

Introduction

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Why an online Review in anthropology of children & childhood?

For decades, childhood and children were considered as a ‘small subject’ in social and cultural anthropology (Lallemand & Le Moal 1981). It is thus justified to wonder: ‘where have all the babies gone?’ (Gottlieb 2000) or: ‘why don’t anthropologists like children?’ (Hirschfeld 2003)¹. Whereas interdisciplinary research centres and networks, Cultural Studies, courses, projects, and meetings on the theme multiply, the creation of an online review entirely dedicated to the anthropology of children & childhood is imperative.

The interest in anthropology of childhood (which includes gestation and infancy) grew throughout the world from the early works of a few founding mothers and fathers (Van Gennep, Boas, Mead, Benedict, Malinowski, Firth, Fortes, Griaule...). These works emphasized social and symbolic construction of childhood and associated rites of passage, through adults’ discourses on children.

Recent and numerous studies on ‘children’s cultures’ and on the social role of children are rooted in the concepts of ‘the child as an actor’ and of ‘agency’. They break up with the perception of the child as an ‘adult to be’ and a passive recipient; they are also embedded in its recognition, as an active and creative subject, initiated by the promulgation of its rights and the evolution of its status.

Papers to be published in *AnthropoChildren: Perspectives ethnographiques sur les enfants & l’enfance - Ethnographic Perspectives on Children & Childhood* should question the connection between social and symbolic construction of childhood and the construction of the “child-actor”: how is the child shaped and how does he construct himself, what is his position in society and how can his voice be taken into account?

The following configurations will be considered:

- family and community break-ups (street children, child-refugees, child-soldiers),
- migration (transnational families, migrant children, interethnic relations),
- new parenthood (blended family, same-sex family, child-headed household, intergenerational relations),
- cultural transmission (between peers, within the family, within institutions),

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¹ Lallemand S. & Le Moal G. (1981). Un petit sujet. *Journal des Africanistes* 51(1-2): 5-21. Gottlieb A. (2000). Où sont passés les bébés? Vers une anthropologie du nourrisson. In J.-L. Jamard, E. Terray & M. Xanthakou (Eds.), *En substances. Textes pour Françoise Héritier* (367-385). Paris: Fayard. Hirschfeld L.A. (2003). Pourquoi les anthropologues n’aiment-ils pas les enfants? *Terrain* 40: 21-48.

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- individual, familial and institutional care (adoption, fosterage, daily care),
- development and humanitarian action (target groups, vulnerable groups, reciprocal influences between local and global norms),
- secular and religious institutions (schools, orphanages, youth movements, trade unions),
- local societies and public policies (work, family planning, training, children's heritage),
- new technologies (virtual worlds, new reproductive technologies, communication).

In order to explore these configurations, health, body, food, language, development, gender, play or ethics are possible entry points. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Northern or Southern societies, the papers will particularly:

- enhance knowledge on children's worlds (ordinary and extraordinary daily life),
- link this knowledge to other dimensions of social and cultural life (economics, politics, kinship, religion...),
- promote a better understanding of the society, the community or the group that children belong to.

From their ethnographic reports, participants are also invited to discuss the specificities of fieldwork with children, regarding the diversity of methodological positions, personal orientations and institutional attachments of the anthropologist. How does she/he act and how is she/he perceived by children and their social environment? How relevant are age, sex and social status (parent or not, origin)? How does she/he enter the 'children's world'? What sort of observations and interviews (or other audiovisual, graphical tools...) can be used? More largely, the specific questions that ethnographic fieldwork with children addresses to fieldwork practice in anthropology will be stressed.

Finally, papers should outline the conceptual characteristics of anthropology of childhood and children. What is the heuristic utility of notions and concepts such as body and person, body techniques, socialization, interaction...? What are the reciprocal influences, the specificities and synergies between anthropology, sociology, history, psychoanalysis, psychology, linguistics and demography? Online, bilingual (French, English) and free, the review should permit to strengthen the dialogue between the different traditions and actors involved in Northern and Southern countries; it should also reinforce the institutional recognition of anthropology of children & childhood. Finally, far beyond, the review aims to highlight the contribution of anthropology of childhood & children to other fields in anthropology and social and human sciences. It will also strengthen its position in the international scientific and public arena.

The international diversity of anthropologies of children & childhood

This first issue of the online review *AnthropoChildren*, dedicated to Jacqueline Rabain-Jamin - one of the pioneers in anthropology of childhood in France - offers a first international assessment of anthropological works on children and childhood by questioning the different conceptual, theoretical and methodological backgrounds researchers refer to. This assessment will allow to situate the development of this field within social and human sciences, according to the different academic and scientific traditions in anthropology. It follows the international congress, *Pour une anthropologie de l'enfance et des enfants. De la diversité des terrains ethnographiques à la construction d'un champ - Towards an Anthropology of Childhood and*

Children. Ethnographic Fieldwork Diversity and Construction of a Field, which was held at the University of Liège (ULg) in March 9-11, 2011. The congress was conceived as a space for meetings and exchanges between anthropologists from worldwide academic and scientific traditions.

The present issue gathers together inaugural conferences offered by six Keynote Speakers – which have challenged and achieved a difficult task: Doris Bonnet, Alma Gottlieb, David Lancy, Régine Sirota, Andrea Szulc and Clarice Cohn. On the basis of their own fieldwork, but also other works, the Keynote Speakers have presented the academic and scientific traditions they belong to – such as their developments in time. Those texts are written versions of oral presentations – some of which have been translated into English. Two authors, Gladys Chicharro and Jeannett Martin, have accepted to offer two additional contributions to the issue².

