanying challenges that can accompany this. (Aims 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6)

**3.6 Blundell, D. & Cunningham, P. (2008) "Making room for the community sport coach", in Ross, A. & Cunningham, P. (eds.) Reflecting on Identities: Research, Practice and Innovation. London: CiCe, pp. 705 – 712  
ISBN: 978-0-9560454-7-8**

This chapter was originally presented as a paper at the Children's Identities and Citizenship in Europe (CICE) conference, Istanbul, 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2008. The work for this was associated with the development of a Foundation Degree at LondonMet designed to empower and professionalise grassroots community sport coaches working very largely with children and young people – often with significant and multiple challenges of disability, poverty, unemployment, abuse, discrimination etc. The degree had a particular focus on cricket, including the format played by blind and visually-impaired cricketers. The paper describes the structure of the degree and the suite of knowledges around which it was constructed; these included, personal skill development, pedagogic and coaching knowledges, understanding of social policy and theory, and either knowledge of education or health promotion. The paper situates the pedagogic practice and knowledges of community sport coaching within the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and their concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation'; it proposes that its practices can be understood spatially with reference to the work of Henri LeFebvre and Edward Soja and their seminal work on the social *production* of space. The paper argues that LeFebvre and Soja offer important support to the enhancement of the professional status of these frequently undervalued agents and their work with children and young people. It is not directly rooted in the New Social Studies of Childhood, but points the way for the influence of the spatialized analysis of subsequent outputs within the body of work. (Aim 6)

**3.7 Abegglen, S. and Blundell, D., “European ideals, schooling and modern childhood”, Chapter 8 in Isaacs, S.(ed.)( 2017), European Social Problems, London: Routledge  
ISBN: 978-1-1389-1993-8**

“European ideals, schooling and modern childhood” is found within a volume on social problems in Europe edited by Stuart Isaacs as sequel to ‘Social Problems in the UK: an introduction’ - in which **Blundell, 2014** can be found. It seeks to examine the construction of modern childhood as a European, even, Eurocentric phenomenon, and its deployment through the ideal type it identifies as ‘the template child’ across national and global scales through a number of institutional, policy and research contexts. The chapter proposes that modern childhood is rooted in the European Enlightenment as a culturally and historically specific way of seeing biological immaturity and embodied its concern to realise human social progress and economic prosperity, subordinating youthfulness and many non-Europeans to the status of components in nature’s bounty. The chapter offers evidence for the ways that ‘the template child’ is deployed as a rationally constructed ideal type through original critical analysis of three influential reports from the grey literature on the condition of childhood and children’s education; these are: Innocenti’s reports for the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Eurostat publications, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s PISA (Programme for International Standard Assessment) tables. The chapter argues that the template child enables each agency to conduct its research and frame conclusions without recourse to the messiness or complexities found in the diversity of childhoods encountered across a globalising world. It concludes by suggesting that recognising this diversity is a growing and insistent reality, vital to all our futures as we embrace the challenges of The Anthropocene. (Aims 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6)

**3.8 Blundell, D. and Cunningham, P., “Eurovisions: ‘European values’, rites of passage & scripting the curriculum”, Chapter 10 in Isaacs, S.(ed.)( 2017), European Social Problems, London: Routledge  
ISBN: 978-1-1389-1993-8**

This chapter was prompted by work for an Erasmus+ funded Jean Monnet Network project involving colleagues from across Europe from some 48 universities. Formal outputs from the project will be two best-practice guides for Citizenship Education, one targeted at teachers in the Early Years and the other at teacher educators. This explores key concepts that will inform an introductory chapter on curricular obstacles, challenges and opportunities that will serve as preface to the case studies of best practice. Our starting point for this

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chapter was the Paris Declaration following the Charlie Hebdo shootings in January 2015 and the commitment to putative ‘European values’ that can be inferred from them. The chapter utilises a spatialized analysis to imagine Europe as a container-like discursive space that is reproduced through curricula inscribed with scripts for European-ness. It presents research evidence to suggest that the container metaphor does not match the experience of many young Europeans and that, following Doreen Massey, a conception of space as networked, fluid, and comprising ‘stories so far’ offers a more useful stage upon which to imagine European identities and to script a curriculum for inclusive Citizenship Education that is meet to the challenges and conflicts of a globalized world. Furthermore, that in line with the NSSC, this invites an understanding of children and young people as social actors, enmeshed in synchronous networks. The chapter was modified in light of the referendum of June 2016 and the UK’s decision to leave the European Union. (Aims 2, 3, 4, and 6)

#### **4. Coherence of the Body of Work I – four themes**

Although comprising the eight different outputs summarised above, the body of work broadly addresses itself to four recurrent themes. These themes are closely related to questions concerning the relationship between childhood and children's lives and the institutions of schooling and education, but also address current anxieties and future prospects for children and young people (Aims 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). These four themes are: *Education, schooling and the scholarisation of childhood; Developmentalism and children's lives as social actors; 'Modern Childhood', nature and the Anthropocenic proposition; and, Globalization, difference, and future childhoods.*

##### **4.1 Education, schooling and the scholarisation of childhood**

There is a climate of concern around childhood and children's lives that is expressed in diverse ways and often based upon very different assumptions about what is normal and which children are regarded as the norm. Amongst the concerns is the imposition of a one-size-fits-all, naturalised and universal *template form* for childhood around which schooling and other institutional realities can be constructed and through which transnational bodies, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), can impose a regime of comparative international educational attainment that ripples through educational practices at national, local and institutional scales and shapes the lives of families and children (Abegglen and Blundell, 2017; Blundell, 2016 and 2017b). This concern has been expressed both as the 'scholarisation' and the 'schoolification' of childhood. Arguably, this is one of the pressure points where the rationalities of Modern Childhood impact upon the actualities of children's lives and constrain them by diminishing their status as full social actors.

Whereas scholarisation is concerned with the growing dominance of school-based activity, evidenced for example in Ecclestone's (2012, p.157) claim that "[c]hildren in Britain are more assessed than those anywhere in the world ..." as contributor to processes that reconstruct 'childhood' as 'pupil-hood', complaints about schoolification come from exponents of early childhood, who see growing incursions on their curricula and pedagogies by schooling. There exists a growing appetite amongst students in the increasingly diverse HE settings found in the UK to embrace these ideas – not least because they live out the tensions that these critical approaches seek to reveal and address. (Aims 1, 2, 3, and 6)

#### **4.2 Developmentalism and children's lives as social actors**

A central target for the New Social Studies of Childhood inherited from Prout and James' New Paradigm, was a concern to challenge the dominance of temporally driven, normative accounts of childhood founded upon developmentalist understandings of growth. The language of development is salted into the discourses of institutions and everyday life, yet the body of work explores both the historical provenance and meaning of *ages and stages* (as a central plank in the construction of Modern Childhood), as well as some of the ways that real children's lives contradict and challenge the logic of this hegemonic intellectual legacy bequeathed by modernity. By contrast, the body of work takes its cue from the NSSC in seeking to advance the proposition that children live their lives as social actors embedded in networked 'lifeworlds'. In its concern to reveal the historical provenance of schooling and kindred institutional arrangements and to map out the impact of developmentalist practices in institutional time and space, the possibility that things could be other than they are is opened up. Indeed, it argues that whilst technological change seems to accompany (and possibly facilitate) 'flatter' conceptions of the world (hence the interest in space and spatiality found in **Blundell, 2016** and in the networked spaces discussed in **Blundell and Cunningham, 2017**) the structures of schooling are dominated by a diachronic construction of childhood through the conflation of linear, individualised physical growth with social and cultural concepts of development. These concepts all too readily authorise and require institutional arrangements for children's lives, including separation from their social actor-networks, that look increasingly anachronistic and unsustainable because out-of-step with much of the world beyond institutional walls. (Aims 1, 2, 3, 6)

#### **4.3 'Modern childhood', nature and the Anthropocenic proposition**

The body of work draws many of its critical themes together around discussions concerning nature, the natural world and children that gain intensity as the transformative implications

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of climate change impact on all aspects of planetary life. There are popular, headline debates around the importance of ensuring children's access to the natural world; however, rather than debating this proposition head-on, the body of work is concerned to reveal and challenge the provenance of this assumed special relation between children and nature and the reasons for its tenacious appeal. It argues that understanding the place of nature in modernity and the imagination of Enlightenment philosophes – especially those humanists who sought to separate humans from nature - is fundamental to understanding how and why we think about biologically immature humans through constructions of childhood and 'the child' that are fundamentally grounded in conceptions of what is as well as what is not natural. These constructions with their roots in the European Enlightenment are broadly identified as 'Modern Childhood' through much of the body of work. This takes its lead from the work of theorists such as Marta Gutman and Ning DeConinck-Smith (2008) and their collection of papers around the construction of institutions and other cultural environments shaped by the ideological condition they identify as Modern Childhood. This has implications for understanding the ideological and material constraints that Modern Childhood as an ideological condition places upon children, not least through the separate institutions – such as schools, nurseries, children's centres etc. - within which they are required to spend so much of their time. It is argued that these institutions and the normative professional practices operating within them are underpinned and authorized by reference to nature and the naturalized child at the heart of developmentalism (**Blundell, 2016 and 2017a; Abegglen and Blundell, 2017**).

