

Editorial Introduction



OVER THE PAST FOUR DECADES, studies of children, childhood and youth in history have developed internationally into a lively and expanding area of study. The recent publication of a three-volume *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society* has provided an invaluable reference source, highlighting past achievements and signalling new directions for research.¹ The ten-member editorial team and their 336 authors range over centuries, countries and cultures in their exploration of 20 broad categories: history and theories of childhood; childhood in global perspective; children in history; parenting and family relations; education and schooling; play, music and entertainment; material culture and children's spaces; race and gender; psychology; child advocacy; protection and politics; law and institutions; economics and work; industrialization and urbanization; religion, rituals and celebrations; children's literature; representations of children and childhood; adolescence and transitions to adulthood; health, medicine and disease; body and sexuality; and contemporary childhood.² A summary listing cannot do justice to the 445 detailed entries, but the general descriptions emphasize the multi- and interdisciplinary nature of the project. That interdisciplinarity has been one of the hallmarks of childhood and youth history.³ It is also an occasional source of concern for those seeking more methodological consistency.

North American scholars Ray Hiner and Joseph Hawes first addressed that issue in their introductory essay for *Growing Up in America*, when they suggested that consideration of several key questions could help to provide a coherent focus for enquiry.⁴ These included the conditions that shaped the development of children; the social, cultural and psychological functions of children; the attitudes of adults towards children and childhood; the subjective experience of being a child in the past; and the influence of children on adults and each other. More recently, when reviewing the development of childhood history in the United States over the three decades of their active involvement, Hawes and Hiner extended those guidelines to include an investigation of the institutions that have been important in defining children's lives and experiences. The influence of children was also elaborated to include four specific themes in addition to the basic notion of the universality of childhood: children as members of families; as members of a distinct population group; as producers and consumers; and as cultural and political symbols.⁵ Such an interpretative framework has not been applied as a methodological straitjacket in this issue of the *New Zealand Journal of History*. Contributors were simply invited to consider its usefulness for, and application to, their particular article. The importance of exploring adult attitudes towards children and childhood is obvious in all of the essays that follow. So, too, is the more difficult goal of trying to ascertain the subjective experience of children, the child's voice.

While adult retrospection, verbal or written, is the most immediate source

of information on childhood and youth experience — and one that itself raises questions about the reliability and authenticity of such evidence⁶ — it is by no means the only method of discerning youthful perspectives. Children's letters to newspapers; personal family correspondence; sketches and photographs; schoolwork-related poems, essays and other exercises all provide glimpses into the activities, attitudes, achievements and aspirations of young people in the past.⁷ Oral traditions, music and games can yield more indirect insights.⁸ Both retrospective and contemporary resource material need to be used with appropriate caution and consciousness of the contexts in which they are or were constructed.⁹ In that, childhood history is akin to all other historical enquiry that requires interrogation of the evidence. An apparent paucity of material is also a shared challenge. As David Northrup has suggested in his preface to *Africa's Discovery of Europe, 1450–1850*, 'we need to make the best of what does exist', relying on internal consistency and plausibility where no other corroborative material can be found.¹⁰

The value (and fun) of engaging historically with youth is demonstrated in the Summer 2005 issue of the *Journal of Social History*, devoted entirely to the theme of globalization and childhood. In his editorial preface, Peter Stearns explains the rationale behind the project, one of combining the two fields to help 'refine (and complicate) approaches to the contemporary history of globalization while providing new, less regionally-confined perspectives on childhood'.¹¹ He addresses the problems of definition — childhood, children and youth are cultural as well as biological constructs — and emphasizes the significant question of children's agency, the extent to which young people 'can participate in determining the frameworks within which they live'.¹² Child labour (including sexual exploitation), education, human rights, migration and identity, consumerism and the media are the major topics identified for exploration and synthesize the 'overarching challenge' when researching globalization and children, one of involving the application of topical studies to 'children's real lives' including their relationships with adults, siblings and peers.¹³ The articles within this interdisciplinary issue of the *New Zealand Journal of History*, although developed quite independently of Stearns's comments, confirm the importance of the lines of enquiry that he has identified while also noting the potential of religion and childhood as a further point of intersection between globalization and childhood histories. Armed conflict is another, as reflected in the multi-authored international anthology, *Children and War*, its wide-ranging coverage incorporating many of the themes which the editor, James Marten, had earlier investigated in a specific case study of children and the American Civil War.¹⁴ Recent child-centred issues of *Family & Community History* and *BC Studies — The British Columbia Quarterly* suggest additional topics and show the very considerable scope for national case studies to be enriched by comparative dimensions, an approach reflected in the international references within the articles that follow here.¹⁵

