EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES

Early childhood is now widely recognised by many countries as significant and there is a move towards a graduate professional workforce. The reasons for this vary: from a recognition of early childhood in its own right as a distinct phase in life; through consideration of parenting in early childhood and evidence of the significance of what happens in the earliest years to brain development; on to evidence that early childhood experiences have lifelong consequences, opportunities and costs; and a neoliberal concern with children as future economic and societal capital. Underpinned by ecological theories of development concerned with children, families and communities, the book also provides the reader with philosophical, economic and socio-logical insights and with the latest thinking emerging from post-humanism. In so doing, it provides tools that enable students to research childhood, to understand the complexities of often seemingly simple matters and to navigate critically ever-changing policy and practice in early childhood. Its breadth, depth and currency cannot fail to impress.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES

A STUDENT'S GUIDE

EDITED BY

**DAMIEN FITZGERALD &
HELOISE MACONOCHIE**

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THE INDIVIDUAL CHILD

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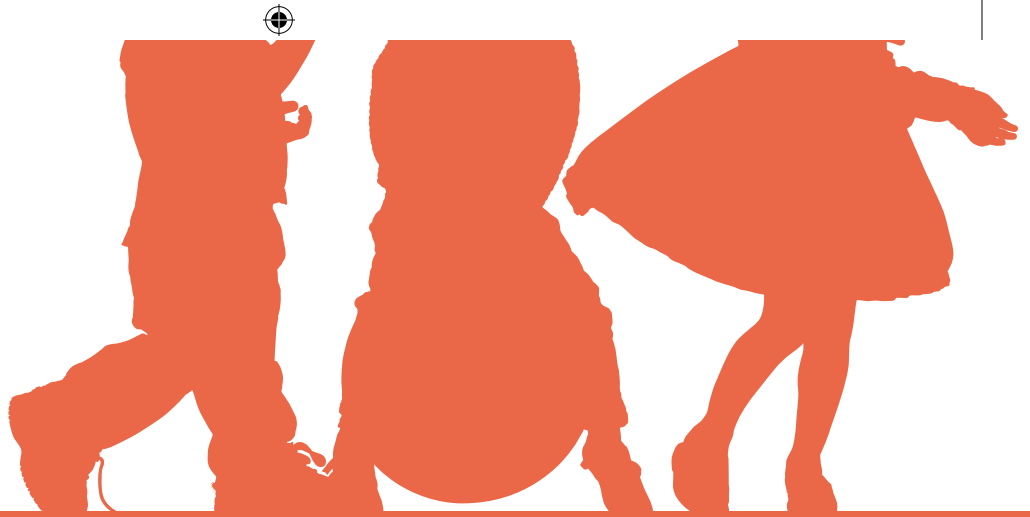
THE EMERGENCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES: AN HISTORIC OVERVIEW

BY RITA WINSTONE

This chapter is an extremely interesting read. It will help you improve your knowledge and understanding of the history and philosophy of early childhood with helpful examples throughout.

The section on key theorists has improved my knowledge and I am now able to identify the impact and influence that each key theorist has had on early childhood. The chapter also includes the impact of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). I haven't found many other books during my studies that cover this. It has also made me reflect on my own experiences when it comes to implementing policy and where I have seen it be a success but also when I have seen it fail.

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✔ **learning outcomes**

By actively reading this chapter and engaging with the reading material, you will be able to:

- discuss the concept of childhoods and how this has been a fluid concept throughout history
- consider the impact and influence of Urie Bronfenbrenner and his ecological theory
- evaluate the current understanding of childhoods considering the impact of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and how this has influenced policy
- question the current philosophy, political and social stance on children and early childhoods in society today.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter positions childhood in a broad context – historically, socially and culturally – and explores the fluidity of the concept mainly within a Western European context. The aim is to help readers understand that childhood is a socially constructed concept and to appreciate that different families, groups and cultures will have different views on childhood. The chapter will explore how childhood is linked to where and how children are situated in their family context and the broader social environment. This draws on **Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory** which facilitates an understanding of the dynamics of the influences on children within families and society and the impact this has on their development and experiences. Children and childhood are considered as a holistic whole.

