Please cite the Published Version

Performing child(hood)

Abstract

Taking an example of play as our point of departure we consider what it means to be a child and to perform (Butler, 1990a, 1990b) childhood. By drawing on poststructuralist accounts of subjectivity, language and meaning (Foucault, 1979; Derrida, 1974) we argue that despite powerful discourses that seek to contain childhood, children manage to exceed or interrupt sites of containment. We then go on to suggest that if children themselves are moving beyond some of the discourses in which they are enwrapped how might we seek to further destabilise what 'becoming' (Deleuze, 1990) child might mean and what might be the implications for our practice(s) with children.

Introduction

What are the consequences when childhood is understood as a performance (Butler, 1990a; 1990b)? What might be the cultural, political and moral implications for understanding the child outside of the usual bounded spaces that circumscribe childhood including those of developmental psychology (Burman, 1994; Morss, 1996)? In order to address these questions this paper centres attention on one extract of data. By drawing on poststructuralist accounts of subjectivity, language and meaning (Foucault 1979; Derrida, 1974) we argue that despite powerful discourses that seek to contain childhood, children somehow manage to exceed sites of containment. We then go on to suggest that if children themselves are able to risk staining the discourses in which they are enwrapped how might practitioners in general but ourselves especially seek to further disrupt what 'becoming' child might mean (Deleuze, 1990).

We begin by establishing a research context before describing the theoretical and methodological approaches that underpin the study. The data is then introduced. By subjecting this to a number of close readings possibilities for seeing children differently emerge.

Situating the paper

The data emerged from a study that was located in a kindergarten (for children aged 3-5 years) in the North-West of England, where one of the authors, Ian, had previously been the head teacher. The data was collected as part of Ian's doctoral studies, an ethnographic project that was concerned with experiences of ethnic identity amongst the ninety children, three quarters of whom were Pakistani British, the remainder being White British (Barron, 2009). Ethnographic research is particularly powerful in appreciating how children negotiate the daily practices of schooling including those around ethnic and gendered membership (Corsaro, 1981).

Access to the setting was eased because the staff knew Ian. However, the question of familiarity within a setting such as a school is seen as a particular problem within ethnography where one's knowledge of the context might predispose selectivity in terms of what is seen and what is recorded (Gordon et al., 2001, Jones et al, 2010). Similar doubts linger around the ways in which insider knowledge might incline towards certain interpretations and preclude others. To caution against such a move, Lather (2001) counsels adopting a 'stuttering relation' to data so as to resist preferred ways of interpreting. Similarly Brothman (1999), following Derrida, suggests undertaking forms of analysis that are full of 'intimacy' yet simultaneously riddled with 'tension' (70) where close readings are undertaken but where trying to get to the heart of the matter (which in Derrida's terms is described as 'presence') is resisted. As such, we want to read the data knowing that 'meaning owes its existence to something that is absent – to what it lacks – as much as to what is present to it and within it' (Brothman, 1999, 70).

By perceiving subjectivity as being constituted within discourses whilst additionally being sceptical about language/meaning (Foucault, 1972; 1979, Jones and Barron, 2007) it is possible to see how the discursive practices of schooling work at 'fabricating' (Foucault, 1979, p. 217) individuals within the social order and it is this, which both enables/constrains potential, thoughts, language and ways of being. As Britzman (2000) notes,

> Discourses authorize what can and cannot be said; they produce relations of power and communities of consent and dissent, and thus discursive boundaries are always being redrawn around what constitutes the desirable and the undesirable and around what it is that makes possible particular structures of intelligibility and unintelligibility (Britzman, 2000, 36).

The data

Clarke (2005, 166) describes the ethnographer as one who 'wanders about', gathering 'stories' and acquiring 'collectibles'. The following 'story' can be understood as one such 'collectible':

Jack, a four-year-old boy of white-British heritage is in the construction area. Aisha a girl of Pakistani heritage, also aged four, enters the area and says:

Hello Jack.

Jack ignores her.

Aisha repeats the greeting: *Hello Jack*.

Jack ignores her again.

 Aisha then says: *I said, hello Jack*

Jack replies: *I'm not Jack*.

Aisha asks: *Well, who are you then*?

Jack: *I'm Luke*

Aisha: 'Well, Luke – there's a train coming- it's raining, it's pouring, the old man is boring.

Aisha then goes up to Jack/Luke and, standing very close to him, she roars.

