Chapter 1 Introduction: children's emotions in policy and practice

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This edited collection focuses on children's and young people's (aged 0-25) emotions in policy-making and professional practice. It explores diverse kinds of policy and practice: from governmental policies to informal education, psychotherapy to volunteering schemes. It covers multiple substantive issues: from youth offending to nature, and from military recruitment to suicide. Critically, however, given a surge in interest in emotion, affect and feeling across several social-scientific disciplines over the past decade, the book examines the many ways in which emotions matter within these diverse contexts and forms of intervention. The chapters explore diverse forms of emotion and emotion work, including: emotions experienced during the course of professional interventions; emotions underpinning and evident (or overlooked and absent) in policy-making for children; management of young people's emotions as part of professional practice; the use of emotion to justify particular moral or political imperatives.

Each chapter draws principally upon research by academics, taken from various international contexts and academic disciplines. Grounded in and developing recent theorisations of emotion and affect, the chapters draw upon rich, original empirical materials. The chapters also tease out ways in which emotions 'make space' – how emotions constitute, and are constituted by, a range of scales, places, geographical contexts, mobilities and boundaries. Finally, each chapter ends with a short bulleted list indicating key implications for policy-makers and professionals working with children and young people. They are not intended to serve as 'recommendations', rather as pointers to critical themes for consideration by those working or engaging with children and young people.

This book examines children's and young people's emotions in policy-making and professional practice with children and young people. The book seeks both to inform readers about up-to-date research and to provoke debate, encouraging and enabling critical reflections upon emotions in policy/professional practices relevant to readers' own context. It combines theoretical and empirical rigour with a clear focus on policy and/or practice relevance, presenting work of academics most of whom work (and some of whom write) together with practitioners. The primary aims of the book are as follows:

- to outline and critically analyse how emotions, affects and feelings matter in policy and professional practice with children;

- to consider emotions within the diversity of forms of policy/professional practice with children and young people across several international contexts;

- to disseminate new findings and original understandings of children's and young people's emotions in the everyday contexts of diverse policy landscapes and professional practices;

- to develop existing theorisations of emotions in policy/professional practice contexts, drawing upon rich empirical studies of interventions aimed at children;

- to constitute an engaging resource for students and academics, as well as (trainee) professionals who work with or on behalf of children.

[A] Institutionalising children's emotions?

In March 2014, the British newspaper *The Guardian* reported on an app designed to help children aged 3-9 deal with stress (The Guardian, 2014). The app, which takes the form of a virtual world,

enables children to play games and asks them to reflect upon how they are feeling. The app's designer argues that for a variety of reasons parents are unable to communicate with their children and that this – and a whole host of other factors from school-work to the influence of social media – have led to rising incidences of stress amongst even very young children. The app is intended as a 'resilience tool' (The Guardian, 2014, unpaginated): rather than a cure for the apparent ills of contemporary childhood, it offers strategies for dealing with stress as well as acting as a prompt for parents and children to discuss such matters together.

The app raises a number of questions about the management and institutionalisation of children's emotions, all of which are pertinent to this book. First, it works as a reminder of long-standing concerns for childhood that are overtly emotional in nature, and which have for decades been the focus of critical scholarship by childhood studies and youth scholars. Whether expressed as a 'crisis' (Scraton, 2004) or in terms of the fears that adults have for children (Valentine, 1996), the app acts as a rather more contemporary reminder of the ways in which debates about childhood quickly become emotive in nature. Indeed, childhood is mobilised as a kind of 'affect' (Kraftl, 2008; Evans, 2010), a harbinger of society's deepest fears for the future, and, thus acts both as a prompt and justification for a wide variety of interventions. In this case, those interventions are technological and based on fears about rising levels of stress amongst young children; but, as the chapters in this book demonstrate, such solutions may take the form of Government policies, professionalised practices, media reportage, and more. The contributors to this book do not necessarily argue that there is anything fundamentally *wrong* with constituting policies or practices on the basis of (often powerful) emotions and affects. Rather, they offer critical analyses that attempt to expose the multiple mobilisations of emotion that – on occasion – remain hidden or unspoken within policies and professional practices for children.