The chapter will also explore the emergence of the field of Early Childhood Studies, which is presented as an alternative to the dominant paradigm of developmental psychology and theories of socialisation. It considers the importance of Early Childhood Studies being a multi-disciplinary field in that it is not just educationally focused but also embraces other academic disciplines such as sociology, psychology, history, social care, health, children's geographies and social policy. This multi-disciplinary approach reflects the ecology of young children's lives in their different contexts. Within the chapter, some of the key theorists relating to our understanding of children and early childhood will be explored, including Ariès and the social construction of childhood. In addition, the chapter will critically consider the work of Bronfenbrenner and explore the impact of his work on our current understanding of children and early childhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

THE PERCEPTION OF CHILDHOOD IN HISTORY AND THE FLUIDITY OF THE CONCEPT

This section presents an overview of the perception of childhood in history which demonstrates the fluidity of the notion of childhood and the movement towards the multi-disciplinary approach and the emergence of the focus on the agency of the individual child.

PLATO (428–327 BC)

Children and childhood have been viewed differently by society throughout the ages. In the time of Plato, the child was considered the responsibility of the whole community (Giardiello, 2014). Childhood was simply considered as the forerunner to engaging in full society. Children would be encouraged to play but it was perceived as functional. In this context, **anticipatory socialisation** was based on an assumption of trade. For instance, the children were encouraged to practise sword fighting if their trade was anticipated as being a soldier, and to play with clay-making bricks and moulds if they were destined to be a mason. Free play was considered unwelcome. This was not based on the fear of children learning to fight but rather on the basis that play often involves rules and, more importantly, making rules to fit the game. Again, with anticipatory socialisation in mind, this could well have led to changing society's rules – a situation not to be encouraged. There was an understanding implicit in this that society and the social bearings were a key factor in a child's development and learning. Play and work were inextricably linked. Play was purposeful and the child's future role the responsibility of the state, with childhood considered by society as the path to citizenship and support of the state (Giardiello, 2014). Since the education of children was key to citizenship, Plato advocated a control of the curriculum within education.

ARISTOTLE (384–322 BC)

Aristotle was a student of Plato, incorporating some of his ideas. However, Aristotle also advocated stages of learning, each of seven years, as he determined that education should be lifelong learning. The first stage embraced early childhood, and the responsibility for the child and their learning and development remained with the family. There was no formal education until age 7 and play was encouraged. Aristotle recognised the importance of early childhood in learning and development, and that the child's experiences during that period were key. He also identified that it was most successful when it harnessed the child's interests and talents.

QUINTILIAN (35–100 AD)

Over 200 years after Plato, Quintilian drew on the central philosophy inherent in Plato's work but extended this to his own ideas about the purpose and value of education – children need a strong foundation of education and should enjoy learning. Quintilian also had some strikingly familiar rhetoric – arguments we still hear today. He considered that observations were important as they provided an insight into the child's abilities and that teachers needed to be well-educated. However, Quintilian also cited poor parenting as an issue. Uneducated and disengaged parents could have a detrimental effect on the child (Giardiello, 2014). Importantly, this in itself suggests that the influences and responsibility for the child were shared between society and parents. The positioning of childhood was still strongly linked to education.

Throughout the early AD centuries, the dominating influences were Greek and Roman and their views on children and childhood were those of preparation for good citizenship – an expansion on the basic concept of anticipatory socialisation. Europe also emphasised the need for education, including supporting poorer children, though again this was more to do with society and advancement than a recognition of childhood. Interest re-emerged in the work of

Quintilian in the fourteenth century and other influences at that time included Martin Luther (1483–1546) and Comenius (1592–1670) who emphasised the importance of play and considered the mother as the important educator in the child's first six years.

REFORMATION AND RENAISSANCE

During the **Reformation** and **Renaissance** periods, the understanding of the nature of childhood and children took a dramatic shift in that the upbringing and education of the child became more concerned with the moral compass rather than citizenship. Children were viewed in many societies across Europe as inherently wicked. Children had to be corrected and brought to salvation. Martin Luther considered a good education to be a divine requirement. Children were entitled to an education and society should be supporting that aim. That was the duty of parents and society. However, there were significant changes to both the spiritual and cultural aspects of society. The emergence of the printing press and other industrialisation had an impact on attitudes to the understanding of children and childhood. Children were needed to be literate in order to make a contribution to society. The idea of children as adults-in-waiting prevailed. Societal needs impacted on the understanding of children's learning and development. Play was still considered vital to learning and development. Childhood was, however, simply the phase before adulthood, a precursor to adulthood rather than a separate stage.