Jack/Luke: *Tie my shoe- lace*

Aisha: *I can't*

Jack/Luke: *It's a dress up party at our caravan[1]...I'm ready for the dress up party...they're going to dance... It's a rudey dress up party where you get your clothes off.* (Field notes, Xxx, 2006)

1. Some of the families hired caravans for summer holidays

If, as Clarke suggests, ethnography is about collecting 'impure', 'messy' and complicated 'stuff' how then does the researcher go about the task of 'handling' such 'stuff' (Clarke, 2005: 16)?

Performing Aisha and Jack

A number of possibilities could be advanced to seek to explore the interaction between Jack and Aisha. If we start by looking at some of the key moments in the engagement and turn to the initial greeting, some, such as early years teachers, might seek to make sense of the interaction by drawing upon knowledge gleaned as part of their initial training, so often influenced by traditional developmental psychology. The reading here would be one which focused on the individual, Davies' (2010, 54) 'subject-of-will' where '....the singular, self contained human individual is fundamental to understanding being'. Such a reading would perhaps argue that what is evident

here is the egocentrism (Piaget, 1954, 1975) of two young children who are unable much of the time to move beyond their own preoccupations and world view to be able to engage with each other.

We would like to venture a different kind of analysis, to which we now turn. Our 'handling' of the data seeks to shift attention from the normativity of the subject of will to the multiplicity of the 'subject of thought' and '*receptiveness* to the not-yet-known … and towards emergent possibilities of thought and being' (Davies, 2010, p. 58, original italics). Our approach is influenced by Derrida's notion of 'active interpretations' (Derrida, 1978: 292). 'Active interpretations' are located around the realisation that 'pure perception does not exist'; rather, 'we are written only as we write, by the agency within us which always already keeps watch over perception, be it internal or external' (Derrida, 1978, p. 226).

Taking these thoughts across to Aisha and Jack, we want to consider what it is that they performatively accomplish within the above encounter. As already noted, Aisha is of Pakistani heritage and it might well be that within her home community there are greeting rituals that share some commonalities and differences from those practices that are enacted with the classroom or that she has come to learn the kinds of greetings that adults believe that speakers of English as an additional language need in classrooms. Classrooms, like other enclosed spaces (MacLure, 2003) such as libraries, hospitals and prisons are all places that are stratified by particular practices that work at making them intelligible (Britzman, 2000). In Aisha's case, she will have learned the 'correct' way of greeting a fellow member of this particular community (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Via various strategies and practices, some stemming from direct adult action and some as a consequence of her own efforts in observing and listening in on adults and other children (Rogoff et al., 2003), she will know that 'Hello Jack' is one of the customary and acceptable ways of greeting in this specific space.

But, if Aisha has learned the customary practice that is used in this community when greeting one another, what about Jack? Despite Aisha greeting him twice, he does not respond. Whilst it could be argued that Jack has not learnt the conventions as successfully as Aisha, such an interpretation is not the only one possible. A more sociological view drawing, for instance, on the work of Corsaro (1981, 1991) would be concerned to understand the social, cultural and structural network in which meaning in this context was enmeshed. An argument could then be made that despite succeeding in using a conventional (adult) greeting, Aisha is not successful in negotiating access because she is unable to link her greeting / entry to the on-going play in which Jack is engaging, a determinant for

Corsaro of successful entry negotiation. Again the reasons for Aisha's lack of success could be many. Perhaps she did not see the preceding play and so was not able to make a connection to it or had not yet developed the skills to be able to do so. It is also perhaps worth noting that her first language is Punjabi and that whilst her use of English may be deemed skilful by adults judging her ability to use conventional (adult) greetings, such a greeting may well not be the way that young children who speak English as a first language usually greet each other. In this scenario, 'Hello Jack' may not have seemed a familiar form of greeting to Jack, not the way that children speaking English as a first language usually speak to him, marking Aisha as 'other' and emphasizing what is not shared between the two of them.

In her third attempt to elicit a response Aisha says 'I said, hello'. The polarity between Jack's silence and Aisha's use of the personal pronoun 'I' is interesting especially when we understand language as providing 'subjects positions' to occupy (Henriques et al., 1998). It allows us to ask: how does Jack's silence position Aisha? What are the consequences of the personal pronoun in terms of Jack's positioning?