Second, the status of the app – developed by a mother as a business proposition – raises questions about *who*, exactly, could or should intervene into the emotional lives of children. On the basis of

the almost universally-accepted proposition that children are both physically and emotionally vulnerable, a variety of actors could claim the proper authority to – in this case – offer ways to deal with children's emotional stress. In recent years, as the tenets of neoliberalism have been accompanied by the logics of 'austerity', countries like the United Kingdom have witnessed what Conroy (2010, p. 326) terms a 'schizophrenic' approach to policy and professional practice for children. On the one hand, he notes that the State has increasingly compelled individuals to take responsibility for themselves, rather than rely on State support. In this context, it is not surprising to see (if in this case implicit) blame upon parents for not being able to talk to their children in the 'right' way to help them manage their emotions. On the other hand, Conroy notes that the State *has* sought to intervene in the intimate details of children's lives as never before, especially in schools: from diet (in the name of pervasive fears about obesity) to toilet use, to their neurological functioning (Pykett, 2012; Gagen, 2015). If 'schizophrenia' is too strong a word, then the combination of a contradictory approach to the governance of childhood, alongside the withdrawal of the State from a wide-range of services for children and families, has certainly created a significant schism. Both by accident and by design, that schism has left an opening for a wide variety of actors and organisations – some new, some not – to provide services and support for children. Those actors include the diverse and growing voluntary sector, private businesses and social enterprise, and new, often complex forms of subcontracting between the public sector and their voluntary or private partners. Once again, based on the assumption that something must be done about today's children (in the case of the app, about their emotions), two important questions are raised, which this book begins to broach. In contemporary contexts – and not just the UK – *who* are the actors and organisations that claim the authority and the expertise to intervene into children's lives, and, especially, their emotions? And: are we witnessing, in diverse forms, the *de-*institutionalisation of childhood or the *re-*institutionalisation of childhood in complex, contradictory ways?

Third, the app – and the questions raised above – also presages important debates about both *when* and *where* adults should intervene into the emotional lives of children. As Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) note, amongst others, there has been a therapeutic turn in several professional fields in the past decade that has seen some practitioners categorising and dealing with children on the basis of children's emotional literacy, competency or behaviour. Again, the argument is not that working with or talking about emotions is inappropriate – far from it. Rather, it is that, most often, the very same children who were in the past deemed to be educationally or socially deficient (for instance, teenage boys from socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances) are re-branded as emotionally deficient - and in terms that those children are perhaps even less likely to understand. On the one hand, these critiques open out questions as to the timing of interventions into individuals' emotional lives. The logic – for instance of Children's Centres, which work with disadvantaged families in the UK – has been one of early intervention; of catching and dealing with problems early, with the attendant logic that to wait until the teenage or adult years is 'too late' (Horton and Kraftl, 2009a; Hartas, 2014). Thus, there is a logic of futurity inherent here: that dealing with problems now will prevent those problems from manifesting in more serious ways later down the line – for instance, in the explosion of an obesity 'time-bomb' (Evans, 2010). The chapters in this book cover the full range of childhood and youth – from age 0 to age 25 and in some cases beyond. Each offers a series of critical perspectives on policies and practices aimed at different age groups and, whether in the terms of smoking, orphan care, music or volunteering, each chapter provides a different perspective on the logics of futurity that undergird much policy and practice around children's emotions.

On the other hand, the app reported in The Guardian article prompts reflection upon *where* interventions into children's lives take place. In the case of the app, its designer makes an initial distinction between digital and physical spaces, wherein the former are being viewed as both a cause and a panacea for the emergence of emotional, social and behavioural problems in the latter. In fact, the app seeks to bridge this apparent divide between the digital and physical worlds, recognising that the two are, in fact, mutually and inextricably interwoven (Madge and O'Connor,

2006). This example – as well as the discussion of institutionalisation above – serves to illustrate the importance of space and place to the mapping and making of children's emotions in policy and practice. Nowhere have these debates been more prominent than in the vibrant, inter-disciplinary field of children's geographies. In that scholarship, researchers have made several pertinent observations, which are carried through many of the chapters in this volume:

- that childhood is not merely a social construction but a *spatial* one, premised on, for instance, powerful emotions (usually fear) about children in public spaces (Holloway and Valentine, 2000);

- that *images* or constructions of childhood prevalent in the Minority Global North maybe irrelevant to, offensive, or even harmful for children in the Majority Global South – from de-contextualised images of poverty-stricken children, deliberately photographed without their parents/carers to elicit shame or guilt amongst potential charity donors (Ruddick, 2003), to global discourses of children's rights that seek a universal ban on child labour when in some cases, and with clearer legislation, it could be appropriate (Bromley and Mackie, 2009);

- that the changing forms of the *institutionalisation* of childhood are shot through with various 'geographies' (Philo and Parr, 2000): from the material construction of schools to evoke particular kinds of atmospheres (such as homeliness) for the benefit of children (Kraftl, 2006), to the management of school dining halls by lunchtime supervisors in ways that control children's behaviours (Pike, 2008), to the ways in which children negotiate and feel about bullying in school corridors (Valentine, 2000);

- that emotions are *relational*, constituting experiences of place at various geographical scales (Blazek and Windram-Geddes, 2013): from the ways in which children's 'sense of place' is developed in an iterative relationship between their emotional development and their sensing of physical spaces (Bartos, 2013), to the ways in which interactions between adults

and children may not simply constitute fleeting, micro-scale interactions, but have effects that *matter* over larger scales and time periods (Kraftl, 2013a b).

Therefore a key aim of this book is to tease out the manifold, often contradictory ways in which policies and practices for children map and make spaces for children, from the local to the global scale. The notes above offer some signposts, but the following chapters flesh out these and several other critical and theoretical discussions as they subject specific policies and professional practices to detailed scrutiny.

[A] Emotions, policy and practice

Over the last 15 years, policies around the globe focused on children and youth have flourished at both the national and local scales (Kraftl et al., 2012; Youth Policy, 2015), establishing childhood as a principal interest of governments and a subject of governance. Policies are indisputably important elements in the *making* of spaces of childhood with their complexities evoking what Foucault (1980) called a dispositif, 'a thoroughly heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions' (p.194). However, as such they also offer an opportunity to *map* these spaces – and indeed childhood itself – in the sense of 'finding a way' (Pile and Thrift, 1995) for adults, professionals or not, to approach children in complex landscapes of ethics and politics. A scrutiny of the role and implications of emotions in such a process of 'way-finding' raises three themes that constitute the core of this book's contribution.

First, policies are usually declared and vindicated as rationally grounded frameworks providing a guideline for action. Yet, policy making itself is paradoxically often emotionally driven and charged, as are the embodied acts of policy advocating, promoting and disseminating. Evans (2010) and Brown (2012), for instance, demonstrate how policies related to children *are propelled* by emotions

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and they *target* emotions at the same time. Fischer (2010) shows that while emotions are seen as a 'barrier to reasoned judgment' (p.407) in policy making, they are instrumental in policy *deliberation*, while emotions associated with policies in media *representation* have usually a stronger effect on the reception of policies than any substance coverage (Gross and Brewer, 2007). Emotional media representations of childhood are in turn used to influence and negotiate policies (Khan, 2010) as are other representations of emotions (Whittier, 2009; Cass and Walker, 2009; Coe and Schnaberl, 2011). The very *implementation* of policies is an emotional process (Horton and Kraftl, 2009b) and it invokes emotional *responses* from those affected, including children and their parents (Duncan et al., 2004). Yet, in order to justify policy frameworks, a significant effort is being made to distance policy aims and narratives from the very emotional nature of the experiences, dilemmas and contexts that embed children's lives (Cooper, 2005; Kenway and Youdell, 2011). In response, this book does not simply seek to establish a place for emotions in the policy area. It acknowledges that the duality of the 'reason' and emotion and its implications for power relations in the society have been challenged – by feminist and psychodynamic theorists, among others – and the chapters in the book unfold the role of emotions in the policy making and the development of professional practice as a way of *reconnecting* emotions with the more rational deliberations and practical actions over childhoods. The chapters explore the emotional dynamics behind policy-making, in policy implementation and of policy effects, yet they link the findings back to the wider question of children's lives and how adults set about them.