Debates about nature have been centrally important for the New Social Studies of Childhood and appear in the work of Prout and James (1990 and 1997), Stuart Aitken (2001), Alan Prout (2005) and Affrica Taylor (2013) to name a few. The proposition that the Earth might have entered the Anthropocene (or geological epoch of the humans) because our species can be considered as a telluric force is explored because of its implications not only for nature at large, but also for the naturalization of childhood that we have inherited from Enlightenment modernity. Whether this challenge to existing mentalities as response to the imperatives of climate change leads to liberatory outcomes based on the accommodation of diverse nature-culture hybrids (see Affrica Taylor's work in **Blundell, 2016 and 2017a**) – or towards human-engineering solutions promoting closer convergence towards global norms, remains to be seen. Although seemingly remote from the everyday life of nurseries and schools, this body of work believes that the Anthropocenic proposition can be transformative for our construction of childhood and children's lives because it can re-focus and reinvigorate much of the critical work undertaken by the theorists named above and warrants the attention of those interested in the future of children's lives. This

represents an original point of departure for further work beyond this submission and that is anticipated to augment this body of work. (Aims 2, 3, 5, 6)

#### **4.4 Globalization, difference, and future childhoods**

Following from theme three, the body of work acknowledges global and globalizing dimensions to childhood and children's lives. This is explored through the experience of migration and encounters based on social realities that transcend the constraints of geography, distance and time – whether under physical/material or digital conditions – and are characteristic of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This global dimension is lent considerable force by the simple statistic that whilst Western conceptions of childhood enjoy increasing dominance as the way to 'do' biological immaturity amongst global elites, nine-tenths of the world's children live in majority world settings that may be very different from the normative prescriptions of socially and materially privileged Europeans (**Blundell, 2016**). We appear to be witnessing significant resistance to global economic convergence that may have impacts on attempts to standardize educational norms and performance that shape children's lives, exemplified in **Abegglen and Blundell (2017)** through the concept of the 'template child'. However, whether these resistances will be undone by the march of technological changes and convergence of technocratic systems comprising flatter networked worlds is not yet clear. (Aims 1, 2, 4, 6)

### 5. *Coherence of the body of work II: Edward Soja and three critical dimensions*

The coherence of the body of work as a complete submission turns on an understanding of Modern Childhood as an ideological institution with a provenance in the European Enlightenment through which the meaning of human biological immaturity is articulated and enframed. Further, that this ideological conception of childhood as an ideological institution, existing in the conceptual sphere, translates into material institutions as spatialized and physical entities that contain, regulate and direct children's lives; moreover, these material institutions through, for example routine and periodic acts of separation, confirm the legitimacy of many of the assumptions about children as vulnerable and in need of separation and protection from much of the adult world (Mills, 2000 and **Blundell, 2016 Chapter 5**). Therefore the work owes much to a particular conception of institutions as socially, historically and spatially constructed phenomena that bring the ideological and material together. Theoretical underpinning for these braided social, historical and spatial strands running through the work comes from the *trialectical* schema advanced in the work of geographer Edward Soja. Soja proposes that our understanding of social being is enhanced through a three-fold integration of sociality, historicity and spatiality as distinct, yet complementary ways of knowing. He argues that whilst sociality and historicity are relatively familiar forms of knowledge in the social sciences and humanities, spatiality is still relatively new; although written in the late 1990s, Soja's assertion remains the case in much of the curricula for Education Studies. This part of the Covering Document offers a series of theoretical rationales for those conceptions of historicity, spatiality and sociality that run through the body of work and its particular interest in the institution of Modern Childhood and the institutions of education and schooling that are so dominant in enframing children's lives. Following on Soja's convictions, this trialectical approach offers readers and users of the body of work opportunities to develop an enhanced understanding of childhood and children's lives through the complementary affordances of social, historical

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and spatial ways of knowing and, as corollary, critical purchase on their lives, work, and values whether as incipient or experienced professionals. (Aims 1, 2, 3 and 6)

Edward Soja's *trialectics of being* not only makes an important contribution to the understanding of the spatiality of childhood and children's lives in **Blundell (2016)**, but also offers important structural coherence across the whole body of work. Soja's trialectical formulation makes a central contribution; first, because a social constructionist understanding of sociality (**Blundell, 2012 and 2014**), histories of childhood (**Abegglen and Blundell, 2017; Blundell, 2012, 2014, 2017a**; and, **Cunningham and Blundell, 2017**), and concern with the spatiality of children's lives (**Blundell, 2016; Blundell and Cunningham, 2017**) each serve as distinct, yet interwoven, threads throughout the body of work. But second, the trialectical emblem serves as a tangible heuristic figure to support readers' grasp of the contribution made by what is widely termed the spatial turn in social science and this is explicitly presented for readers in **Blundell, 2016**, Chap 3; (but also in **Blundell and Cunningham, 2017**). Furthermore, and no less significantly, as a third point, the particular articulation of sociality, historicity, and spatiality found in the body of work draws strongly on quite specific interests found in my own intellectual biography (see **Blundell and Cunningham, 2008**). The component identified as *sociality* by Soja is shaped by a particular reading of social constructionism found in David Bloor's interpretation of Ludwig Wittgenstein as a meaning finitist and the place of social institutions in constructing and sustaining the social world that this opens up (Bloor, 1997). The approach to *historicity* is, in turn, shaped by the work of Fernand Braudel *et al* and the Annales School that also influenced Philippe Aries and the seminal contribution he made to the study of childhood. In turn, the interest in *spatiality* is informed by what has been termed 'the cultural turn' in Human Geography that expressed itself in a level 6 module entitled 'The Cultural Geography of Childhood' written for the LondonMet Education Studies degree in 2001 and from which elements in this body of work have their origin.

With Soja's *sociality, historicity, spatiality* triad as starting point, the three critical dimensions running through the body of work are:

- Modern Childhood and the **historicity** of children's lives
- Childhood as symbolic space and the **spatiality** of children's lives
- Institutions, social constructionism, and the **sociality** of childhood

## 5.2 Modern Childhood and the historicity of children's lives

The historical study of childhood has made a seminal contribution to the emergence of the New Social Studies of Childhood. This is not to say that all histories of childhood have been

consciously written with social constructionist intentions and some will be rooted in a more realist ontology than this. However, the very idea that it is meaningful to think of childhood as an historical and therefore changing phenomenon, owes much to a particular historiographical tradition rooted in French scholarship that is broadly identified under the umbrella of the Annales School and the work of Fernand Braudel in particular.

In 1963 an English translation of the French historian Phillipe Aries' *L'Enfant et al vie familiale sous l'ancien regime* was published as *Centuries of Childhood*. Since publication, there has been something of an industry in challenging Aries' claim that a notion of childhood recognisable to us did not exist in the mediaeval world – which, in itself, has reinforced the legitimacy of historical analysis in the critical study of childhood. Aries' work and the contentions it gave rise to are discussed in **(Blundell, 2012 pp.12-15 and 2014)**; and, although challenged - even debunked - on the basis of the empirical evidence he used, *Education and Constructions of Childhood* proceeds from Aries as its point of departure for charting the emergence of Modern Childhood and its relation to the institutions of schooling, education and society.

Aries' history is rooted in the French historiographical tradition of The Annales that flourished from the 1920s and offered an approach to historical scholarship that championed multidisciplinary synthesis that incorporated themes, identities and topics seldom addressed by historians before then. Therefore, it is important to identify how Aries work stands within this historiographical tradition that not only dominated French historical scholarship but also placed itself in opposition to what it saw as a Germanic tradition with its diachronic historical logic rooted in and exemplified by Hegel and Marx, and its dominant interest in government and political affairs. The Annalists explicitly set out to challenge this tradition and its hold on many historians' imagination, and therefore Aries' conclusions are more meaningfully understood in relation to the historiographical reference points that anchor his work and therefore the goals he set out to achieve, i.e. its approach to expressing not merely historical facts and phenomena, but the meaning and purpose of history itself and, by implication, not only *how* it narrates those facts and phenomena, but also, *why* those facts are considered meaningful. Aspects of *Annales'* scholarship and philosophy continued to inform Michel Foucault's more recent *archaeologies* of Western culture (Major-Poetzl, 1983 pp.12-20). For example, Foucault's metaphorical appeal to the archaeological connotes a more stratigraphic, synchronic and spatialized approach to history that has exerted such important influence, not only on the new cultural and historical geographies discussed in the next section, but also has been vital to legitimizing children and childhood as topics for histories committed to taking the sort of 'wider look around' that is authorized by the Annalist's approach to historical enquiry. It should perhaps be remarked that although the Annalists eschewed what they saw as a Germanic tradition, their work has much in common

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with the historiography of the German historian Herder, a near-contemporary of Hegel, who argued that historical phenomena could best be understood through their synchronous as well as diachronic relations (see Charles Taylor, 2016) - a position having much in common with Braudel and the Annalists.

As a leading figure in the *Annales* movement, Fernand Braudel sought to unify history and sociology so that by embracing multidisciplinary this emergent synthesis could stand alongside other social sciences (Major-Poetzl, 1983 pp.15-16). This project to incorporate other disciplines (in a sense to 'take a wider look around') was carried forward by:

... young scholars, particularly Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, the founders of the journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, who wished to broaden history even further by incorporating economics and geography. Subsequent generations of *Annales* historians have drawn upon ever more diverse areas of inquiry, among them psychology, linguistics, and anthropology. They have also been increasingly critical of narrative history and have been prepared to view change 'not as progress, regular development or continuity, but in terms of a need for other functions, or as part of a process of structuring, destructuring, and restructuring.' (Major-Poetzl, 1983 p.16)

Central to his approach to historical narrative was Braudel's challenge to conventional constructions of historical time as a continuous timeline (frequently serving as a device that offered a convenient logic for the assertion of Eurocentric notions of progress and Western dominance) in favour of one that recognises the importance of differing timescales that not only inform and account for human cultural meaning and experience in academia, but also in the realm of everyday cultural experience. The obvious linkages in relation to space, place, and social relations are not incidental to the timescales Braudel proposes, these are: *temps géographique* (extremely slow, almost imperceptible cyclic regularities); *temps social* (addressing shifting economic and political conditions); and, *temps individuel* (daily, transitory and disjointed events). For Major-Poetzl, "[t]he combination of Braudel's interest in extensive geographical areas, long periods of time, and shifts in structures has been the effort to create a total, or global, history – what Braudel calls '*une impossible science globale de l'homme*'" (Ibid. p.16).