Turning to Jack, if we were to adopt a normative reading, suggested by observations of and participation within the space, we can see his refusal or reluctance to respond as akin to breaking the rules of engagement that circulate within the space. Such rules are underpinned by curriculum practices, which are brought into being with definite intentions in mind. In this classroom, greeting rituals are just one of the many social practices that are aimed at the realisation of the normal and the well-socialised boy or girl. By keeping silent, Jack is neither being 'sensitive' to Aisha's 'feelings' nor is he showing 'respect' and as a consequence he behaves in opposition to some of the traits that are perceived as curriculum goals within the UK's Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (Department for Education and Skills, 2007).

It is, we think, possible to understand Jack's silence in less normative ways, as an irritant, mobilised to frustrate and forestall Aisha. Our sense is that if Jack had returned the greeting and had said 'Hello Aisha' he would have gone beyond being merely polite; his greeting might well have served to open the road to the construction materials. By losing his voice so to speak he performs a sleight of hand where his 'self' as understood by Aisha 'disappears'. We are tempted into seeing Jack's silence as performative play so as to accomplish both resistance and confusion of Aisha and her advancements - advancements that carry the strong possibility of wanting to share Jack's space. Keeping silent provides Jack with temporary respite from having

to act when the options or choices of how to act are fairly heavily scripted within the social milieu of the environment.

Butler's insights into 'performativity' are helpful here. As she notes, her original clue for 'performativity' came from Derrida's reading of Kafka's "Before the Law". She elaborates: 'There the one who waits for the law, sits before the door of the law, attributes a certain force to the law for which one waits. The anticipation of an authority is attributed and installed: the anticipation conjures its object' (Butler, 2006, xv). Turning back to Jack, his silence can be understood as 'anticipation' where he knows that the 'law' of this room is predicated on sets of injunctions that will include 'being fair' and 'sharing'. As injunctions they operate externally on Jack. But, through a sustained set of acts, 'the law' becomes internalised and hence naturalised. Such acts will include daily events such as 'carpet time' when all the children gather and sit on the floor at the feet of the practitioners. These ritualised moments insist that children sit in particular ways, and, as MacLure points out, even learn 'how to look attentive or surprised' (2003, 18) in appropriate ways. It is by and through these practices that 'the truth' of the child is produced (Walkerdine, 1988, 204) and the docile body comes into being (Foucault, 1987). Jack's silence can be understood as an example of a 'subtle interactional judgement' (MacLure, 2003, 19) that he enacts to ward off not just Aisha but 'being' the child who 'shares', 'cares' and so on.

The moment where Jack proclaims that he is 'Luke' is another moment of particular challenge in terms of seeking to understand both Jack's and Aisha's behaviour. It is Aisha's use of what we might understand as the sovereign or law like 'I' that obliges Jack to abandon silence:

'I'm not Jack'.
'Well who are you then?'
'I'm Luke'.

Following Derrida (1974) we might see the erasure of the name 'Jack' as a way of getting rid of the word that signifies who Jack *'really'* is. In other words he is trying to escape the sign that makes him obviously knowable. He has to adopt the pseudonym of Luke because Aisha as 'girl' (always) reminds him by her difference that he is a boy which Spivak summarises as 'the strange "being" of the sign: half of it "not there" and the other half always "not that" (1976, xv).

Aisha does not challenge or argue with 'Luke (who once was Jack)'. Rather she recites a stream of (dis)connected words:

'Well Luke – there's a train coming - it's raining, it's pouring, the old man is boring.'

So what is going on here? Again a number of possible explanations could be advanced. Could it be that the reason that Jack ignored Aisha earlier is because, in the episode that preceded Aisha's appearance and greeting, he was 'Luke' in his play? If so, in telling Aisha that he is Luke, he is granting her access to play with him. In this reading, Aisha accepts that he is called Luke because she recognises that he is now allowing her to be his playmate. The apparently nonsensical *'there's a train coming - it's raining, it's pouring, the old man is boring'* could then relate to the play in which Aisha saw and heard Jack engaging in as she approached him and to which he has now allowed her access. According to this reading, far from subverting or challenging notions of expected (schooled) child behaviour, Aisha is, in some ways, seeking to re-establish what is expected of young children playing together, though in ways which may not be readily accessible to normative adult readings of the situation.