JOHN LOCKE (1632–1704)

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, there were changes to the way society in Europe began to consider philosophies and the way the world was viewed. This became known as the Age of Reason and this impacted on the way childhood was considered in the light of these philosophies.

John Locke believed that a child's mind was a **tabula rasa – a blank slate –** and, as such, it was important to fill children's minds with knowledge and learning. He still maintained a philosophy of play and, indeed, thought children should divert themselves and engage in their own learning provided it was not detrimental to their health and wellbeing. He prescribed a mixture of kindness and good sense in bringing up children (Ingleby et al., 2015). He argued that their experiences informed them and children needed to have a reasoned approach so that they could grow freely yet develop respect. The idea of a blank slate was passive – the child waiting to be filled up with knowledge (Waller and Swann, 2009).

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712–1788)

In contrast to this view, Rousseau espoused that children would flourish given the right conditions. He argued that, given the right environment, children would learn and develop through discovery and exploration and in using their own imagination. This partly forms the basis of the **nature–nurture debate**. The debate centres upon whether children learn because of their genetic make-up or because of their environment, or indeed a combination of the two. However, for their learning and development to be simply a product of their environment, as envisaged when children were considered to be blank slates, is no longer considered credible as it poses

the question of how children make sense of the world around them in order to process these environmental experiences and benefit from the learning (Ingleby et al., 2015).

There are three key ideas central to Rousseau's view of children and development. First, Rousseau believed in the primacy of feeling and the centrality of matters of the heart. In the Age of Reason in which Rousseau lived, where science and technology were key, this was a radical concept. Second, he proclaimed the basic goodness of human nature. Again, this was radical as the prevailing doctrine at that time was one of original sin. People, and therefore children, were perceived as being born wicked and needing to attain redemption. Third, he did not consider children to be imperfect adults but saw childhood as a distinct and precious period of life with its own developmental stages. These ideas have significantly influenced contemporary approaches to children and their development. Within this reasoning came the recognition of the importance of including children within the fabric of the social world (Ingleby et al., 2015).

SOME OF THE KEY FIGURES IN PIONEERING UNDERSTANDING OF CHILDREN AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

During the next century, there were many influential individuals who pioneered the understanding of children and childhood and in many cases linked these to practice. These include Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852) who considered the outdoors as a learning platform; the McMillan sisters, Rachel (1859–1917) and Margaret (1860–1931), who were social reformers; Susan Isaacs (1885–1948) (see Chapter 22) who focused on the importance of social development and the centrality of the child; and Maria Montessori (1870–1952) who developed a child-centred educational approach.

Maria Montessori was a medical doctor who worked with children in the deprived areas of Rome (Nutbrown et al., 2008). She developed her philosophy and principles for childcare based on observations of children within their own environments, and her ideas impacted on our understanding of childhood and how children learn. From her observations, she devised her 'Montessori method' which considered children by ability rather than chronological age. She was a pioneer in the field of childcare and had a huge impact on children's education. She developed an innovative approach to children's education and development in that she believed that children responded to their environment and society. The Montessori method was based on the concept that all children have potential and they should be given the freedom to explore this, which could mean learning within mixed-age groups and allowing children opportunity for independent exploration and discovery. Adults are observers whilst the child is the protagonist (Neaum, 2016).

reflection point 1.1

Reflect on the Ideas and Philosophies of the Early Pioneers of Children and Childhood

Already, it can be seen that the concept of childhood is not a universal given. Each society and its dominant thoughts and ideas inform its approach to how children and childhood are

constructed. In addition, whilst this is only a brief overview, it demonstrates that children and childhood reflect the culture of the society as well.

Reflect on some of the ideas inherent in the philosophies of the early pioneers of children and childhood. Read further on those mentioned above. Consider:

- Does society still view education as a tool for a role in adult life?