In New Zealand, as elsewhere, the high level of national concern about the physical, social, psychological and educational wellbeing of children and young people is readily apparent from commissioned reports and varied activities of key government departments, ministerial pronouncements and the on-going

formal and informal efforts of official and unofficial agencies, schools, groups and individuals to improve the quality of life for youth of all ages. The emphasis, understandably, is contemporary, not historical. The most commonly cited of all past writings on childhood and youth experience in New Zealand is the 1978 chapter by Canterbury sociologist Dugald McDonald, which proposed a conceptual framework of child as chattel (nineteenth century), social capital (Liberal era to World War II), psychological being (from the 1940s), and citizen with associated rights (from the 1970s).¹⁶ McDonald's ideas have been helpful, accessible and influential. That typology now merits some reconsideration, however, particularly in view of its monocultural approach and the emphasis on the nuclear family. At least two of the articles in this issue suggest that notions of the child as psychological being and child as citizen may need some time-period adjustment in the light of more recent research.¹⁷

In the decade following Mary Gordon's thorough bibliographic overview of Australasian research on the history of children and childhood,¹⁸ several new works contributed substantially to an increased understanding of young New Zealanders' lives in the past, particularly in relation to the influence of adult attitudes and state policies. Bronwyn Dalley's study of child welfare, Margaret McClure's history of social security and Margaret Tennant's analysis of the children's health camps are three notable examples.¹⁹ Claire Toynbee's sociological study of family, kin and community, based on oral interviews; Rollo Arnold's analysis of Kaponga; and Caroline Daley's exploration of gender dynamics in Taradale, demonstrate how attention to children and youth can enrich social and cultural histories.²⁰ A number of theses, articles, essays and book chapters have taken historical childhood experiences seriously, while the continuing output of personal memoirs confirms the enduring influence of those formative years.²¹ As yet, there is no published New Zealand equivalent of such short interpretative national surveys as *Australian Childhood* by Jan Kociumbas and *American Childhoods* by Joe Illich, both of which demonstrate the potential for a local study to be informed by international comparisons.²²

Violence against children (Sally Maclean); their status in the law (Claire Breen); the consolidation of rural schools (Logan Moss); the concern to instil social values (Geoffrey Troughton); legal provisions for schooling and the individual and family attitudes affecting patterns of attendance (Colin McGeorge); the competing and often conflicting demands made on young people's time (Rosemary Goodyear): all of the issues explored here historically have relevance to contemporary New Zealand society and suggest the possibility of more detailed comparative studies. There are obvious interconnections: education and religion; school attendance and school consolidation; children's work and educational attainment; and the changing nature and levels of protection which the law has come to provide for young people. Overall, this issue aims to provide readers with a broad framework of reference concerning many of the institutions, policies and adult attitudes that have impacted on (predominantly Pakeha) children's lives from the late nineteenth century through to the present day, and to emphasize the importance of considering the subjective experience of childhood and children's agency. Conscious exploration of the lives of children and young people opens up

the experiences of, usually, at least one-quarter of a population to historical analysis and comment. To write history with more reference to children in the past could be a powerful means of making today's world more comprehensible to those growing up in it.

Planning for this issue began in 2004, and I am appreciative of the Editorial Board's willingness to proceed with the proposal and to the Auckland editors for their support. The University of Waikato Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Small Research Grant provided funding for a contributors' workshop in mid-June 2005. Two of the articles are written by historians of education; one by a legal specialist; two by history graduates who have pursued career paths in the public sector; and the sixth is completing a PhD in religious and social history. The deliberate mix of discipline, experience and approach has made for a very rewarding editorial experience and I am grateful to all of the contributors for their commitment to the project. Emeritus Professor Neil Sutherland, doyen of Canadian childhood studies, gave generously of his time to comment on all of the works in progress. His dedication to exploring the experience and significance of children in history has been inspirational within and beyond the Canadian context for some three decades.