The issue starts with Andrea Szulc & Clarice Cohn, honoring the young, promising but unrecognized Latin American tradition. Then, follow the contributions of Doris Bonnet for French-Speaking works and David Lancy for English-Speaking research. Both draw the outlines of older traditions, however they are still unaware of their mutual contributions to the field. The overview continues with the presentation of German-Speaking works by Jeannett Martin and research of Gladys Chicharro on childhood in China (with Chinese-Speaking references). Both reveal poorly known traditions, although very abundant. This perspective is then presented by Régine Sirota from the sociology of childhood. Alma Gottlieb closes the issue with a text that advances the contribution of a reflexive posture in anthropology of children & childhood.

Andrea Szulc & Clarice Cohn focus their paper on the contribution of the young generation of anthropologists working in Latin America (Brazil and Argentina) whose works, mostly published in Spanish, remain poorly disseminated. By reviewing different bodies of data, they highlight the important headways in ethnology, ethnography and anthropology of education, as well as the study of indigenous children, street children and subaltern populations. They also set out the researches on social construction of childhood and the methodologies developed within anthropology of childhood.

Reviewing some French publications in an historical perspective, Doris Bonnet presents a collection of works among which some of folklorist, colonial administrator, Europeanist and Africanist ethnologists. She stresses the long-term interest of ethnology and interdisciplinarity of French-speaking researches on childhood, in particular their theoretical rooting in psychoanalysis and history. In doing so, she highlights the major works on childhood in Africa. Doris Bonnet finally mentions the influence of institutional networks on the development of anthropology of childhood in France. For an exhaustive presentation of these ultimate points, the lector is invited to read the translation of Doris Bonnet and Suzanne Lallemand's interview, previously realized by Madina Querre & Claire Mestre³ in this issue (Section: *Enseigner & apprendre l'anthropologie des enfants & de l'enfance - Teaching & Learning Anthropology of Children & Childhood*).

David Lancy, who refers to the academic and scientific anglo-US tradition, refutes the supposed disinterest of anthropologists for childhood, reminding that a great number of ethnographic and anthropological publications have dealt with the subject-matter, at diverse

² The coordinators warmly thank the two authors, as well as the reviewers and researchers who have collaborated, in a manner or another, to this issue, particularly Bruce Whitehouse, Mathias Graig, Susan Levine, Dorte Thorsen, Alma Gottlieb and Saskia Walentowitz.

³ The coordinators thank the authors, the review *Face to Face*, Madina Querre and Claire Mestre for their kind authorization for publishing this interview translated in English by Wendy and Bryan Keys.

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degrees, and for a long time. According to the author, the marginalization of researches on childhood is due to the fragmentation of academic production that has to be overcome. He proposes an organizational schema for reviewing the existing literature and distinguishes several streams, based on different perspectives on childhood: socialization, cognitive and linguistic development, enculturation, maturation, growth, game, economic exploitation and works on child as a cultural mediator. Mentioning the growing institutional visibility of research on childhood, David Lancy concludes in suggesting different research paths for the future.

Jeannett Martin demonstrates how German-speaking publications on childhood and adolescence have considerably expanded since the 1990s. The author retraces the changes which have occurred in the definition of objectives, theoretical and methodological orientations of the works, and underlines the different issues on which present researches focus on; these make up a field of specific and autonomous research on childhood and youth. According to Jeannet Martin, the proliferation of German-speaking works does not come with a strong institutional rooting.

Gladys Chicharro analyzes the different phases, streams and themes which mark anthropological researches on childhood and children in China, in Taiwan and Hong Kong, then in continental China. After having introduced Marcel Granet's work on the symbolic and social constructions of childhood and reminded the historical researches on the theme, Gladys Chicharro is interested in anthropological works of the 1990s which tackle childhood through representations, adoption and the circulation of childhood, as well as their socialization and school education and within the families. The demographic control and the unique-child politics appear as a preoccupation at the end of the 1990s. As for more recent researches, Gladys Chicharro shows how they testify on the development of exchanges between Indian-speaking researchers investigating on poverty, vulnerable children, children's rights, and the new emergence of works on child culture.

Being part of the sociology of sciences, Régine Sirota explains how the sociology of childhood builds itself between national traditions, different linguistic fields and a globalized discursive common space (enactment of the international convention on children's rights, the weight of the large institutions for the defence for children, consequences of expertise and international evaluation of social politics, the media coverage of a compassion-type figure of childhood). Régine Sirota centers her reflection on the development of the ethnographic approach in sociology which allows, according to the author, to grasp the child as an actor or *agency*. She questions the ethnographic "quality" of investigations regarding the different interpretative paradigms. Régine Sirota believes that it is by sharing the ethnographic approach that anthropology and sociology renew their regard on the problematics of childhood.

To conclude, Alma Gottlieb evokes the interactions between personal lives, researches and academic activities (selection of fieldwork, problematics, theoretical orientations, etc.). In a reflexive perspective, poorly represented in anthropology of childhood, the author explains how her new status of mother led her to develop anthropology of motherhood, parenthood, care and children. Alma Gottlieb mentions her work on the childhood model among the Beng (Ivory Coast) for whom children are complete and autonomous persons, especially at the emotional level, from the youngest age. She insists on the manners to work with young children, and puts her research in perspective in the more general field of anthropology.

We wish this general overview, which gives a first idea of the anthropology of childhood & children's international dynamism, will be nourished by further complementary contributions within the review *AnthropoChildren*.