Traian Stoianovich, pupil and scholar of Braudel and French historical methods, suggests that this commitment to 'total history' incorporates older traditions found in Marx's concept of 'total man' and the anthropologist Marcel Mauss' concern with 'total social facts' that were not just to be understood historically, socially, and psychologically but also through the incorporation of the psychoanalytic subject and subconscious. For Major-Poetzl, quoting Stoianovich, the coming together of these traditions in the work of *Annales* encouraged its historians to seek structures beyond the traditional interest in high politics

that “has led to the ‘demasculinization of history’ and to histories ‘of women, of youth, of childhood, of oral cultures, of voluntary associations, [and] of non-Western civilizations’” (Major-Poetzl, 1983 p.17 and Stoianovich, 1976, pp.158-9)

Phillipe Aries’ *‘L’Enfant et la vie familiale sous l’ancien regime’/‘Centuries of Childhood’* can be understood within this tradition and as a seminal historical study of childhood certainly served to reveal structures beyond the immediate concerns of high politics (within which children are almost completely invisible and by and large remain so). Aries’ contribution is all the more impressive because he was ‘*un historien de dimanche*’ as he described himself, or amateur historian, who undertook historical research during his leisure time (see Burke, 1990, pp.67-9). Although trained as an historical demographer, Aries eschewed quantitative approaches to social science phenomena in favour of a qualitative orientation exploring the relation between culture and nature (the meaning of nature-culture relations is a long-running philosophical concern found across the social sciences and runs as a golden thread through the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) and this body of work). This led Aries to examine phenomena - including childhood, sexuality, and (in his later years) death - that are widely assumed to be primarily ordered by nature, but which, for him, were always subject to linguistic interpretation and institutionalised practices lying squarely within the realm of culture – Prout and James make a similar distinction between what should properly be distinguished as biological and cultural facts in their New Paradigm and that echoes throughout **Blundell (2012, 2104, and 2016)** as a core axiom of their social constructionism. Through his work Aries not only fore-grounded childhood as a topic for historical analysis, but also rendered differences and discontinuities in mentalities – such as the emotional place occupied by children in popular social and familial imagination – as important contributory factors in the demographic study of historical populations (Burke, 1990, p.69) and opened the door to social constructionist understandings of biological immaturity. In this stress on discontinuities in mentalities, Aries and fellow Annalers share Foucault’s commitment to an epistemic ontology and his transformation of temporally-driven narrative history towards a more synchronically spatial and, multi-disciplinary field with clear resemblances to archaeology and its interest in understanding through stratification and a contiguous relationality (Iggers, 1997, p.60); all this has done much to render phenomena, such as childhood, open for critical treatment and invited enhanced interest in the meanings children express about their lives.

The emphasis placed on institutions for the emergence of Modern constructions of childhood is found centrally within Aries’ incipient social constructionism. This is his claim that a recognisable understanding of biological immaturity as a distinct condition and children as vulnerable and in need of protection, led to the development of the college as a bespoke and separate institution for children and young people at the University of Paris in

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the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In turn, the actual physical separation reinforced the expectation that young humans should be separated in a reflexive manoeuvre. This emergent interest in separating children out from the rest of the social world through institutions of childhood is charted in **Blundell (2012)**. It is also fundamental to the argument found throughout **Blundell (2016)** that the physical separation of children into institutions of childhood has been accompanied by an ideational rendering as a symbolic separateness; so that material space and symbolic space work together to justify the institutional arrangements through which children's lives are ordered and regulated .

The dominant position occupied by positive developmentalist science in the narration and rationalization of children's lives has tended to marginalize histories of childhood in vocational curricula for professionals and may explain Mayall's observation (see Section 3 of this Covering Document) that they exhibit a "*bias towards practice-implications*" that can "*skate lightly over the surface*" when exploring complex themes and phenomena found in the social world. The body of work seeks to redress this by encouraging students to consider the phenomenon of childhood not only in terms of the sociology of knowledge, but also through what social and intellectual history can reveal. Indeed, the work consciously advocates the inclusion of intellectual history as supplement to the multidisciplinary of the Education Studies curriculum. Intellectual history invites us to consider the origins and currency of taken for granted knowledge and through this to ask questions about the nature of knowledge itself and is readily recruited to the social constructionist cause. Thus, the term 'Modern Childhood' deployed in **Blundell (2012)** and **Abegglen and Blundell (2017)** seeks to locate this phenomenologically as a specific response to biological immaturity that is located historically and intellectually within the circumstances of the European Enlightenment.

The assertion that we can identify Modern Childhood historically and trace its phenomenology in the form and processes of institutions invites critical engagement with philosophical questions about *how* things are in the world and *why* they might be as they are or appear to be; moreover, this invites an interest in children and childhood at the lived, experiential level that includes an active incorporation of how they see their worlds. This bringing down to human level is a vital concern of the body of work, not least because of what this can afford practitioners and their practice; hence, the particular concern with spatiality drawing on research and theorization within the sub-discipline of Human Geography identified as Children's Geographies, and to which we now turn.

## 5.2 Childhood as symbolic space and the *spatiality* of children's lives

Despite his reference to a ‘spatial turn’ across the social sciences and humanities, spatiality and the contribution of space to the construction of social worlds remains the least familiar dimension within Soja’s triad of sociality, historicity and spatiality through which we approach a fuller understanding of ‘being’. However, it should be apparent that the synchronous approach to understanding social phenomena that attention to spatiality brings has congruencies with the historiography championed by the Annalists, explored above. The key figures in the spatial turn include Henri Lefebvre, Edward Said, Anthony Giddens, and Michel Foucault along with others from the French philosophical wave broadly identified as post-structural as well as important contributors to feminist and queer theory, such as Judith Butler and Donna Haraway. In their encyclopaedic survey of key thinkers in space and place, Hubbard and Kitchin (2011) set out to anthologise the spatial turn through outlines of contributions to this field made by 66 geographers amongst a diverse cadre of scholars across the social sciences and humanities. Thus, although geographers themselves, Hubbard and Kitchin recognise the broad disciplinary church that has built up around spatiality, remarking:

[t]he fact that nearly half of the thinkers profiled here [in their collection] are not conventionally defined as ‘geographers’ is an acknowledgement of the centrality of space in social theory and the significance of the so-called ‘spatial turn’ in disciplines such as sociology, cultural studies, and literary studies over the past 30 years, alongside the ‘cultural turn’ in geography that has seen a broad engagement with social theory by geographers. (Hubbard and Kitchin, 2011: 2. Brackets mine)

Hubbard and Kitchin quote the aphoristic assertion made by Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift in their seminal ‘Thinking Space’, “*that [s]pace is the everywhere of modern thought*” (Ibid and Crang and Thrift, 2000: 1). Further, they welcome the inter-disciplinary conceptual and linguistic ‘trade’ that in consequence means:

... academics outside the discipline have begun to theorise space in ways that have appeal for geographers. This means that their work is being imported into geographical thought in a variety of ways. Conversely, work by geographers is increasingly being used and read by those in other social sciences and humanities. (Ibid)

The majority of the research that provides the content thread for **Blundell (2016)** comes from Children’s Geographies both as a sub-disciplinary field in Human Geography and directly from the journal with that title. However, it also is sourced from journals including: *The Journal of Intellectual Disabilities; Journal of Social Sciences; The Harvard Educational Review; Disability and Society; Childhood: a global journal of child research; Built Environment; Youth and Policy: the journal of critical analysis; Environment and Behaviour; Environment and Planning; Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood; The Canadian Journal of Education; and, The European Journal of Education*. This underlines the breadth of scholarly interests that have gathered around spatiality.

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The turn towards spatiality can be seen as contributory to a less hierarchical ‘flattened out’ ontological conception for the social world, but can also this conception also resonates with thinking found in other disciplinary areas. Among these is the work of Jeremy Rifkin (2014) on diminishing marginal costs in economics and the flattening of corporate hierarchies by synchronous information technologies and their facilitation of the so-called ‘internet of things’. This emerging reorientation of our imagination also sits comfortably with a project to reconfigure a linearly conceived life-course as sequential ages and stages. As corollary, hierarchically integrated institutions that reify Modern Childhood and enframe children’s lives may be set to experience pressures to change their organisational and social arrangements.. Thus attention to spatiality is an important strand in this body of work and its challenge to commonplace developmentalist understanding that runs as a golden thread from Locke and Rousseau to Piaget and brain research (**Blundell, 2012; Blundell, 2014; Blundell, 2016; Abegglen and Blundell, 2017; Blundell and Cunningham, 2017**) and has commonalities with their reliance on the liberal individualised subject that dominates the ways that the West thinks about personhood.

The separation that is fundamental to Modern childhood is illustrated by Anne Trine Kjørholt (2007), who proposes that childhood in wealthy minority world contexts can be seen as a symbolic space in which real life scenarios are frequently experienced through mimetic simulation rather than actual encounters. Kjørholt contrasts this to life for many children and young people in majority world settings. **Blundell (2016)** argues that this separation into childhood as a symbolic space finds its correlate in the form and practices of the material spaces of institutions such as school, nursery, kindergarten, youth club, junior sport clubs ..., along with ideologically conceived spaces, such as children’s television, literature, fashion, play, and retail where credentialed ‘childhood professionals’ watch over and direct their lives. It is further argued that attention to the spatiality of these institutions reveals much about the cultural construction of childhood.

In understanding the spatial turn, it is important to be clear about some of the important concepts surrounding space and place whose complex entanglements of the material and ideological both trouble and facilitate our lives. *First*, there are important considerations about space itself that come from philosophers and human geographers; *second*, there has been an important intellectual and disciplinary shift in human geography, identified by Hubbard and Kitchin (2011, earlier) as the ‘cultural turn’ that has led to renewed interest in the concept of place and that shaped a module from which much of the body of work springs, titled *The Cultural Geography of Childhood*; *third*, interest in the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and others (see **Blundell, 2016** pp.157 and 168) has meant that these changes have been accompanied by a concern to investigate social realities through the fine filigree of everyday life and the transaction of meaning within it. At this

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point it seems helpful to expand on each of these three components and their contribution both to the ‘spatial turn’ and to the spatiality deployed within this body of work in pursuit of greater understanding of children’s lives.