With this brief overview of historical understandings of children and childhood, it is clear that much of it was linked to education and often specifically to education in preparation for an adult role in society. It was generally viewed as a precursor to being an adult and not considered as a stage of development in its own right. The eighteenth century witnessed huge change across Europe. Advances in science brought about a belief that scientific study could be applied to further understanding and this included the study of children and childhood. This was the beginning of perceiving childhood as a distinct phase. Much of this was initially rooted in physicality and psychology. However, what was also emerging was the social construction of childhood.

The evolution of the understanding of children and childhoods also emphasises that the concept of children and childhood is not a fixed perception (Walkerdine, 2017) and varies across continents, and yet we often try to discuss this as a single concept; one where we make assumptions that we all consider children and childhood in the same light. Children experience many different understandings of childhood (Waller, 2009). The focus on childhood up to this point was also closely linked with their education – training for a place in society, rather than the more holistic approach that is evident today.

THE EMERGENCE AND DRIVING FACTORS OF THE CONCEPTS OF CHILDREN AND EARLY CHILDHOOD IN WESTERN EUROPEAN SOCIETY

PHILIPPE ARIÈS (1914–1984)

Ariès was a historian who challenged the current thinking on the concept of childhood and viewed it as a social construct. In doing so, he also challenged the idea of childhood as a universal concept (James and Prout, 1997). His book *Centuries of Childhood* (published in French in 1960 and translated into English in 1962) marked the beginning of the systematic study of the history of childhood (Lowe, 2004) and still influences historic studies of childhood today. Within the text, he contested that in medieval times the idea of childhood did not exist (Ariès, 1996). Ariès suggested that childhood, as a concept and distinct period of development, only came to be recognised in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He argued that this lay in early infant mortality, where parents kept an emotional distance, and in the need for children to enter the labour market so that parents viewed them as a small adult. As the need for the child to enter the labour market so quickly receded with increasing affluence and improvements in health, the idea of childhood emerged (Lowe, 2004). Though some of Ariès' suppositions were persuasive (Lowe, 2004), they have since been contested as being based on narrow parameters

(Parker-Rees, 2015) and on the basis that evidence is weak that children were in fact treated as mini adults (Parker-Rees, 2015). In addition, Wyness (2014) notes that although the work of Ariès provides an understanding of the modern childhood, the child's voice is missing. Yet, nevertheless, his work marked the shift to a study of the historic consideration of childhood and provided a means to explore the concept of childhood as a social construct (Wyness, 2014).

By the end of the twentieth century, there was concern about the way in which children's psychology did not include a greater awareness of the impact of the social context in which a child functions. The need to consider the influences and impact of the wider social structures was acknowledged. Critique of developmental psychology led to the emergence of the social model of childhood and Bronfenbrenner's theories, as well as Vygotsky's understanding of the importance of the social impact on children's development. It also reflected the nature–nurture debate which centres on how far behaviours are learnt and how far they are a combination of genes and experience. Over time, it was acknowledged that an either/or position was too simplistic as development occurs as a combination of both (Ingleby et al., 2015). This debate links to the philosophies of John Locke who considered the mind a *tabula rasa* – a blank slate. Later theorists, including Bronfenbrenner and Vygotsky, recognised the importance and impact of children's earliest experiences. The current understanding of childhood continues to acknowledge that both nature and nurture are significant in children's growth and development. Maynard and Thomas (2004) hold that arguments around whether the biological factors or the social and cultural environmental factors are the most important, actually deflect recognition of the importance of the tension and relationship between the two influences. Indeed, it is a complex amalgamation of the two aspects that reflects the historical understandings and current perceptions of children and early childhood (Neaum, 2016).

LEV VYGOTSKY (1896–1924)

Lev Vygotsky also emphasised the importance of the social world in relation to children's learning and development. He recognised relationships with others around the child as having a direct impact on the child's learning and development. His theory of **social constructivism** was based on the concepts of a **more knowledgeable other** (MKO) and a **zone of proximal development (ZPD)**. His assertion was that a group working together could construct their knowledge to a higher degree than individuals working alone. This was, of course, dependent on the levels of interaction between members of the group. A more knowledgeable other might share their experiences and expectancies which would, in turn, promote the growth of knowledge and understanding (Waller and Swann, 2009).