Second, while reading through childhood and youth policies, from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), through national policies such as Every Child Matters (ECM) in the UK or No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in the US, to the variety of local and sector-specific documents, one gets an ambiguous sense of the supposed role of emotions in children's wellbeing. The word 'emotion' is mentioned in ECM only in reference to emotional 'problems' or 'needs', although it is contained within a frequent but somehow more equivocal term 'mental health'; 'emotions' do not appear at all in the UNCRC; and they are mentioned in relation to 'needs', 'development' or 'impairment' in NCLB.

A difficulty with such a framing is that even these limited acknowledgements of emotions tend to approach emotionality in children's lives within a referential model oriented towards a modification of children's realities in order to achieve a targeted (emotional) state, rather than to attend to how children actually feel. Along with addressing children's emotions as a (potential) problem, emotions have been also shown as a means for achieving wider policy goals, such as on participation and citizenship (Brown, 2011) or education (Lagana-Riordan and Aguilar, 2009). In contrast, the chapters in the book avoid the instrumentalist attitude to emotions and seek to adopt an open approach by building accounts of children's own emotions in various policy and practical contexts. The authors refrain from seeing emotions as a problem or a target, although they pay attention to how such conceptualisation might serve as an anchor for policy and practice. Several authors thus adopt a 'child-centred' approach in their narratives, but with a focus on what 'matters' (Horton and Kraftl, 2009b) in institutions, protocols, spaces, materialities, but also adults' own emotions and their often unpredicted and overlooked effects and entanglements with emotions of children.

Finally, various forms of professional, semi-professional and everyday practice with children such as education (Schutz et al., 2007), youth work (Sapin, 2013), care (Arnold, 2010) or psychotherapy (Barish, 2010) are perhaps more explicit about children's emotions than the policy arena. While the debates in this book are situated in some of these contexts, and the chapters are designed as aids for policy-makers and practitioners, they are not written as guidelines. Instead, the book explores the complexity of emotions as emerging and manifested through a variety of ways in practice, not always easily accessible (Blazek, 2013), and it goes beyond the instrumentalism of emotional engineering embedded in some policy materials. Rather, the chapters seek to understand professional practices through the prism of emotions; as systematic interventions in children's lives through formal and informal power mechanisms, but also in connections with policy and the wider issue of politics in adults-children relationships. Emotions have been shown to shape the spaces of professional practice (Nairn and Higgins, 2011) and to emerge at the entanglements of the structural organisation of practitioners' work and their embodied experiences with clients (Watkins, 2011;

Evans, 2011). Yet, as Bondi (2004) shows, there are ruptures in how policies are translated into everyday experiences of professionals' work, and emotions, rather than rational deliberateness, are often key in the formation of these disconnections (also Pinkney, 2011).

[A] Book synopsis

The subtitle of the book – 'mapping and making the spaces of childhood' – highlights the focus upon the diverse spaces of policy and practice that embrace children's and young people's everyday lives. While each chapter addresses particular theoretical, empirical and/or political concerns of relevance to the case study/ies in question, the organisation of the book into four parts reflects on distinctive – yet interconnected – spatial processes across several scales.

The chapters in Part I thus explore spaces of care, affiliated with family and home, or developing in their absence. In Chapter 2, Tom Disney examines the space of a Russian orphanage, focusing on the emergence of emotional entanglements at the intersection of the macro-institutional landscape and the micro-scale dynamics. He points out to the central role of emotions in the constitution of relationships between the staff, volunteers and young people, and offers a critique of the rigidity in the organisation of care. Chapter 3 is situated in a similar context yet follows a different topic. Harriot Beazley assesses the institutional response to children affected by disasters. She shows how the humanitarian action addresses central institutional provision rather than the support to children's families and communities, effectively 'creating' orphans. Like Disney, Beazley illustrates how looking at children's emotions shifts the centrality of care from institutional frames to the lived experiences of those involved in caring. Such a topic is also investigated in Chapter 4 by Sarah Wilson, who highlights children's agency against the predominant notion of dependence in challenging circumstances. Exploring the neglected significance of children's sensory experiences at home, Wilson suggests that children have underappreciated capacities of 'getting by' and she calls

for reformulating the role of social workers and other practitioners beyond the conventional language of family intervention. Finally, looking at the debates on smoking bans in cars, Damian Collins and Morgan Tymko look in Chapter 5 at an example of policy in which concerns over children's wellbeing and discourses of care and caring fail to encompass children's own experiences. Like Wilson, Collins and Tymko emphasise the importance of children's visceral and emotional experiences and also highlight their exclusion from policy-making, but they also point to the limited ability of children to address these issues on their own, advocating further engagement between adults and children.