### 5.2.1 Space, place and spatiality

The ‘spatial turn’ has not left understandings of *space* itself untouched but has accompanied paradigmatic shifts in commonplace understandings of this seemingly uncontroversial medium as inert and container-like. These shifts are alluded to in the quotation from Foucault in **Blundell (2016, p. 45)** in which he rejects the received notion that we ‘live within’ a pre-existing void, offering instead a more dynamic view of space as created, sustained and destroyed through sets of relations. This view resonates with the three propositions from Doreen Massey, outlined in **Blundell (2016, pp.60-1)**, in which she offers an interactionist understanding of space and spatiality as fabricated through interrelations across local and global scales and that both offers a plurality of possibilities and accommodates multiple ‘stories-so-far’ as subjective relations mesh with material practices. Massey’s approach is cognate to the seminal work of Henri Lefebvre on the social production of space and Manuel Castells’ network conception of the ‘Space of Flows’. These re-imaginings of space and spatiality seem to offer more useful possibilities to comprehend a globalizing world where information and communications technologies continue to challenge and transform the ontological imagination we inherit from modernity and thereby the fabric of our lives. These ideas are central to the structure of the content and arguments found in **Blundell (2016)**. Further, the spatialized metaphor of networked space and of ‘stories-so-far’ is deployed in the discussion of young people’s sense of European-ness and Eurocentric curricula in **Blundell and Cunningham (2017)**; the container metaphor is invoked as a spur to critical reflection on settled realities in the spirit of the ‘double hermeneutic’ employed by Prout and James. These impacts of globalized lifeworlds are picked up through the research of Horschelmann and El Refaie (2014) in **Blundell (2016, Chapter 8)**. Furthermore, the LeFebvrian proposition of space as a social product shaped arguments advanced in more recent work can also be traced in **Blundell and Cunningham (2008)** and its concern to locate Community Sport Coaches and their work in ways that facilitate professional recognition for these relatively unsung citizenship educators and ‘social pedagogues’. **Blundell (2016, Chapter 3)** seeks to complement these ontological questions with the provision of a lexicon for thinking and speaking about space and spatiality found in the work of Elizabeth Kenworthy Teather (1999).

Teather categorizes the ways in which we think about and use the language of space, place and spatiality in everyday situations, viz: space as place; activity space; positional (or

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relational) space; and, discursive space. Each of these provides a conceptual hub around which selected examples of empirical research can be deployed to exemplify, prise open, and unsettle understandings of children's lives and their relation to the institutions of Modern Childhood. There are four chapters in **Blundell (2016)** each of which addresses one of Teather's categories, but then, reflexively, each category is coupled with a current issue or concern surrounding childhood and the quality of children's lives and supports its exploration; these are: 'space as place' – scholarisation and the construction of pupilhood; 'activity space' – children's freedom and range outdoors; 'positional (relational) space' – childhood, schooling and intersections with social class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disability; 'discursive space' – Modern Childhood, children, and Nature. The aim is not merely to present concepts and debates around these categories that enhance curricula as given disciplinary bodies of knowledge, but also: to encourage readers to enter into and learn through those debates; to think critically about how diverse examples of empirical research might contribute to the construction of arguments; and, to reflect on particular methodological contributions made by spatialized research to understanding of childhood and children's lives. This aims to help readers to be more than simply *knowledgeable* and approach the *educated grasp* and linguistic fluency required of agentic critical professionals concerned with the knotty and messy character of real life for children, young people and professionals in institutional settings.

### 5.2.2 Childhood and 'the cultural turn' in human geography

The turn towards spatiality across the social sciences has been complemented by a '*cultural turn*' within human geography catalysed by the rise of critical cultural studies and its interest in relations between representation, discourse, and material lifeworlds. In line with a general interest in questions of representation across the social sciences and humanities following the emergence of post-structural critiques in continental philosophy, geography became increasingly interested in its particular modes of representing knowledge about the world in writing, maps, and iconography. Denis Cosgrove, Peter Jackson, J.B.Harley, Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan were seminal contributors to these key developments and their implications.

This has been important in the rise of critical children's geographies as well as interpretation of childhood in the spatial terms that are explored in **Blundell (2016)**. (see Denis Cosgrove and Peter Jackson's seminal 'New directions in cultural geography' published in 1987 and discussed in a 'Classics revisited' under the editorship of Peter Kraftl, 2016). Interest in subjectivity, space and place had grown during the late 1960s and the 1970s in Anglo-American geography with the insertion of theory from Behavioural

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psychology and its proposition, as outlined here by Gould and White in 1974, that human dispositions towards their environments were directed at least as much by perceptions of reality as by a reality that in a simple sense can be accepted as uncomplicatedly ‘there’:

‘Behavioural geography’ ... falls into two major areas of concern. Very broadly, the first considers behavioural aspects that are related to spatial patterns and movements, and explicitly recognises the effect of behavioural constraints on geographical models. The second recognises that human decisions with locational implications are affected by the way in which the decision maker perceives the physical and human environment. (Gould and White, 1974: 22).

This frankly idealist and psychologically-rooted note, wherein an individualised interpretivism sat on top of unchanging reality, suggested to others with a sociological bent that more might be required than behavioural or perceptual psychology could provide to account for the constructions of those social realities that are the setting for human action and meaning. Spurred on by social psychology and associated developments in social constructionism, the sociology of knowledge and post-structuralism (e.g. Berger and Luckman, 1967 as well as interpretations of Wittgenstein’s linguistic account for knowledge found in Thomas Kuhn and Foucault’s epistemic archaeologies of knowledge) the terms for a more culturally-referenced understanding of social reality emerged. Following on the work, *inter alia*, of Judith Ennew and Jean La Fontaine as well as Richards and Light’s ‘Children of Social Worlds’ (1987) the proposition that children might see and understand the world differently through their own cultural ‘lenses’ grew into an understanding of their lives as inhabitants and co-constructors of distinguishable social realities. This set up an agenda for research and action having much in common with that for other non-hegemonic groups, including women and people with disabilities. Thus in 1990, Sarah James published a paper whose title asked: “is there a place for children in Geography?” (James, 1990) and took a first step in promoting what has become today’s well recognised sub-discipline. Moreover, the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 had required signatories to admit children’s ‘voice’ (a widely used, and possibly clichéd, metaphor for agency), so that they had an inscribed entitlement to be heard in matters that concern them (not always easy or welcomed – see **Blundell, 2017b**). As we have seen, this emphasis on rights and recognition that, as Matthews and Limb (1999) have it: “... *children differ in the ‘ways of seeing’*” ... so that “[w]hat goes on during the day of an average young person is different in rhythm, scale and content from that of adults” gave fresh impetus to an extension of scholarly studies of childhood beyond psychology and across the humanities and social sciences. Matthews and Limb’s (1999) contribution came in the form of a seven-point ‘Agenda for the Geography of Children’ (**Blundell, 2016**, pp56-8); this sought to define terms for a geographical or spatialized study of childhood and

children's lifeworlds in ways that complemented and reinforced the more sociologically-focussed New Paradigm of Prout and James (1990, 1997 and 2014). A year later saw the publication of Holloway and Valentine's edited collection 'Children's Geographies: playing, living, learning' that set an agenda for the emergent research field and when in 2003 a journal with a near identical title was launched, disciplinary integrity had been secured.

Matthews and Limb's Agenda echoed Prout and James in affirming the socially constructed character of childhood and the diversity found amongst the category group we identify as 'children', because:

Children come in all shapes and sizes and may be distinguished along various axes of gender, race, ethnicity, ability, health and age ... We emphasize the need to recognize the importance of 'multiple childhoods' and the sterility of the concept of the 'universal child'. 'Who' the child is ... and 'where' the child comes from (both place and time) define important situations (or positions) from which to understand the complex and multiple realities of children's lives (Matthews and Limb, 1999; also quoted in **Blundell, 2016** p. 57).

This encouraged extensions of the territory occupied by the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) to embrace geographical ways of knowing as another component of what was emerging as a broad multi-disciplinary front. However, it also highlighted the crucial paradox: that by stressing the diversity of children's lives and experiences the very category might, on the one hand, be undermined, but on the other that the very existence of 'children's geographies' as an emergent sub-discipline could be seen as sustaining the metonymic trope of 'the child' and reinforcing the institutions it authorized. This distinction and the denial of the deterministic or structural imperatives of biology may have offered some critical leverage to those seeking to free children and young people from the over-weaning strictures of what the body of work identifies as discourses of Modern Childhood in **Abegglan and Blundell (2017)**, **Blundell (2016 and 2017)**, but it also seemed to reinforce the dualism – a point picked up by Alan Prout in 2005. Drawing on their location in majority world settings and/or the disciplines of anthropology and sociology, these claimants charged the Convention with being shot through with Eurocentric constructions of childhood, both in its core assumption of Rights founded on the construct of the Western individual and its implicit appeal to developmentalist notions that are, in turn, founded on repellent theories that proceed on an assumption of racial hierarchy – see variously DeBoeck and Honwara (2005), Kjørholt (2007), Twum Danso (2009), and Shallwani (2010) in **Blundell (2012 and 2016)** and **Abegglan and Blundell (2017)**.

This distinction between Modern childhood as discursive construction, with 'the child' as its idealised trope, and children's lifeworlds as social actors, is important to understanding the arguments found in all of the work presented. The importance of a more ethnographic embrace of children's lifeworlds called for by Prout and James (1990 and

1997) is thereby affirmed and invites attention to the everyday fabric of children's lived spaces and places.

### 5.2.3 Lived space and the fabric of children's everyday lives

Accompanying these disciplinary developments has been a concern to learn more about the phenomenology of what are variously described as children's lifeworlds, 'lifescapes' (as in Anderson and Jones, 2009 in RCSP: 42) or 'lived space' (after Soja, 1999) (Blundell, 2016). As corollary, a third dimension to the *spatial turn* is, borrowing the geographer Michael Curry's metaphor, a concern with the *fabric* of children's everyday life (see Curry, 2000). Curry presents an interpretation of Wittgenstein's work arguing that his thinking can be seen as profoundly spatial. Curry's argument has consistencies with David Bloor's understanding of Wittgenstein as a strict meaning finitist (Bloor, 1997 and see below), wherein the social world is woven together through the institutionalised custom and practice of social rules. This way of seeing, he argues, addresses many of the problems that have concerned geographers (and concern theorists of childhood who see spatiality as offering much in pursuit of understanding and being responsive to children's lives), these include an approach to:

... the role of space in philosophy, social theory, and common sense; of the importance of places; and of the nature of the natural – in a truly radical way, in a way that gets to the root of the matter. But here we can best see his work not as that of the traditionally Olympian and architectonic philosopher, standing outside the world – and humanity – and legislating a new and better system for encompassing the whole. ... Indeed for Wittgenstein the history of Western philosophy can be seen as the result of this Olympian urge, to go beyond one's own social context, the context within which actions and utterances make sense, to stand outside, to see the world from a point of view that is not a point of view, and to see more clearly than do the rabble. By contrast, Wittgenstein promoted a view in which the rabble – men and women, children, adults, and the aged, the bright and the feeble-minded – need to be heard. (Curry, 2000: 90)

This concern with being *in* rather than standing outside everyday life has important implications, not least because it invites curiosity not only about children's lives, but us all.