THE INFLUENCE OF BRONFENBRENNER (1917–2005) AND ECOLOGICAL THEORY

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (later named **ecological systems theory** – **EST**; see Figure 1.1) considered the impact of the environment. He developed a system based on the

principle that the child was at the centre of a number of settings that influenced development. He developed terminology to define these influential layers:

- The **microsystem** is the layer of influence closest to the child. This would be the immediate environment in which the child lives, the family and the home, and care or school environment.
- The **mesosystem** considers the connections between the structures of the child's microsystem. The exosystem becomes more important as the child grows older (Gillibrand et al., 2016).
- The **exosystem** encompasses the larger social systems that would have an impact such as the neighbourhood, the extended family and the workplace of the family members.
- The **macrosystem** is embedded in the cultural values and would include the impact of government policies.
- Bronfenbrenner later added a further layer to the system: the **chronosystem,** which recognised the impact of patterns or time events in a child's life. (Christensen, 2016; Neaum, 2016)

The broader society, culture, social norms

Community, childcare, neighbours, media, policy makers

Relationships between the microsystems – school, home, health services

Direct interactions in daily life – family, friends, peers, church, day care/school

Gender, characteristics, personalities

Macrosystem

Exosystem

Mesosystem

Microsystem

Individual

Chronosystem

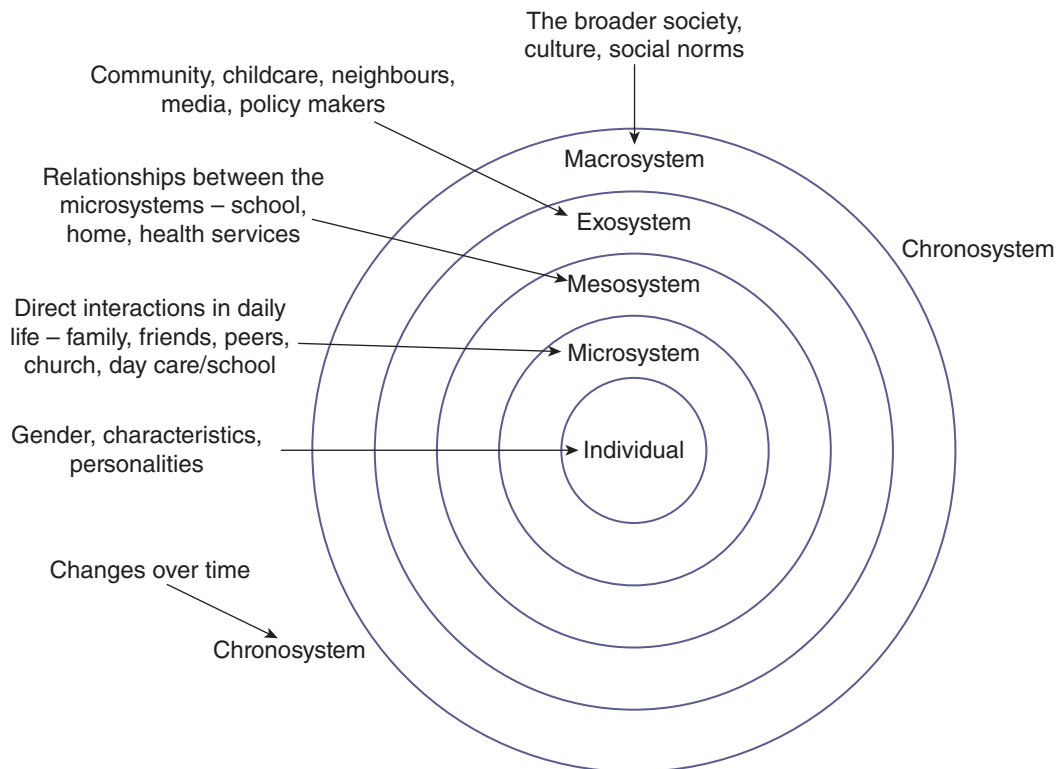Changes over time

Chronosystem

Figure 1.1   Bronfenbrenner's ecological model

Source: Diagram based on Bronfenbrenner (1979)

The impact of Bronfenbrenner's work was to reframe the understanding of children, to recognise that biological factors were subject to other influences and that social experiences were equally important (Neaum, 2016). Whilst the layers are complex, they are also bi-directional and reinforce the concept of the unique child (Ingleby et al., 2015). Bronfenbrenner also achieved a shift in the way children and childhood were studied, moving towards a more natural approach where children are studied in their own environment within natural conditions (Brendtro, 2006).

spotlight on people 1.1

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917–2005)

Urie Bronfenbrenner was born in Moscow, though moved to the United States as a young boy and spent his working life in America. He became a psychologist and as an academic became one of the leading scholars in developmental psychology.