In our efforts to theorise what might be happening here, we have found Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) figuration of the rhizome helpful. Modernist conceptions of both thinking and development are often characterised as a tree where sturdy, stable roots below ground give sustenance and support to a sturdy stable system above ground. In contrast, rhizomes have no central organisation and sprout vertical stems randomly. Thinking of both children within the metaphor of the rhizome gives us a break from common sense and/or logical thinking. It expands our scope for seeing that whilst each is caught within expected codes that legitimate what it means to be a child in this kindergarten, they themselves can play around with or trifle with conventions. In behaving rhizomatically the children forsake the usual patterns choosing instead 'lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). As Deleuze and Guattari emphasised 'There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines' (1987, 9).

Aisha's rhythmic jumbling of partly discernable fragments contrast quite markedly with what might have been expected from the 'docile body' of the child. She does not, for example, appeal to any external voice of authority; one that would challenge or even rebuke the so–called Luke. Rather she moves from tacit acceptance of Luke to a rush of words that culminate in moving physically closer to Luke so that she can 'roar'. From out of nowhere she introduces 'a train coming' and in so

doing she takes both the boy and herself into the realm of nonsense. Butler's notion of 'excitable speech' (Butler, 1997) as having the capacity to 'injure' is useful here. She writes, 'To be injured by speech is to suffer a loss of context, that is, not to know where you are. Indeed, it may be that what is unanticipated about the injurious speech act is what constitutes its injury, the sense of putting its addressee *out of control*' (3, our emphasis). Aisha causes further consternation by moving from the train to a nursery rhyme. Again she trifles with what Jack/Luke might have been anticipating by substituting a 'snoring' man for one that is 'boring'. And whilst it might well be that 'boring' was chosen because it rhymes with 'snoring' it also resonates with and hints at the tiresome Jack and his refusal to acknowledge Aisha's greeting and his messing up of the social order in which people do not change their names.

We can read Aisha's performance as an assemblage of ruptures that are simultaneously starting points. Thus she knows how to 'be' and 'do' the 'polite child' as epitomised in her twice uttered greeting of 'Hello Jack'. She can also assemble and reassemble aspects of a familiar nursery rhyme so as to execute her own performance of confusion; one which might well have been quickly summoned so as to parry, dodge and maybe 'injure' the impostor - 'Luke'. Finally both her close proximity to 'Luke' and the roar that she executes serve to burst her hitherto polite persona. Her roar is a call of the wild, of the animal, of the untamed. Perhaps it is because it is irrational and so out of keeping with any expectations that Jack/Luke might have of Aisha that he needs to do something which will re-position her into an 'intelligible' subject (Butler, 1990b).

His request for her to 'tie his shoelace' is interesting. On the one hand it renders him as a needy child but on the other it does make Aisha once again 'knowable' whereby, in attending to Jack, her performance will be recognisable as that of quasi-adult. She however declares 'I can't', a statement which on one level might mean that she literally cannot execute the task and/or it might carry a trace of the 'thing' that roared, the unintelligible Aisha who does not undertake domestic tasks such as tying up shoe laces. The positioning(s) that each child takes up comes from the friction that lies between the interplay of inside-outside (Butler, 1990) where Aisha works on Jack and he in turn works on her but where both try and subvert each other.

…and rudey bodies

Maybe, because Aisha cannot be positioned as substitute adult/mother, Luke/Jack has to pursue another narrative, one that might provide an exit from that of needy child. By introducing a 'dress up

party at our caravan' he invokes two practices where one (dressing up) will have some resonance for Aisha whilst the other (holidaying in a caravan) might be less familiar. But then he states that, 'It's a rudey dress up party where you get your clothes off'.

Vacillating in and amongst this narrative is 'the body'. Our own curiosity around 'the body' in Jack/Luke's narrative centres on the movements that it makes. To 'dress up' implies the clothes being special but because it is a 'rudey party' they are simply to garnish the meat of the business - getting 'your clothes off'. As we glimpse Luke/Jack through this narrative we are pretty certain that his performance of (him)self is one which does not quite conform to the wished-for way that four-year old children, or indeed four-year old boys, are 'supposed' to be. We want to suggest that his performance troubles a number of boundaries that are imposed around both the child and the child's body. Mary Douglas' (1966) anthropological work around taboo is helpful in that we can appreciate how 'the very contours of 'the [child's] body' are established through markings that seek to establish specific codes of cultural coherence' (Butler, 1990b, 178). As Douglas notes:

> … ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have
> as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only
> by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male
> and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created (1966, 4).