### 5.3 Institutions, social constructionism, and the *sociality* of childhood

The social constructionism at the heart of this body of work is framed and understood through David Bloor's interpretation of the later work of Ludwig Wittgenstein as a 'meaning finitist' and his rendering of the philosopher's concern with rule following, and the construction of social institutions. Bloor presents an account for norms as socially

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constructed rules that challenges the sense that they are either justified by reference to infinite ideal forms or can be read directly from brute reality. This position denies that our material world is referenced to ideal types proposed by Platonists; rather, the meaning attaching to the phenomena we encounter in the world is ascribed through collective usage. For Bloor, Wittgenstein's meaning finitism validates the here and now world in all its diversity and difference:

The most obvious feature of this picture – something so obvious it is in danger of being overlooked – is its wholly down-to-earth character. It is this-worldly, concrete and causal: in a word 'naturalistic'. Wittgenstein insisted he was talking about language, even mathematical language, as a 'spatial and temporal phenomenon', not some abstract 'phantasm' outside space and time (PI: 108). (Bloor, 1997: 20)

For Bloor, this is a humanistic but not individualised view of the world, because these institutionalised truths (including mathematics) are better understood as social rules that are realised and reproduced through a community of users for whom they have meaning. This implies that rules cannot be used capriciously or idiosyncratically, they are used in conformity with a *social* reality within which they make sense. Thus, rules can be understood metaphorically as having the qualities of *institutions* that constitute, sustain, reproduce, and legitimate those social realities (**Blundell and Cunningham, 2017**). This is what Bloor says about the social status of these rules and why they are experienced as compulsions:

For Wittgenstein, rules and meanings considered in themselves do not possess agency: all agency and action associated with them derives from their human users and creators. And yet we constantly speak as if we are compelled by some reality outside ourselves. This is not, however, pure error and illusion, for each of us individually is compelled by something outside, namely by other people around us in society. It is society that is external to us and the true source of our sense that rules exist as an independent reality set over against the individual rule follower. So there is a reality answering to these mysterious myth-ridden feelings, but nothing that lies beyond the social collectivity and its constituent parts. We are compelled by rules in so far as we, collectively, compel one another. (Bloor, 1997: 22)

When considering children and childhood, the significance of these institutional rules is underlined in Nikolas Rose's oft-quoted statement about childhood as the most regulated of social conditions (Rose, 1999) – quoted in **Blundell (2016, p.27)** and in **Abegglen and Blundell, 2017; Blundell, 2017a; and Blundell, 2017b**. It is the most regulated because these particular constructions of childhood demand and require this form of rule following. For Bloor this approach to social constructionism does not obviate the biological – a charge commonly laid against strong post-structural accounts (see Taylor, 2011 and 2013 and in **Blundell (2016 and 2017b)** – rather it embraces understanding of how we feel compelled to think about biological immaturity as *childhood* and organize our arrangements for

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biologically-immature humans through the motif of *the Child* (Blundell, 2014). It does this by shifting our attention away from childhood as an essential form, driven and determined by biology, towards what childhood means as a social phenomenon and therefore how we arrange children's lives in accordance with the rules that these meanings authorize. Bloor proposes that Wittgenstein's account of rule following has three important dimensions connecting our biology and our social worlds in ways that form complex, hybrid entanglements. These are:

*"... (1) its biological or psychological aspect, dealing with our instinctive and automatic responses"*. For example, to approach the construction of worlds in ways that seek order and consistent meaning. Following Prout and James, the social constructionist propositions running through the submitted material distinguishes between these biologically instinctual propensities and predilections and their rendering as social facts and practices. Prout and James' contend that 'childhood' is neither universal nor deterministically structured by facts of nature but represents a series of cultural facts through which biology is made meaningful within institutionalized contexts. Hence, Blundell (2012) seeks to demonstrate the evidence for this through an historical survey of education, schooling and its emergent institutions framed by discourses of childhood and 'the child' (this is also echoed in Abegglen and Blundell, 2017 and Blundell, 2014 and 2016 - Chapter 7 on 'Nature' and childhood). Blundell (2016) complements this attention to historicity through an examination of the construction of childhood in a more synchronous fashion through an examination of the spatiality of its institutions (especially Chaps. 3, 4, 5, 6) and through cross-cultural evidence for difference and diversity (Blundell, 2016 - Chaps 2 and 8) rooted in the concept of 'nature-culture' hybrids found in Taylor, 2011 and 2013 (and Blundell, 2016 and 2017a), and that Bloor describes thus:

*"... (2) its sociological or collectivist aspect which concerns the shaping and sanctioning of our innate tendencies and their organisation into customs, conventions and institutions"*.

Bloor's argument is important because he demonstrates Wittgenstein's concern not only to explain the existence of customs, conventions and institutions in a way that is consistent with social constructionist accounts, but crucially he addresses the manner in which these rules are taught and learnt within a community. Bloor writes: *"Wittgenstein said that if we want to understand rule following we should look at how we learn to follow rules, and how we might teach someone a rule"* (Bloor, 1997 p.9). This invites an understanding of social processes as implicitly pedagogic and underlines the aspiration of the body of work not simply to be *about* the social construction of childhood, but also to make a contribution to its re-construction.

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“... (3) *the background of meaning finitism against which the entire process is set.*” The emphasis on social learning of rules is fundamental to the notion of meaning finitism and its perspective on biology and sociology found in points 1 and 2. Bloor proposes that there is nothing beyond the here and now processes of learning social rules or customs, conventions and institutions. This has important implications because it proposes that a phenomenon, such as childhood, should be understood in relation to the anthropological circumstances of everyday life and in the ‘lived spaces’ to which the geographer Edward Soja refers (see later and **Blundell, 2016**, p.60; as well as the complementary concept of ‘lifescape’ found in Anderson and Jones’ research reported on pp.42-3). Meaning finitism has important implications for a globalising world in which social and cultural differences encounter each other on a day-to-day basis. This is not least because its relativism undercuts the ascription of hierarchical judgments about superiority and subordination through which Eurocentric developmentalist accounts of childhood have asserted their dominance and continue to dominate international agendas found in the UNCRC, UNICEF, PISA and EuroStats (**Blundell, 2012** - Chap. 9; **Blundell, 2016** - Chaps. 2 and 8; **Abegglen and Blundell, 2017**; and, **Blundell, 2017b**).

If we see children’s ‘needs’ as well as the means by which they are met as a matter of customary rule following, then understanding the role of institutions in reproducing these rules – expressed through their professional practices, languages, values as well as the spaces and places they occupy and define – becomes central to the ‘*circumstances of teaching and learning*’ referred to by Wittgenstein;

This meaning finitist position on the nature of knowledge and, in this case, on the specific needs of children and the institutionalised panoply surrounding the meaning ‘a good childhood’, implies that knowledge is neither completed nor driven by a convergent telos. Indeed, as those who work within institutional contexts know, novel situations and cases will be encountered that do not readily conform to the rules and offer challenges that must be met (**Blundell and Cunningham, 2017**). This open-endedness is fundamental to the education of critical professionals because it validates them as the point of agency and not some external, universal, abstract rationality; furthermore, in Doreen Massey’s terms, it endorses a view of childhood as a symbolic space, whose fabric comprises ‘stories so far’ (Massey, 2005, p.9).

In summary, this account of Wittgenstein’s work and the meaning finitism that Bloor finds in it, supports a social constructionist position that: links institutionalised meanings and professional realities to social rules and the means by which they are learned; it also invites recognition of their historical and cultural provenance. Wittgenstein’s meaning finitism and incipient social constructionism can encourage an understanding of

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children as complete social actors inhabiting synchronic social worlds and of childhood as a socially constructed condition that can be apprehended through attention to institutions as 'lived spaces'. Furthermore, it allows for shifts and changes in the meanings ascribed to biological facts and their rendering as institutionalized social realities. The complementary relationship between *Education and Constructions of Childhood* (**Blundell, 2012**) and *Rethinking Children's Spaces and Places* (**Blundell, 2016**) is reliant on this filial bond between the temporal (historicality) and the spatial (spatiality) and its immanent fabrication as social worlds (sociality); hence, the significance of Soja's trialectics of being to the coherence of this body of work. (Aims 1, 2, 3, 4, 6)

### **6. Coherence of the Body of Work III: Meaning finitism and pedagogic content knowledge in the body of work**

The material in the submitted body of work is mindful that it represents a pedagogic encounter with its audience in a manner that resonates with Bloor's claims from Wittgenstein that the meaning of rules and how they are learned (see section 5.3 above) are integral to one another – for example, the meaning of knowledge learned by passive, rote repetition is likely to be very different from that learned by negotiation and experiment. This follows from the commitment found in the global aims of this body of work, namely: 6. *To develop accessible material for incipient and experienced professionals that supports a widening of the scope of the curriculum in emergent multi-disciplinary fields such as Education Studies.* This commitment to pedagogy is not therefore conceived as a 'bolt-on' or marginal to the body of work, but teaching is understood as the rhetorical medium through which it is able to achieve all five other aims and thus, contributes to the coherence of the body of work. Traditional academic forms may eschew a rhetorical commitment to audience, but this constitutes a pedagogic form in itself, bringing with it lessons to be learned about knowledge and authority; to paraphrase Hemingway, no style is a style.