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NOTES

1 For a review which discusses the two major 'intellectual trajectories' informing contemporary scholarship on children and youth in the humanities and compares the social history approach of the *Encyclopedia* with the more sociological cultural studies emphasis of the 'Birmingham School', see Joe Austin, Review of Paula S. Fass, ed., *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*, 3 vols, New York, 2004 in H-Childhood, H-Net Reviews, June 2004. URL: <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=119881097066018>. Austin cites Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton, eds, *The Subcultures Reader*, London, 1997, as perhaps the best representation of the 'Birmingham' approach. Sarah L. Holloway and Gill Valentine, eds, *Children's Geographies*, New York, 2000, charts a similar growth of recent geographical research on the experiences and lifestyles of children and young people.

2 See, in particular, the essays on 'Theories of Childhood' by Catherine Burke (pp.818–25); 'Age and Development' by Stephen Lasonde (pp.38–45); and 'Comparative History of Childhood' by Peter Stearns (pp.226–32) in addition to those listed in note 5 below. For a summary overview of the development of childhood history, see my essay on 'Childhood', in Kelly Boyd, ed., *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing*, Chicago, 1999, pp.202–203.

3 Willem Kooops and Michael Zuckerman, eds, *Beyond the Century of the Child: Cultural History and Developmental Psychology*, Philadelphia, 2003, is a recent example of this approach. It includes Asian, European and North American case studies.

4 N. Ray Hiner and Joseph M. Hawes, eds, *Growing Up in America: Children in Historical Perspective*, Urbana, 1985, pp.xiii–xxv. See Joseph M. Hawes, *The Children's Rights Movement: A History of Advocacy and Protection*, Boston, 1991, and Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner, *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook*, Westport, Conn., 1985, for examples of the application of this approach.

5 N. Ray Hiner and Joseph M. Hawes, 'History of Childhood: United States', in Fass, pp.426–30. See also the essay on 'History of Childhood: Europe' by Benjamin Roberts, pp.422–6. In his final presidential address to the Society for the History of Children and Youth (SHCY), in August 2005, Hawes gave a personal retrospective of involvement in the field and listed more than 100 titles that have appeared over the past decade or so. See the SHCY Summer 2005 Newsletter No 6: URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~child/newsletters/index.htm>

6 See Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television*, Toronto, 1997, ch.1, for a discussion of the consistent 'scripts of childhood' that emerged from the major oral history project on which this book is based. Many of Sutherland's findings parallel those that emerged from interviews with New Zealanders born before 1903. See Sally Maclean and Jeanine Graham, 'The Colonial Childhoods Oral History Project: A Report on Progress', *Oral History in New Zealand*, 2 (1989), pp.31–36; and Jeanine Graham, 'My Brother and I...' *Glimpses of Childhood in our Colonial Past*, Hocken Lecture 1991, Dunedin, 1992.

7 Shirley Williams, 'Children's Voices: Insights into the History of New Zealand Childhood Through an Examination of Children's Pages in New Zealand Newspapers and Magazines in the 1930s', MA thesis, University of Waikato, 1998, considers factors influencing the nature of the published letters; Deborah Challinor, 'Children and War: A Study of the Impact of the First World War on New Zealand Children', MA dissertation, University of Waikato, 1993, examines letters written during and shortly after World War I.

8 The publications of Iona and Peter Opie in the United Kingdom, and Brian Sutton-Smith in New Zealand are two examples of studies which use children's games and play as a means of exploring the cultures of childhood. Iona and Peter Opie, *Children's Games in Street and Playground*, Oxford, 1969; Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Games of New Zealand Children*, Berkeley, Calif., 1959; and *A History of Children's Play: New Zealand 1840–1950*, Wellington, 1982.

9 See Barbara Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History*, New York, 1993, and Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School, and Street in London, 1870–1914*, London, 1996, for two examples of extensively researched studies that demonstrate how the lives of children can be imaginatively reconstructed. Timothy Gilfoyle's prize-winning article, 'Street-Rats and Gutter-Snipes: Child Pickpockets and Street Culture in New York City, 1850–1900', *Journal of Social History*, 37, 4 (2004), pp.853–62 is also notable for its focus on the lived experiences of children.

10 David Northrup, *Africa's Discovery of Europe, 1450–1850*, New York, 2002, p.xiii. His comments relate to the difficulty of accessing African perspectives of Europeans before the late

nineteenth century. Current research for an anthology of New Zealand childhood experiences has led so far to a considerable amount of material written, predominantly by Pakeha children and youth.

11 Peter Stearns, 'Globalization and Childhood', *Journal of Social History*, 38, 4 (2005), p.845. For a fuller development of these ideas, see Peter Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, Oxford, 2006.

12 Stearns, 'Globalization and Childhood', p.846.

13 *ibid.*, p.847. For a fuller development of these ideas, see Stearns, *Childhood in World History*.

14 James Marten, ed., *Children and War: A Historical Anthology*, New York, 2002, which includes my essay, 'Children and the New Zealand Wars' (pp.216–26); and *The Children's Civil War*, Chapel Hill, 1998. See also Marten's bibliographic essay, 'Never Too Young: Recent Approaches to the History of Children and War', SHCY Newsletter No.3, Winter 2004. URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~child/newsletters/index.htm>. For my CISH conference presentation on 'Distant Conflict: Exploring the Impact of World War I on Children in New Zealand', see URL: <http://www.cishsydney2005.org/program.asp?lang=EN&sub=0038>

15 Note, in particular, Maxine Rhodes, 'Approaching the History of Childhood: Frameworks for Local Research', *Family & Community History*, 3, 2 (2000), pp.121–33. The theme of *BC Studies*, 144 (Winter 2004–2005) is 'Being Young — Journeys into Adulthood'. For an outline of childhood studies in Canada, see Mona Gleason's essay in Fass, pp.129–31. Gleason won the inaugural SHCY prize for the best article published in 2001–2002 for her study, 'Disciplining the Student Body: Schooling and the Construction of Canadian Children's Bodies, 1930–1960', *History of Education Quarterly*, 41 (2001), pp.189–215.

16 Dugald J. McDonald, 'Children and Young Persons in New Zealand Society', in Peggy Koopman-Boyden, ed., *Families in New Zealand Society*, Wellington, 1978, pp.44–56.

17 Some revision is also likely to be found in the forthcoming history of the family in New Zealand by Ian Pool, Janet Sceats and Dharma Dharmalingham, to be published by Auckland University Press later this year.

18 Mary McDougall Gordon, 'Australia and New Zealand', in N. Ray Hiner and Joseph M. Hawes, eds, *Children in Historical and Comparative Perspective: An International Handbook and Research Guide*, Westport, Conn., 1991, pp.97–146.

19 Bronwyn Dalley, *Family Matters: Child Welfare in Twentieth-Century New Zealand*, Auckland, 1998; Margaret McClure, *A Civilised Community: A History of Social Security in New Zealand*, Auckland, 1998; Margaret Tennant, *Children's Health, The Nation's Wealth: A History of Children's Health Camps*, Wellington, 1994. Note also Linda Bryder, *A Voice for Mothers: The Plunket Society and Infant Welfare, 1907–2000*, Auckland, 2003.

20 Claire Toynbee, *Her Work and His: Family, Kin and Community in New Zealand 1900–1930*, Wellington, 1995; see also Lynn Jamieson and Claire Toynbee, *Country Bairns: Growing Up 1900–1930*, Edinburgh, 1992, for a parallel study of Scottish children's lives. Rollo Arnold, *Settler Kaponga 1881–1914: A Frontier Fragment of the Western World*, Wellington, 1997; Caroline Daley, *Girls & Women, Men & Boys: Gender in Taradale 1886–1930*, Auckland, 1999. See also Barbara Brookes, Annabel Cooper and Robin Law, eds, *Sites of Gender: Women, Men & Modernity in Southern Dunedin, 1890–1939*, Auckland, 2003.

21 For a listing of oral and written sources see Jeanine Graham, 'Voices of Youth: A Resource List for Teachers', *New Zealand Journal of Social Studies*, 8, 2 (1999), pp.27–35. Witi Ihimaera, ed., *Growing Up Maori*, Auckland, 1998; and Adam Manterys, ed., *New Zealand's First Refugees: Pahiatua's Polish Children*, Wellington, 2004, are two examples of collections that reflect the cultural diversity of childhood experiences in New Zealand. Sally Maclean's thesis, 'Nga Tamariki o te rohe o Waikato: Maori Children's Lives in the Waikato Region, 1850–1900', MA thesis, University of Waikato, 1990, demonstrates how official sources can be investigated to develop a local case study.

22 Jan Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood: A History*, St Leonards, 1997; Joseph E. Illich, *American Childhoods*, Philadelphia, 2002. Harvey Graff, *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America*, Cambridge, Mass., 1995, and Stephen Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, Cambridge, Mass., 2004, are recent examples of a more extended national overview. For ideas on a New Zealand framework see Jeanine Graham, 'New Zealand', in Fass, pp.623–5; and 'Towards a History of New Zealand Childhoods', *Historical Review*, 48, 1 (2000), pp.89–102.