Against the predominant view of child development as simply biological, Bronfenbrenner argued that the environment and experience all contributed to the development of the individual. He criticised the research of that period as being artificial and sought to promote practical studies of children in their own environment (Brendtro, 2006). He devised his theory on developmental psychology – ecological systems theory – which was first proposed in the 1970s. The principles of the ecological model were based on the child being at the centre of the model. The model acknowledges that the child affects and is affected by the settings they find themselves in. The most important setting for the child is the family. The principles recognise that the child's development is determined by their experiences in such settings. Bronfenbrenner argued that the quality of those experiences and interactions had important implications for development.

Following America's commitment to tackle poverty in the country, Bronfenbrenner was invited to discuss his theories and argued that it would be more productive to focus on the family and the environment, than poverty, as the impact would be more positive. As a result, the Head Start programme set up in the USA to try to combat the issues of poverty included a focus on outreach efforts and working within the community. As a point of comparison, a similar programme in the UK would be the Sure Start initiative.

The impact of Bronfenbrenner's work was significant. It reframed the prevailing understanding of children away from the idea that children and childhood are universal constants that could be defined and observed as if a scientific model. Instead, there was an acceptance of the more complex view of children and childhood. There was also an appreciation of the assertion that childhood was experienced in different ways by different children in different societies (Neaum, 2016).

This meant that whilst many biological factors remained similar across different societies, differences in children and childhood were linked to their social experience.

Critiques of ecological systems theory (EST)

There are, however, critiques of EST that focus on it not embracing the full extent of interaction and influence. Whilst acknowledging the benefits of the theory in providing an insight into

factors that impact on growth and development, Christensen (2016) notes that it is difficult to define your own values as they are an integral part of yourself and, as such, perception of this is selective. It is hard to be yourself and see yourself.

Christensen (2016) also raises the issue of resilience, arguing that it is key to understanding an individual and their capacity to cope. The term resilience was less prevalent when EST was first postulated, but, overall, much of Bronfenbrenner's work was focused on what may now be thought of as social resilience. This is particularly interesting in light of the notion of the 'diminished child', where Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) argue that the child is being diminished by repeated concern with emotions within learning. The resilience is apparent in a sense of purpose, goals and aspirations and an aim in life that is believed to be achievable (Benard, 2004).

Benard argued that these qualities further the adaptation process and are a means to effect change. In addition, Benard (1995) considered that we are all born with an inborn capacity for resilience; that it is part of our genetic base. This means that all children can achieve and the impact of support and society is very relevant. Resilience is the tool we use to develop competence and our problem-solving thinking skills. Importantly, this suggests that interventions can be successful and that there is a need to move away from the narrow paradigm of the social world having the sole impact on learning and development (Benard, 1995).

Neal and Neal (2013) considered that nested systems do not fully reflect the complexity of the way in which the systems interact and impact on each other, and that a networked configuration or intersecting circles would more properly reflect the complexity of the interrelationships of the levels. Furthermore, Penn (2014) argued that Bronfenbrenner's ecology system was too orderly and did not reflect real life and the chaotic complexity of these interactions and impacts, and highlighted Rogoff's preposition that humans do not function in isolation; that thinking is a culturally informed activity by which we make sense of life. Therefore, experiences are determined by our cultural surroundings and this is a dynamic process (Penn, 2014).

Finally, there is also a difficulty expressed in the lack of understanding within the model of international influence, particularly in the current culture of globalisation and the impact of internationalism on society (Christensen, 2016).

action point 1.1

Reflect on how you think your upbringing has influenced your life and your pedagogy.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model recognises the influence and impact of the social and physical environment on the individual. Consider each of the systems outlined in the model. How do you think you have been influenced by these factors? It might be as simple as the fact you always had a story read to you at bedtime. Who read it? Did it form a bond between reader and listener? Has it influenced you in wanting to do that for others? What feelings do you attach to that experience?

Did you have an experience at school that would impact on the way you would relate to children yourself?

Try discussing some of these memories with others. Are their experiences similar? Should they be? Why might they differ? What other social influences might be impacting on the variations?

THE EMERGENCE OF A BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF CHILDHOODS

The idea that childhood is an identifiable concept is in itself problematic. At what age does childhood end? Is it a physical stage? An economic stage? A stage of innocence? It is also dependent on cultural and societal understandings (Thurtle, 2005). However, in recognising the fluidity of the concept there has been a growing emergence of a broader understanding of childhoods, and studies focus on the uniqueness of the child whilst embracing the transient understanding of childhoods. James and Prout (1997) move the discourse towards an understanding of diverse childhoods and challenge the concept of a child as waiting to be developed, rather seeing the child as an active agent in their own development.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)

A significant change to the way childhood was considered came in the form of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989), a human rights treatise for children. In the following years, 192 countries have signed up to this legal and international agreement, though this did not include the USA. The UNCRC set out 54 articles which were binding in law, for political, civil, economic and social rights for every child. They included articles that established the child's right to choose, to health and wellbeing, to be safe and to play. The UNCRC articles fall into three broad categories: rights of provision, protection and participation. The right to have a say in all matters that affect the child (one of the participation articles) was a significant step forward in recognising the child's voice. The UK signed the document in 1990 and it came into law by 1992. There was also a recognition that there are different childhoods, but children's rights remained essentially the same.

A study of childhood now recognises the voice of the child and the strength of this is cited in the Convention (Friedman, 2007). However, giving the child a participatory, active role in Childhood Studies is not going unchallenged. Hammersley (2017) contends that the idea is fraught with inconsistencies. The voice of the child could be construed as more a reflection of adult views and, in addition, giving the child a positive role should also lead to a designated responsibility. In addition, the rights of the child might well conflict with the parental right to make a decision in the best interests of the child. It is therefore important to recognise the problematic nature of the social construction of early childhood (Hammersley, 2017).

In England, the emergence of Every Child Matters (HM Treasury, 2003) at least in part reflected some of the priorities set out in the UNCRC (e.g. being healthy, safe and making a positive contribution). Importantly, part of the Every Child Matters agenda was the realisation of a degree-led workforce. It became possible to engage in Childhood Studies which, in turn, considered the focus as wider than just education, psychology or physical attainment. It merged all these disciplines and considered the social construction of childhood in a holistic embrace. The focus was the child and childhoods. Policy does not always support this emphasis, with a focus on enabling parents to enter the workforce and a vision, at times, of children as the future workforce and education not as enrichment but a narrow approach with a curriculum-driven focus on what is needed for future employment.

reflection point 1.2

Based on your reading, consider your responses to the following:

How have ideas about children and childhood evolved and changed over time?

How do the approaches discussed underpin wider societal and political constructs of childhood?

Can you identify in what ways policies take account of our knowledge of childhood (e.g. socially, emotionally and cognitively)? And those that do not?

SUMMARY

- There are multiple and diverse childhoods and no single perspective can embrace the full understanding.
- There is also the intricacy of cultural impacts and the socialisation of the child. It is difficult therefore to attain a fixed understanding of childhood.
- History has embraced many approaches and the current realisation is one that is dynamic and responsive to the social, cultural and physical environment. The work of Bronfenbrenner was seminal in emphasising the reciprocal impact of the child and their environment.
- A defining feature of the current Eurocentric philosophy of Early Childhood Studies is its multi-disciplinary approach.

online resources

Make sure to visit https://study.sagepub.com/fitzgeraldandmaconochie for selected SAGE videos (with questions), SAGE journal articles, links to external sources and flashcards.

FURTHER READING

Christensen, J. (2016). A Critical Reflection of Bronfenbrenner's Development Ecology Model. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 69(3): 22–8.

The article utilises EST to reflect on current aspects of approaches to education.

Neal, J. and Neal, Z. (2013). Nested or Networked? Future Directions for Ecological Systems Theory. *Social Development*, 22(4): 722–37.

All theories need to be considered in the context of current understanding. This article applies the work of Bronfenbrenner alongside more recent developments to think about ecological contexts.

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