This conviction is supported by the pedagogic theorisation of the educationist Lee Shulman and his championing of the distinctive intellectual and scholarly status of the pedagogue, by listing what he sees as a necessary 'knowledge base for teaching' (Shulman, 1999). Shulman's list comprises seven items that in his view can claim a place in the portfolio of *teacher knowledges*. These include knowledge of the curriculum, knowledge of the learners, as well as knowledge of the institutional, philosophical, and historical contexts for teachers' work, but also and not least, content knowledge (what is to be taught) along with pedagogic knowledge (how one teaches). However, Shulman goes further to propose a synthesis of these latter two, in what he calls 'pedagogic content knowledge'; for him this represents a form of knowledge that is unique to the teacher and vital for effective learning.

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However, pedagogic content knowledge is frequently overlooked or invisible to those outside the profession and may be barely recognisable as a form of scholarship amongst even the best teachers. Shulman justifies this category of knowledge as follows:

“... pedagogical content knowledge is of special interest because it identifies the distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching. It represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction.”

(Shulman, 1999, p. 64)

The concept of pedagogical content knowledge affirms teaching as intellectual labour in itself and reveals not only the ways in which texts address their audience through a pedagogic rhetoric, but also that knowledge is situated within contexts of social practice (see Lave and Wenger, 1991 ‘Situated Cognition’). Returning to the earlier exposition of Bloor’s interpretation of Wittgenstein as a meaning finitist, this rejects the ostensive or denotative understanding of how language works in favour of seeing it as comprising metaphorical, metonymic, and connotative webs of meaning that refer beyond the actual words written or spoken (see also Lakoff and Johnson, 1980 “Metaphors We Live By”). Teaching as an act requiring references ‘beyond the information given’ (Bruner, 1973) is once again consistent with Wittgenstein’s motto: to ‘take a wider look around’. Furthermore, this is consistent with the spatialized ‘total history’ approach from *Annales* that informs the body of work and its concern to bring together linguistic and discursive tools through which readers are enabled to address their professional worlds. The logic of the material in the body of work, especially **Blundell, 2012** and **2016**, is shaped not only by the content found within the field broadly identified as the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC), but also by an intention to render it through ‘pedagogic content knowledge’ and so expand readers’ imaginative engagement with the material and themes it addresses. Pedagogic content knowledge is incorporated into the body of work through a number of devices and processes, including: those likened to curatorial actions of selecting, stressing/ignoring, narration and metaphorical coinage; an approach to teaching that is informed both by research serving as methodological examples, thematic illustrations, and stimulus to facilitate a critically reflective conversation between theory, empirical research, grey literature, and professional practice; conversations requiring a dismantling of the ‘fourth wall’ between author and reader.

### 6.1 Pedagogic ‘gaps’, breaking ‘fourth walls’, and traversing the hypersurface

As pedagogical texts, **Blundell, 2012, 2014** and **2016** can be understood as expressing their relationship to the reader in three ways. These are not exclusively found in a single output, but can helpfully be seen as more or less typical of their respective renderings:

a) **The didactic/interrogative** – pedagogic content knowledge inscribed within **Blundell (2014)** can predominantly be understood as mode (a). In this the reader is required to read the text and implicitly reflect upon and absorb its arguments not only whilst reading but also after the event. Readers are supported by highlighted key ideas and concepts – stressing the importance of these in understanding the arguments – as well as ‘Fast forward’ and ‘Rewind’ links to earlier arguments as a product of the editor’s *curation* of the complete volume and its arguments. These devices, designed to engage readers actively with the text are augmented by: a summary of the arguments in the form of revision notes; a clutch of seminar-style tasks that invite readers to work in ways that model the production of well-structured and convincing arguments; a critical exercise; and, coursework questions. This is followed by references rendered as further resources for study in ‘Further reading’. The content and approach is familiar and, as suggested, has much in common with the ways in which lectures and seminars are conducted in real-time slots. Indeed, the text was conceived and compiled with a level 4 undergraduate module entitled ‘Social Problems’ in mind and serves as the principal sourcebook supporting the content of that module and its transaction. It seems to me that the ‘Revision notes’ hold a key to understanding the relationship between reader and text/author in this format, because these suggest that there are facts, concepts and arguments to be learned by the reader who is thereby placed in interrogative dialogue with the didactically presented material; so that the reader (as knower) broadly remains located as *other* to it (as knowledge).

b) **Reflective ‘breathers’** - Chapter 7 ‘Brave New Worlds and Rhapsody Renewed: New Rationalities, New Institutions and Old Ideas’ in **Blundell (2012)** is typical for the ways that ECC invites a ‘reflective reader’ relationship with the text. The chapter offers an account of the institutionalisation of broadly romantic constructions of childhood in the first half of the twentieth century, but seeks to link back to earlier chapters and demonstrate their provenance in the circumstances of the European Enlightenment. The relationship with the reader was conceived around the rhetorical question, ‘what might a reflective reader be thinking or asking at this point?’. The approach acknowledges the presence of the reader and invites active engagement with him or her; however, it is didactic in that it seeks to model not only a reflective mode of engagement with texts, but also identify that which is

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considered worth reflection upon. By centralising reflection as a ‘thought act’ rather than discussion as a medium for social construction, it implicitly works with readers as individuals and relies upon a Cartesian conception of learning in Higher Education as primarily concerned with mental phenomena.

c) **Interactive explorations through the ‘gaps’ and across the hypersurface – Blundell (2016)** embodies aspects of all three pedagogical modes identified here; however, its approach to assembling material and the location of the reader in relation to that material is significantly different in important ways that make it congruent with developments in fields, such as Theatre Practice, drawing upon emerging virtual realities to aid interpretation and extend possibilities. New technologies do not necessarily supplant older ones or render them obsolescent, but they do change them – this is increasingly the case with academic and scholarly texts that, with a nod to meaning finitism, become more explicitly concerned with rhetoric and audience as real-time moments of encounter. This can be through changes to their materiality - for example the ways in which traditional print material is produced, stored, communicated, and represented - but probably more importantly, through how they shape and re-shape the nature of knowledge through accessibility and logical organisation, as well as its applicability and impacts in social worlds of meaning – there is growing recognition of the reader as shaper and re-shaper of meaning and status as interlocutor with the text.

**Blundell (2016)**, in common with other volumes in the New Childhoods series, is divided into three parts. Part I ‘Debates, Dilemmas and Challenges: childhood and the place of children’ broadly seeks to justify the commitment to ‘rethinking’ by inviting readers to reflect upon conventional constructions of childhood and rendering them as objects for curiosity and enquiry. Part II offers a brief introduction to the theoretical setting and categories for the critical examination that follows in Part III along with a vocabulary that will be used and that, crucially, readers are encouraged to use in exploring and evaluating the ‘Implications for Children’s Lives’. Part I, covering chapters 1 and 2, proceeds with a pedagogic mode that can broadly be seen as (b) The Reflective Reader – with Reflective Activities punctuating the narrative discussion. In Chapter 3 (Part II), examples of research are introduced to test, illustrate, and expand the narrative. These also justify the argument for a re-imagination of readers’ thinking about space, place, and spatiality as well as the utility of an expanded vocabulary derived from Elizabeth Kenworthy Teather (1999) as a literature source for the theoretical framework that structures the book.

It is in Part III that RCSP attempts to engage in different ways with the reader that are more interactive and invite her or him into the text to make guided, critical explorations.

Structurally, chapters 4 to 8 of RCSP are different because constructed through a three-way *Children’s Lives Across The Anthropocene: reconsidering the place of Modern Childhood in Education Studies through the scholarship of taking ‘a wider look around’*

conversation between: 1. the ways of seeing space and spatiality – viz. space as place, activity space, relational space, and discursive space – offered by Elizabeth Kenworthy Teather; 2. issues, themes and popular concerns about the quality of childhood and children’s lives; and, 3. examples of empirical research that seemed provocative, illuminating and/or relevant. These examples of research were selected on the basis of word and topical searches within likely journals – and thus subject to the logic of a Google-ised ontology. It should be added that the curatorial selections were made by me and this provided the raw data for their formulation as arguments in **Blundell (2016)**. The resulting chapters are certainly concerned with what the authors of the research say, but this is regarded as a raw data resource to be curated and narrated in order to construct its arguments; this recognises that **Blundell (2016)** was produced as a text by my critical reading but conceived as a springboard for the critical reading of others. Thereby recognising Roland Barthes’ oft-quoted aphorism that *‘the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author’* (Barthes, 1977, p.70); thus, extending Barthes’ metaphor, the text serves as a link in a chain of death and re-birth and as a polysemic point of departure for the imagination of the reader. As a fore-runner and informant of Barthes’ work, Louise Rosenblatt (1938) recognised this transactional relationship between reader and text through ‘reader-response theory’; in this the:

- reader’s previous experience, textual knowledge and sociocultural background

Interacts with:

- Reader’s ability to interact with and respond to the text

Which interacts with:

- [the] polysemic nature of the text to include intertextuality and ‘gap’

(from Evans, 1998 p. xv)

The concept of the ‘gap’ and of ‘gaps’ into which readers can foray as meaning makers is instructive, because it is fundamental to how the ‘Examples of Research’ in **Blundell (2016)** and the Reflections etc. found in **Blundell (2012 and 2014)** seek to allow the reader to prise apart the apparently seamless text and take a look around. This concept has been applied to understanding the ways in which pictures in children’s literature, particularly the specific genre identified as ‘picture books’ for young readers, serve to invite the reader to enter into dialogue between written text and the iconography of illustrations.