Butler (1990b) points out that whilst Douglas is clearly subscribing to a structuralist distinction between an inherently unruly nature and an order imposed by cultural means, it is nevertheless possible to redescribe the notion of 'untidiness' to which Douglas refers 'as a region of *cultural* unruliness and disorder' (Butler, 1990b, 179, our emphasis). Butler expands:

> Assuming the inevitable binary structure of the nature/culture distinction,
> Douglas cannot point towards an alternative configuration of culture in which
> such distinctions become malleable or proliferate beyond the binary frame
> (Butler, 1990b, 179).

But that aside, Butler does see Douglas' analysis as providing a point of departure for understanding the relationship by which social taboos institute and maintain the boundaries of the body as such. She writes, 'the limit of the body is never merely material, but that the surface, the skin, is systematically signified by taboos and anticipated transgressions' (Butler, ibid). Following

both Butler and Douglas we can now ask: has Luke/Jack become a 'polluted person' in that he has 'developed some wrong condition' (Douglas, 1966, 133)? Has his talk of 'rudey' parties and getting clothes off 'crossed over some line which should not have been crossed' (Douglas, ibid)? And finally, if he has crossed a line, has this displacement unleashed 'danger for someone' (Douglas, ibid)?

The hedonistic events that Jack/Luke conjures in the caravan sit uneasily with some of our treasured notions concerning the child. Certainly he menaces notions of the innocent child where he seems to have cognisance of a world that exceeds developmentalist conceptualisations of childhood. And if he is not innocent what is he? Corrupt? Impure? Sullied? The risk in thinking of Jack within these terms is to pathologise him, to see him as a variant or deviant from 'the norm'. 'Normal' children can and do tell stories about marriages, babies and so on. But the trouble with Jack's story is that it sits outside of what is 'comfortable' in terms of adults' desire for a particular kind of childhood and a particular kind of moral order that excludes (even playful) reference to taking off one's clothes at a party. In observing the terrain of childhood and sexuality, Bruhm and Hurley (2004) note that people 'panic when children's sexuality takes on a life outside the sanctioned scripts of child's play' (xi). Does Jack conjure events, which go beyond the narrative pale of what is (and is not) permissible to tell? Are there some kinds or forms of language that constitutes the 'normal' child and by inference exposes the dissident one?

Aisha's string of familiar yet strange words, and her roar in response to Jack's insertion of the impostor 'Luke', we initially found confused and confusing and, in part, this was what propelled us into opening up different ways of thinking about the children's play. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offer us another way of reading Aisha and it is a reading that can offer us clues as to why Jack/Luke summoned the fantasy of the 'rudey' party. Central to this reading is Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'becoming' which is radically different from sociological or psychological perspectives that relate to 'being' and 'becoming'. As Deleuze and Guattari note, 'becoming is creation' (106). They continue, 'A becoming is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification' (237). They also make the point that while 'there is no performed logical order to becomings and multiplicities, there are criteria and the important thing is they not be used after the fact, that they be applied in the course of events, that they be sufficient to guide us through the dangers' (251). We take this to mean that in becoming one's subjectivity is thrust into new ways of thinking so that what materialises is a unique composition. Aisha in uttering her poetic but nonsensical words plus the

roar has not become half-girl, half lion for this would mean that in a half and half state she would have forged an alliance between two singularities which keeps the signification of each. Rather we would like to suggest that she has dissolved the boundary between her speaking self and her roaring self and in so doing the ontological categories that we would normally use to pin either Aisha or the lion down are disrupted. In re-examining Aisha's string of words and the roar it is difficult to detect logical order but what is possible to discern is that she applied the words, the roar and the moving closer to Jack/Luke 'in the course of events' that guided her through the 'danger' which hovered as a consequence of the introduction of 'Luke'. As Patricia MacCormack (2001) points out 'becomings can be as liminal or as domestic as we desire based on the potentials of our own being to expand into a process of hijacking the movement and rest, speed and slowness of that which we become' (2). Aisha's body can be understood outside of the 'conscious self' or the 'biologically determined self'; rather it is 'understood through *what it can do*- its processes, performances, assemblages and the transformation of becoming' (Springgay, 2008, p. 2, original emphasis).