Part II loosely ties to some of these discussions, but its principal concern is in public spaces and spaces on the verge of institutional control, including spaces of children's own peer relationships. In Chapter 6, Pascale Joassart-Marcelli and Fernando Bosco explore planning in the context of urban resilience. They critique the often symbolic nature of children's participation, which fails to acknowledge the unpredictable and often problematic impact of emotions and problematise the idea of children's participation without emotional attentiveness. Noora Pyyry, in Chapter 7, also looks at emotions associated with young people's activities in public spaces, as she suggests translating the emotional qualities of 'hanging out' and the engagement young people have with the city through such activities into the design and practices of formal education. In Chapter 8, Anoop Nayak investigates how media and policy discourses engineer and sustain the marginalisation of some young people, but also how young people's response to such discourses stimulates their emotional literacy and gives rise to a new individual and collective agency. In Chapter 9, Tamasine Preece look at young people's peer relationships from a different perspective, as she investigates self-harm in virtual spaces. She suggests that the existing policies fail to appreciate the importance of online spaces in young people's lives and she discusses the role of emotions in the establishment of relationships between young people's online and offline identities.

Following from this debate, Part III explores children's emotions in the context of spaces of informal education and professional interventions that operate on the low-threshold principles and/or as forms of outreach interventions. In Chapter 10, Ruth Cheung Judge analyses emotional governance in the context of volunteering trips between London and Sub-Saharan Africa and young people's responses to it, highlighting how emotions are embedded in power relations that problematize the idealised notion of young people as neoliberal subjects. Chapter 11 offers an account of how emotional qualities of young people's positioning in youth work practice fail to be acknowledged by the associated policies, leading Douglas Lonie and Luke Dickens to suggest a more symmetric relation between policy and practice. In Chapter 12, Lorraine van Blerk and Daryl van Blerk discuss potential connections between therapeutic practice and research, seen as a form of intervention. Looking at the spatialities of professional practice, they point out how research might be the first and only engagement of some young people with helping institutions, and they argue for a coordinated approach to first-contact provision. In Chapter 13, Matej Blazek and Petra Hricová draw on their experience from detached youth work to re-theorise the very approach to working with children's emotions. They draw links between power inequalities between adults and children and suggest focusing on relationships with young people that would be supportive of their social, spatial and emotional autonomy, instead on the striving to diagnose how young people feel.

Part IV follows with examining spaces of schooling, formal education, and the 'making of' future citizens. It begins with Chapter 14, in which Lisa Procter revisits the multi-sensory nature of children's engagement with their environments, investigating the potential of outdoor spaces for a wider notion of curricular education, based in children's ties with their everyday environments. In Chapter 15, Jennifer Lea, Sophie Bowlby and Louise Holt draw on their research on Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties, exploring the impacts of socio-spatial organisation of special units in schools on the formation of young people's identities. Chapter 16 then provides an explicit account of emotional governance in formal education, as Bronwyn Wood shows how citizenship education is based on reducing the array of young people's emotional responses to only some that

are deemed acceptable. Wood puts this within a perspective of power inequalities in schools and traces the breadth and depth of emotions which remain disregarded or suppressed. Finally, in Chapter 17, Kathrin Hörschelmann problematises the responsibility over young people's future in her analysis of military depictions of childhood and concludes the empirically based chapters of the book with a series of questions about ethics and politics of childhood across the fabrics of the adult society. The book concludes with Chapter 18 written by the editors, which ties together the key implications of the individual chapters for theorising emotions, both in general, and in terms of policy/professional practices with children.

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