As Janet Evans says:

... [a]uthors and illustrators often make use of other strategies to draw the reader into the text and therefore respond to the story. They use the concept of ‘gaps’ where the reader is to use his or her imagination to interpret the words and the pictures together to make sense of the text. ... Thompson (1987, p.123) describes these ‘gaps’ as ‘spaces between sentences,

chapters, events, details, characters, narrative viewpoints, textual perspectives and so on'.  
(Evans, 1998, p. xvii)

Evans continues by quoting Iser (1978) to underline the sense that gaps invite readers to work with and inhabit the text within and through the gaps. The implication that this is an active encounter is helpful in understanding the relationship between the examples of research and the arguments into which they are enfolded and, in turn, the husbanding of readers' emergent fluency with concepts and vocabulary that become their own:

Whenever the reader bridges the gaps, communication begins ... the blanks leave open the connections between perspectives in the text, and so spur the reader into coordinating these perspectives – in other words, they induce the reader to perform basic operations within the text. (Iser, 1978 in Evans, 1998, p.xviii)

Through invitations to summarize, cross-reference, apply criteria critically and relate to personal experience, readers are scaffolded both in the use of key vocabulary and in the exercise of critical judgement. This is deliberately the case in **Blundell (2012)** with its peppering of reflections as an apprenticeship to critical reading and response to the question: what might a critical reader be thinking about and asking at this point?

Underlying this is a commitment in **Blundell (2012 and 2016)** to 'breaking down the fourth wall' that separates the reader from the text. This idea is commonly encountered in the area of theatre performance whenever the conceit of separation between actors and audience, spectacle and viewer or participant and observer that is fundamental to the transaction of the play under proscenium conditions is being challenged. The operation of 'breaking the fourth wall' is closely associated in theatre circles with the work of Augusto Boal and his concern to promote interactive forms of theatre that engaged audiences more thoroughly and were felt to be relevant to their lives:

Boal had a major influence on a style of theatre which seeks to engage audiences more directly in the dilemmas experienced by people in theatrical stories. His principal contribution was to remove the 'fourth wall', which in most theatre forms through time had clearly separated audience and actor spaces. His early work focused on creating contexts in which audience members could become more active participants in a variety of interventions that could ameliorate the problems depicted in performances. His theory and practice developed during the post-World War II period when many theatre people, motivated by the urge to make theatre more relevant to a wider audience, were looking for new forms of audience engagement. (Somers, 2011 pp. 149-50)

Shulman's concept of pedagogic content knowledge not only 'bridges' the distinction between pedagogy and content/pedagogue and knowledge, but also acknowledges an implicit reaching out to the learner as co-constructor of meaning. In **Blundell (2012 and 2016)** readers are invited to breach the fourth wall and dwell within the landscape of academic enquiry. This dwelling within the landscape has resonances with Heidegger's

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aphorism: “*We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is because we are dwellers ...*” (Heidegger, 1971). This concept of dwelling and the legitimacy it brings is also important in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) ideas about situated cognition and their contribution to **Blundell and Cunningham (2008)**.

Boal’s concept has family resemblances to the virtual theatrical processes described by Gabriella Giannachi (2004) as ‘performing through the hypersurface’ that is facilitated not just by the material presence of digital technologies, but also by the ‘mind-making, self-mastering and self-designing’ impacts they afford human users. For Giannachi, hypersurfaces offer:

“... places of exchange, fleeting intertextual strata in which dialectical opposites interact and continuously contaminate one another ... [a]ble to present dichotomous relationships, between representation and matter, inside and outside, organic and inorganic, the hypersurface is the site of virtual performance.” (Giannachi, 2004 p.99).

So that:

“[t]hrough hypersurface theory and practice, it is possible to conceive of the surface as a skin, and therefore a site of exchange between inside and outside. Because of this, the hypersurface is also a site of potential intervention. ... As a hypersurface, viewers can be both materiality and representation, both inside and outside the work of art, transformed into artistic information that changes in real time. Within the world of the hypersurface, the viewer is both remediated and in the real; they are both alive and live.” (Ibid, p.103)

As texts, **Blundell (2012 and 2016)** in particular, offer a materialised plane of encounter resembling the skin-like porosity of the hypersurface whose fabric effects interchange and exchange. This porosity permits readers to enter and explore, locate themselves, and then practice the language current in the disciplinary territory of the material offered across the body of work. This encourages the reader to be *alive* and active rather than passive and exhibit a *lively agency* rather than uncritical mimesis. Whether conceived through fourth walls, communities of practice, hypersurfaces or similar metaphors, there is not simply recognition (to paraphrase Barthes) that the author must die for the reader to be born, but that the pedagogue armed with repertoires of pedagogic content knowledge can intervene as midwife to facilitate this process. (Aims 2, 6)

## **7. An independent and original contribution to knowledge**

The body of work submitted here for the degree of PhD by prior output is guided by Wittgenstein's motto, namely: 'Take a wider look around'. It is committed to this because of a conviction that the academic contexts within which childhood and children's lives are addressed through research, teaching and critical study of policy have all too frequently been directed by constructions of childhood and 'the child' that have too narrow a provenance in developmentalism and that this has allowed an uncritical naturalization that fails to recognise the diversity of children's lives and responses to the condition of biological immaturity. This is particularly the case where development becomes an over-weaning institutional reality that fails to accommodate difference and meet many of the concerns that children and young people express about their schooling in particular. There is another sense in which there is virtue in taking a wider look around and this is that interest in childhood and children's lives is all too frequently subordinated within the academy as a minority concern and not for serious consideration by scholars across the disciplinary spectrum. This reinforces a sense that children's lives can readily be understood through the tropes of developmentalism, such as 'the child' and childhood conceived as an unproblematic universal condition. Thus the problems of childhood are understood as a failure to comply with this normatively-conceived condition rather than with the terms of the condition itself.

The body of work presents two independent and original contributions to knowledge. The *first* of these is the incorporation of the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) into the curricula and research agendas of Education Studies and cognate multidisciplinary fields. The second builds on the debates within the NSSC surrounding the nature of childhood and, particularly, the place of Nature within childhood and children's lives; the body of work extends these debates in an original and independent direction through incorporation of multi-disciplinary insight that is gathering around the proposition *Children's Lives Across The Anthropocene: reconsidering the place of Modern Childhood in Education Studies through the scholarship of taking 'a wider look around'*

of The Anthropocene and its implications for futures in an era of climate change and particularly the relationship between humans and human agency and the natural world.

Addressing the *first*, this body of work offers an original intervention by drawing insights from the New Social Studies of Childhood into the curricula of Education Studies and cognate multi-disciplinary fields. This seeks to challenge settled understandings of childhood and the child that stands at the heart of so much educational theorisation as well as policy and practices that shape and rationalise schooling. As a relatively new multi-disciplinary field Education Studies has by and large grown up through the taught undergraduate curriculum of new post-92 universities and has tended to stand detached from the work of established educational research institutes, whose work has, in turn, been dominated by contract-based evaluative activity rather than critical scholarship. This body of work seeks not only to expand the range of the undergraduate curriculum, but to render the languages, theories and insights of the New Social Studies of Childhood in ways that catalyse original and independent research agendas for the discipline – not least through its approach to the four themes addressed through the work. As such, it represents a body of research activity and seeks to kick start further activity.

This conviction about the merit in taking ‘a wider look around’ leads to the incorporation of insight from a broadened disciplinary spectrum, as seen in the outputs and rationalised through what attention to the historicity of childhood and spatiality of children’s lives can bring to readers and students’ understanding of social institutions, such as schools, nurseries, children’s centres, sports clubs etc. However, it is also underpinned by the work of the late Ernest L. Boyer, who as President of the State University of New York and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching championed a broadening of understanding of scholarship within Higher Education. In his seminal ‘Scholarship Reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate’ Boyer (1990) proposed that although what he termed ‘The Scholarship of Discovery’ had come to dominate conceptions of legitimate scholarly activity within academia the emphasis it placed on empirical research was relatively recent. He saw this as critically constraining and out of kilter with the changing circumstances of Higher Education; therefore Boyer advocated an enhanced set of complementary scholarships. These were conceived by Boyer as supplements to ‘Discovery’ and comprised ‘The Scholarship of Integration’, ‘The Scholarship of Teaching’, and ‘The Scholarship of Application’. This body of work draws on the fruits of ‘Discovery’ and curates and articulates these in an original fashion within the field of Education Studies and can be seen as driven by ‘The Scholarship of Integration’ (see sections 4 and 5 of this Covering Document). Integration has a dual sense, in that it can be seen as incorporating that which is currently outside into the disciplinary body, but also of bringing that body into a closer, more cohesive and directed whole. Both these senses apply to the body of work

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presented for this award and reinforce its commitment to ‘a wider look around’. Furthermore, the body of work is conscious of its pedagogic responsibilities to its readers and therefore seeks to infuse a ‘Scholarship of Teaching’ throughout.

The second independent and original contribution to knowledge is centred on the advent of The Anthropocenic proposition. This proposes that human agency in relation to the Earth and its oceanic, atmospheric, terrestrial and biotic systems is now so considerable that it has become a telluric force in its own right and that, in consequence, there are no components of the Earth system that stand aloof from the impact of humans. The proposition was first advanced in an *ad hoc* fashion by the atmospheric scientist Paul Crutzen at a conference in 2000 (see Pearce, 2006, pp.41-6; and Clark, Crutzen and Schellnhuber, 2004, pp.1-28). Crutzen’s declaration that the Holocene was now over and had been superseded by an epoch he coined ‘The Anthropocene’ because of the scale of human impacts on the Earth seems to have offered a *mot juste* that has gone on to gain interest and support over the intervening 17 years. Conceived originally as a geological proposition whose legitimacy is currently being deliberated over by the International Stratigraphic Commission – the body that regulates and adjudicates on additions to the geological column – the Anthropocenic proposition has invited interest from a broad range of scholars from across the arts, humanities and social sciences as well as the natural sciences from whence it came. Many scholars are drawn to the way in which the naming of the Anthropocene challenges the distinctions between nature and human culture that we inherit from the Enlightenment and opens up fresh ways to understand humanity’s relationship with the natural world at a time when there are compelling reasons for a reframing of this. Historians and social scientists have become interested in the proposition because of the way in which it brings geological time and human time into alignment (Pearce, 2007; Dukes, 2011; Bonneuil and Fressoz, 2015; Davis and Turpin, 2015; Semal, 2015; Vince, 2016; **Blundell, 2017a**).