We want to suggest that whilst Aisha fleetingly created a different zone between herself and Jack, a space where novelty and creativity could occur and new ways of relating to one another might have proliferated he nevertheless was unable or could not take up the challenge. MacCormack (2001), following Deleuze and Guattari, makes a number of points that we have found illuminating. She notes that the white able-bodied hetero male (which Deleuze and Guattari describe as 'the majoritarian') is 'encouraged not to make new and strange connections…but rather fulfil a certain form of subjectivity fixed in space' (2). Tellingly she notes that 'one is never safe in a dominant position but must re-establish the rules of dominance while fulfilling the expected subjectivity of these rules' (3). And, whilst cautious, we nevertheless understand the statement 'one is never safe' as heralding possibilities for cutting into what is still the yard stick by which subjectivity is appraised - 'the white heterosexual male' - and against which the non-white and the non-heterosexual individual is aligned and negatively construed.

Concluding remarks

Momentarily we glimpsed an encounter between two children. We highlighted the way in which this might be understood through the eyes of a teacher, drawing upon traditional developmental psychology as though there was an unquestionable moral base from which to judge and shape children. What we then offered instead were 'active interpretations' through which we tried to disentangle this milieu. Our principal focus was on the complexities of what it means to be 'a child'

within these parameters. What became apparent (to us) was that neither Jack nor Aisha relied upon a singular identity. Rather each assembled different performances as a consequence of 'reading' differences within the situation. Both children were able to 'subject' one another to different discursive practices, which led to each being positioned differently. This meant that they had to renegotiate themselves through different performances. Identity for Jack/Luke and Aisha was never singular, stable or uniform and neither straightforward nor uncomplicated. It was an ongoing struggle where revisions to notions of self had to be taken. Both children were involved in what MacLure has described as a 'constant process of becoming' involving what is 'an endlessly revised accomplishment that depends on very subtle interactional judgements'. This, as she summarises, 'is always risky' (2003, 19). Thus, Aisha's outpouring of words could have been met with the risk of jeers. Similarly, her encroachment of Jack's space so as to roar might have incurred a shove.

Previously we made the point that 'we are written only as we write, by the agency within us which always already keeps watch over perception, be it internal or external' (Derrida, 1978, 226). Whilst we recognise that our dual perceptions have infected the data we have nevertheless tried to undertake what Scheurich (1997) describes as 'creative interactions with the data'. This has involved following at times a number of quirky lines of inquiry that allowed us to move from the banality of one child greeting another to the more idiosyncratic aspects of the encounter so as to appreciate conventional and subversive performances of being child. In examining the events involving Aisha and Jack (and Luke), we have tried to put theory to work to counter the appeal of construing children in some ways and not others. We see this as a step in jamming the machinery and apparatus of early years education so that in the resultant confusion we might take the risk in thinking differently.

This might well involve stepping outside the norms of recognised practice as outlined in many professional guidance documents (e.g. the United Kingdom's *Early Years Foundation Stage*, 2007). Deleuze offers us confidence in this endeavour when he writes, 'once one steps outside what's been thought before ..... once one ventures outside what's familiar and reassuring, once one has to invent new concepts for unknown lands, then methods and moral systems break down and thinking becomes, as Foucault puts it, a "perilous act", a violence, whose first victim is oneself (Deleuze, 1995, 103- 4, quoted in Semetsky, 2006, 344).

Thus, as a first step, we have to work on ourselves and the way in which we make judgements. Our 'taste' for making judgements is, as Deleuze (1980) notes, inextricably linked with our taste

for morality where 'judging always implies something superior to an ontology'. He suggests that we should avoid individualizing and judging by forestalling an eagerness to relate certain actions, ways of behaving and so on to values (Deleuze, 1980). Instead, we can ask what makes certain moments, including an encounter between two children, possible? Deleuze elaborates further, 'you relate the thing or the statement to the mode of existence it implies, that it envelopes in itself…You seek the enveloped modes of existence and not the transcendent values' (Deleuze, 1980, no page given), and in so doing we move from explanatory, judgemental readings to ones that Deleuze suggests are more ethical (1980).

As practitioners, is it possible to create openings for observing children's activities and interactions as precursors for purposeful conversations with other practitioners aimed at moving ourselves beyond familiar views of what it means to perform child? Can we confound our own confidence in orthodoxies (including developmental psychology) in order to resist both normalising and pathologising children? Can we resist the supposedly common sense, the common place and the dominant discourses, which seek to understand 'child', and in so doing cast new light on the complexities of children's lives and interactions? Can we ourselves work rhizomatically with children so as to create spaces where we can think differently about how to work with and support them as they grapple with the gender, class, sexuality, race and culture–based complexities and contradictions of what it means variously and multiply to perform child?

References

Barron, I. (2009) Illegitimate participation? A group of young minority ethnic children's experiences of early childhood education, *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 17: 3, 341 - 354

Britzman, D. 2000 "The question of belief": writing poststructural ethnography. In *Working the Ruins: Feminist Poststructural Theory and Methods in Education*, (eds.) E.A. St Pierre and W. Pillow. New York, Routledge.

Brothman, B. 1999. Declining Derrida: integrity, tensegrity, and the preservation of archives from deconstruction, *Archivaria* 48
Bruhm, S. and Hurley, N. 2004. Curiouser: On the queerness of children. In *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children,* eds. S. Bruhm and N. Hurley. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
Burman, E. 1994 *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*. London: Routledge.
Butler, J.1990a Gender trouble, feminist theory and psychoanalytical discourse. In *Feminism /Postmodernism*, ed. L. Nicholson. New York: Routledge.
Butler, J. 1990b. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge.
Butler, J. 1997 *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative*. New York & London: Routledge.

Clarke, A. 2005. *Situational Analysis Grounded Theory After the Postmodern Turn.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Corsaro, W.A. 1981. Entering the child's world: strategies for field entry and data collection in preschool settings'. In *Ethnography and Language in Educational Settings, eds.* Judith Green and Cynthia Wallat. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex,.

Davies, B. 2010. The implications for qualitative research methodology of the struggle between the individualized subject of phenomenology and the emergent multiplicities of the poststructuralist ~~subject~~: the problem of agency. *Reconceptualising Educational Research Methodology*, 1, (1), pp. 54-68.

Deleuze, G (198) *Cours Vincennes* 12/21/1980. Available at http://www.webdeleuze.com

Deleuze, G. 1990. Control and Becoming. Gilles Deleuze in conversation with Antonio Negri Conversation with Toni Negri *Futur Anterieur* 1(Spring 1990), translated by Martin Joughin. Available at http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdeleuze3.htm

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Athlone.

Department for Education and Skills. 2007. *The Early Years Foundation Stage*. London: HMSO.

Derrida, J. 1978. *Writing and Difference* (translated by A. Bass). London: Routledge.

Derrida, J. 1972. *Dissemination*. London: Athlone.

Douglas, M. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge.

Foucault, M. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock.

Foucault, M. 1979. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (translated by A. Sheridan). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Gordon, T., Holland, J., Lahelma, E., and Tolonen, T. 2005. Gazing with intent: ethnographic practice in classrooms. *Qualitative Research* 5, no. 1: 113-131.

Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C., & Walkerdine, V. 1998. *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Jones, L. and Barron, I. (2007) *Research and Gender*. London: Continuum.

Jones, L, Holmes, R., MacLure, M, and MacRae, C. 2010. Documenting classroom life: how can I write about what I am seeing? *Qualitative Research* 10 , no. 4: 479-491

Lather, P. 2001. Postmodernism, post-structuralism and post(critical) ethnography: of ruins, aporias and angels'. In *Handbook of ethnography*, eds. Atkinson, P., A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland & L. Lofland, 477-492. London: Sage

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MacCormack, P. (2001) Becoming Hu-Man: Deleuze and Guattari and 3rd Rock from the Sun. *Intensities: The Journal of Cult Media*. http://intensities.org/Essays/MacCormack.pdf

MacLure, M. 2003 *Discourse in Educational and Social Research*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Morss, J.R. 1996. *Alternatives to Developmental Psychology*. New York: Taylor and Francis.

Piaget, J. 1954 *The Child's Construction of Reality.* London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Piaget, J. 1975 *The Child's Conception of the World*, Littlefield Adams Quality Paperbacks.

Rogoff, B.R., Paradise, R., Arauz, M., Correa-Chavez, and Angelillo (2003) Firsthand learning through Intent Participation. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54, no. 1: 175-203.

Semetsky, I. (2006) The complexity of individuation. *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic studies.* Vol. 1, (4), pp. 324-346.

Spivak,G.C. 1976. Preface, in J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (translated by G.C. Spivak). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Springgay, S. (2008) *Body Knowledge and Curriculum: Pedagogies of Touch in Youth and Visual Culture*. New York, Peter Lang publishing.

Walkerdine, V. 1988. *The Mastery of Reason*. London: Routledge.

15