The inclusion of discussion of the declaration of the Anthropocene and its implications for thinking and rethinking Modern Childhood in **Blundell (2016, 2017a)** and **Abegglen and Blundell (2017)** represents an important original contribution to knowledge, not merely in epistemological terms, but crucially ontologically. This is because the declaration of the Anthropocene appears to represent what in Thomas Kuhn’s terms is a paradigm shift in our thinking about modernity and how intellectual, political, economic, social, demographic and ecological dimensions to the Enlightenment can be reconsidered (Kuhn, 1962). The Anthropocene offers a framework to recast modernity in terms of the challenges faced by humankind and all life on Earth in the 21st century (by whose end it is predicted there will be 11 billion humans and the stable climatic conditions of the Holocene epoch will have been erased from living memory) but also locates these in relation to

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historical conditions that include the construction of Modern Childhood. It is argued here that the paradigmatic shift catalysed by the Anthropocene leaves little or nothing untouched and that we have barely begun to understand or address the wider implications; furthermore, that our thinking about and provision for young humans is not immune from the challenges faced. However, the implications for children underline the fact that standard narrative that humankind has, *en masse*, stumbled into the Anthropocene by some accident cannot be sustained because: first, it is unjustified to charge all of humankind with a shared responsibility; and, second, that the deleterious effects of the processes leading to this point have long been recognised and can be seen as an act of wilful convenience by sectional interests (Bonneuil and Fressoz, 2015; Davis and Turpin, 2015).

The body of work has evolved over the 10 years in which it has been compiled and it is coming to be re-narrated by the declaration of The Anthropocene and its impact on my thinking about Modern Childhood and its sustainability in light of rapidly changing global circumstances. As such, a critical standpoint from which to re-consider and re-narrate all of the Aims identified in Section 1 of the Covering Document (Aim 5) has emerged. The Anthropocenic paradigm offers opportunities to rearticulate histories of childhood and the recruitment of children's reproductive vitality in pursuit of the industrial, social and economic goals of modernity – not only through physical labour, but also through the industrial scale of schooling and the scholarisation of children's lives (Aims 1 and 3). Furthermore, the declaration offers a commentary on the global extension of these processes and the future prospects for young people growing up with increasing chances that they will be alive to witness the actuality of a human population in excess of 11 billion (Aim 4). Because of the centrality of children to all these questions about the quality, sustainability and future of human life we need to understand more about the diversity of their lives. As corollary, I believe that The Anthropocene invites a revitalisation of the goals of the New Social Studies of Childhood and its challenge to recognise children's agency as social actors and extend their entitlement to full engagement with the wider human social world to embrace para-human worlds (Aims 2, 5, 6). Consequently, all of the themes can be re-integrated around an insistent demand for action that will include a reconsideration of how education can and should contribute to meeting the challenges of The Anthropocene. Attention to the historicity, spatiality, and sociality of children's lives can and should contribute to this revitalised agenda and its incorporation into the education of those preparing for professional practice.

The challenges of climate change may, however, still seem remote from the everyday practices of schools, nurseries and other formal institutions of childhood. A central concern of the body of work is to demonstrate the reliance of Modern Childhood as ideology on constructions of nature and the meanings ascribed to naturalness; it is here that *Children's Lives Across The Anthropocene: reconsidering the place of Modern Childhood in Education Studies through the scholarship of taking 'a wider look around'*

profound changes might be made to the institutional enframing of children's lives (Aims 5 and 6). Thus, the relationship between children and the natural world is one of the four key themes identified in section 4 of this Covering Document and it runs through the body of work. Nature and childhood has a long pedigree: as Jean-Jacques Rousseau himself suggests, the teacher is to treat the child Emile as a little animal destined for the spiritual life, and in a critical review of perspectives on childhood, Richard Mills (2000) encountered this same trope of the child as a little animal in a range of literary texts (**Blundell, 2012 p.163**). Piagetian developmentalism has something of this with his well-known assertion that ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis, a crucial concept he gleaned from the (now controversial) 19<sup>th</sup> century ethnologist Lucien Levy-Bruhl who claimed to have identified what he termed 'the primitive mind' as precursor to European mentality (**Blundell, 2016 p.166**). This presumed special relationship between children and nature has surfaced most recently perhaps in discussions around so-called 'Nature Deficit Disorder' (Louv, 2005; Moss, 2012); whereby, children are claimed to suffer a cocktail of challenges to their proper development when denied access to the natural world. The themes are touched on in **Blundell (2014)** and discussed more fully in Chapter 7 of **Blundell (2016)**. Furthermore, they have been examined by a number of scholars, including Stuart Aitken (2001, pp.27-61). The presumed naturalness of childhood was challenged in Prout and James' New Paradigm (1990 and 1997) in favour of their social constructionist position. The tenacity and appeal of the claims about children and nature is evidenced by Alan Prout himself. In 'The Future of Childhood' (Prout, 2005) he had become critical of the New Paradigm and its failure to dispose of naturalising discourses of childhood. Indeed, he claimed that the New Paradigm served to reinforce the dualistic impasse between childhood as nature and childhood as culture – popularly understood as 'nature-nurture'. Seeking a fresh direction, Prout drew on the assemblages concept advanced by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in which elements identified as natural and cultural are in a constant state of hybridization catalysed by technological change (**Blundell, 2016, 2017a**). Prout supported his assertion with examples of technological and pharmaceutical interventions in childhood and their transformative impacts on our natural biological inheritance, including the genetic through the potential to produce so-called 'designer babies'. The Australian geographer and early childhood theorist Affrica Taylor has built on this through the work of Bruno Latour on the politics of nature in modernity (Latour, 2004) and Donna Haraway's notions of the cyborg and queer kin (Haraway, 1991 and Haraway and Kenney, 2015). In 2013 Taylor published her seminal 'Reconfiguring the Nature's of Childhood' in which she set out terms for a reimagining of children's lives in terms of what she calls 'commonworlds'.

In short, questions surrounding childhood and its rootedness in particular culturally and historically-located notions of nature as well as the relationship between humans and the

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natural world have loomed large in critical accounts of childhood and animate research and scholarly agendas. This body of work picks up these concerns and discusses much of the literature and sources identified above; however, as a distinctive contribution to knowledge it locates these questions in relation to the Anthropocene proposition and how it contributes to a reconsideration of children's lives and the ways that they are institutionally enframed by naturalising discourses of childhood. The body of work is increasingly committed to the belief that The Anthropocene can challenge and redirect the way that debates are framed at global and international level, but it can also offer a critical context for the curricula of fields like Education Studies. Therefore, **Blundell (2016 and 2017a)** and **Abegglen and Blundell (2017)** address these questions directly through an appraisal of the potential impacts of the Anthropocene not only on the *subject matter* of Education Studies and cognate disciplinary fields as a topic, but also invites a critique of ways in which institutions, such as schools and schooling, objectify children and naturalise childhood in order to meet any number of social, economic and political goals alongside what might be seen as the strictly educational (viz. the metaphor of 'The template child' presented in **Abegglen and Blundell, 2017**). Accordingly, **Blundell (2017b – in press)** goes on to examine the ways that recognition of those Eurocentric elements in constructions of childhood as well as the ways they are justified through notions of naturalness and universality, offers an important, if not necessary, starting point for genuine inter-cultural dialogue and understanding – a point that is also addressed in the spatialized analysis of container-like mentalities for European-ness, Eurocentric curricula and for the cultural habitus of institutions of childhood in **Blundell and Cunningham (2017)**.

All that said, the body of work is sceptical about the position occupied by childhood in the intellectual and philosophical imagination of modernity (e.g. **Blundell, 2012** p.3, e.g. the discussion around Moss and Petrie's (2002) discourse of the child as 'redemptive vehicle') because of the burden this can place on real children as actors living within the synchronous networks that are the fabric of their social worlds. However, despite this desire to unburden children, it does recognise that young humans may always have been and continue to be recruited for ruminations on human nature at large. Recognising this, the body of work is committed to the proposition that understanding children's lives not only invites and requires disciplines like Education Studies to 'take a wider look around', but also for more interest to be shown across the academy in the condition of childhood and for it to cease to be a somewhat subordinated specialism – so that echoing the demasculinization of history championed by the Annalists as well as Curry's reading of Wittgenstein, the philosophical becomes more concerned with the meaning of everyday life and the everyday becomes more open to social, historical and spatial critique and understanding.

Finally, the body of work presented here proceeds with these ideas because of the potential they have to reframe existing debates in ways that offer scope for intellectual development and manoeuvre, but also because they have the potential to fuel active engagement with Boyer's fourth 'Scholarship of application' and approach the challenges presented by the 'age of the humans' and prospects for sustaining human life on Earth.

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## **9. Appendix 1**

Children's Lives Across The Anthropocene: reconsidering the place of Modern Childhood  
in Education Studies through the scholarship of taking 'a wider look around'

David Blundell

Appendix 1a: Statement on David Blundell's contribution to collaborative outputs put forward for degree of PhD by Prior Output

Output:

**Abegglen, S. and Blundell, D., "European ideals, schooling and modern childhood", Chapter 8 in Isaacs, S.(ed.)( 2017), European Social Problems, London: Routledge**

This is to confirm that David Blundell contributed a 50% share to the above output and I contributed the rest.

Signed:

Sandra Abegglen

Date:

Appendix 1b: Statement on David Blundell's contribution to collaborative outputs put forward for degree of PhD by Prior Output

Output:

**Blundell, D. & Cunningham, P. (2008) "Making room for the community sport coach", in Ross, A. & Cunningham, P. (eds.) Reflecting on Identities: Research, Practice and Innovation. London: CiCe, pp. 705 – 712**  
**ISBN: 978-0-9560454-7-8**

This is to confirm that David Blundell contributed a 50% share to the above output and I contributed the rest.

Signed:

Peter Cunningham

Date:

Appendix 1c: Statement on David Blundell's contribution to collaborative outputs put forward for degree of PhD by Prior Output

Output:

**Blundell, D. and Cunningham, P., "Eurovisions: 'European values', rites of passage & scripting the curriculum", Chapter 10 in Isaacs, S.(ed.)( 2017), European Social Problems, London: Routledge  
ISBN: 978-1-1389-1993-8**

This is to confirm that David Blundell contributed a 50% share to the above output and I contributed the rest.

Signed:

Peter Cunningham

Date: