

Beyond ‘voice’, beyond ‘agency’, beyond ‘politics’? Hybrid childhoods and some critical reflections on children’s emotional geographies

Abstract

In this paper I argue that a significant proportion of research on children’s emotional geographies has been deployed to reinforce the importance of children’s ‘voices’, their (independent) ‘agency’, and the various ways in which voice/agency may be deemed ‘political’. Without wishing to dismiss or dispense with such approaches, I explore potential ways to go ‘beyond’ concerns with voice/agency/politics. Initially, I review studies of children’s participation (and participatory methods), activism and everyday lives that mobilise emotion and affect in productive ways. I contrast such studies with important questions raised by a reinvigoration of interest in the need for children to be able to represent themselves. I then explore the possibilities raised by so-called ‘hybrid’ conceptions of childhood – which go beyond biosocial dualisms – to enable further strides beyond voice/agency. Drawing on examples from alternative education and contemporary attachment theories, I explore some potential implications for children’s emotional geographies and relational geographies of age of what I term ‘more-than-social’ emotional relations. Yet I do not offer an unequivocal endorsement of these hybrid emotions. Thus, I end the paper by issuing some words of caution – both in terms of the critical questions raised by more-than-social emotional relations, specifically, and in terms of engendering broader debate about how and *why* scholars do (children’s) emotional geographies.

Keywords

Children’s geographies; emotion and affect; biosocial dualism; alternative education; attachment theory; family and intergenerational relations

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Introduction

Reflecting a broader ‘turn’ to emotions and affect, children’s geographers have sought to understand how emotions work in children’s everyday lives. Children’s and emotional geographies may be entangled in multiple ways: from children’s own expressions of anxiety (Nayak 2003) or hope (Pain et al., 2010), to the powerful feelings that undergird contemporary constructions of childhood (Valentine 1996) or adult memories thereof (Philo 2003). Undoubtedly, children’s emotional geographies have represented a rich vein of research. However, whilst there may be broad agreement that researching children’s emotional geographies is a positive, worthwhile endeavour, there remain important, critical disjunctures in terms of how emotions and affects might be understood *to matter*, both within and beyond the academy (e.g. Vanderbeck 2008). Most notably, some recent critical debates have centred around the possible ways in which children’s experiences may be framed as ‘political’ (Skelton and Valentine 2003; Kallio and Häkli 2010).

Whilst this paper does seek to intervene in these debates, it does so in a particular way. It seeks to set out some additional (perhaps alternative, perhaps complementary) frames through which children’s emotional geographies might proceed. It is not intended as an agenda for how children’s geographers could ‘do emotion’ differently. Rather more modestly, it aims to initiate consideration of a series of additional approaches and critiques that might offer different starting points for deliberations about how children’s emotional geographies matter. As I point out in the paper’s conclusion, these approaches and critiques may have important ramifications for all scholars – not just ‘children’s geographers’ – in terms of thinking how

and, especially, *why* they study (children's) emotions. To do so, I begin in section I by revisiting two (virtually) foundational principles in contemporary research on children's geographies and, indeed, broader social studies of childhood: notions of 'voice' and (independent) 'agency'. Several contemporary critics have attacked both principles. I draw upon their critiques to observe a *general tendency* in work on children's emotional geographies that has engaged somehow with questions of politics. That is, a tendency to deploy children's emotions somewhat instrumentally *in support* of voice and/or agency. In the second half of section I, and in order to frame what follows, I explore two of several possible responses to these critiques: first, I note some important exceptions to this instrumentalist tendency, focussing on studies of emotion, affect and children's politics that have moved 'beyond' voice and/or agency; second, I note calls to consolidate notions of voice and/or agency in the face of emotional and, especially, nonrepresentational children's geographies (Mitchell and Elwood 2012).

I want to clarify that I am not assuming that going 'beyond' means *dispensing* with questions of voice/agency, nor that children's emotional geographies *should* (now) seek to move 'beyond' those notions, nor that the two possible responses cited above are incommensurate. Rather, the remaining sections of the paper offer some additional ways of thinking and doing children's emotional geographies that may, in some contexts, be viewed as alternative, in others complementary, and, in others, as unnecessary or undesirable. Indeed, section III offers one set of broader reflections on why thinking and doing children's emotional geographies *at all* may require further critical reflection. I focus in section II upon one set of ways to 'go beyond' voice/agency, inspired by a recent impulse outside geographical scholarship to exceed biosocial dualisms that have characterised much childhood research (Ryan 2011). I frame my discussion in what Ryan (2011, 2) terms a "new wave" of childhood studies that aim to understand entanglements of biology and society – so-called 'hybrid

childhoods' (Prout 2005). I then provide two extended examples, taken from my own research into alternative education spaces, and from recent cross-disciplinary studies of attachment theory. I cite these two examples with the principal aim of stretching how children's geographers might conceive of the relationality of children with adults and, indeed, the relationality of children's emotions. I am not necessarily advocating that children's geographers (or others interested in emotion) should focus primarily upon alternative learning spaces, or work with or adopt approaches from attachment theory. Rather, building on my critique of Mitchell and Elwood (2012) in section I, I attend to the potential implications (both substantive and conceptual) of attending to hybrid childhoods, in what I understand to be significant ways that both map onto but go beyond concerns with voice, agency and/or politics.

In section III – an extended discussion and conclusion – I question what might be the role of children's geographers – and children's *emotional* geographies – in interrogating hybrid childhoods. Specifically, and despite my enthusiasm for children's emotional geographies of all kinds, I offer some words of caution. I sketch out a series of critical questions with which children's emotional geographers may wish to engage: initially, if theorisations of hybrid childhoods are to supplement other approaches to children's emotional geographies; and, more broadly, if children's geographers are to critically engage with the multiple, potential uses to which emotions may be put in relation to children's lives.

I Going beyond 'voice' and/or (independent) 'agency'?

The so-called 'new social studies of childhood' represented a profound shift in scholarly research with children, evincing a series of core principles through which 'biological' concerns with children's development were virtually replaced with the 'social' constructions

and processes through which childhoods were constituted. Two foundational principles – which were rapidly adopted by geographers – were that children be afforded greater ‘voice’ (in academic research and elsewhere) and that they be viewed as capable, ostensibly independent agents. Few researchers working with children accepted that children’s ‘voice’ or ‘agency’ came without (adult-)imposed limits – far from it. However, these two principles did become somewhat of a mantra: without directly naming names, it would not be too difficult to find scores of articles that end by pressing for greater ‘participation’ by children on this or that issue, or that, actually, children are far more capable and independent than adults usually admit. If nothing else, I will readily accept that I have made this argument more than once (most often in research with policy-makers); I will also, therefore, be quite clear that for this reason I am not arguing that, in going ‘beyond’ voice or agency, childhood scholars should dismiss such principles outright. To do so would be to lose some of the hard-won gains achieved by childhood researchers and advocates over the last twenty years, and to efface the enormous variety of ways in which those two terms have been deployed.

However, I want to suggest a more measured, more modest process of ‘going beyond’ voice and agency, on two fronts. On the first front, recent work by geographers and others has raised critical questions about not only the desirability but the possibility of voice and/or agency. Space precludes a full review, but I want to highlight just two examples. First, Philo (2011, 125) examines occasions where it might be *inappropriate* to listen to a child’s voice – for instance (borrowing from Foucault) if a child should wish “for sexual relations with a given adult”. Indeed, Philo notes an obvious contradiction within children’s geographies research where children’s voices (and feelings) about play, work or school attract significant attention, but where (for whatever reasons), children’s articulations of their sexuality attract far less (also Vanderbeck 2008). Philo’s position is clear: in some contexts, it may neither be possible nor desirable to listen to children’s voices.

“I am convinced that there is a major dilemma to be faced here [...] my feeling is that it indeed signals the limits to how far we should go with child-centric children’s geographies, suggesting instead that there are moments when it is imperative to [not be] ‘seduced’ by children’s own voices but instead retaining a (thoroughly and reflexively critical) sense of the adult discourses [...] which cannot but ‘see further and deeper’ than is ever possible for the children themselves”

A range of other scholars has sought to question the limits of children’s voice and participation (e.g. Hemrica and Hayting 2004; King 2007), whilst others view some examples of children’s ‘voice’ and participation as an abrogation of adult responsibility (Conroy 2010). I pick up on this point later in this section, with particular reference to children’s emotions.

Second, important advances in relational geographies of age have, on the one hand, questioned the privileging of certain age groups in geographical research (principally 5-12 year-olds) and, on the other, critiqued a widespread practice amongst children’s geographers, in particular, to consider children *on their own* (Hopkins and Pain 2007). To paraphrase, a curious effect of viewing children as independent ‘agents’ has commonly been to efface the intergenerational relationships that not only constitute childhoods, but construct experiences of age-itself. Several studies have therefore sought to address this lacuna (e.g. Tucker 2003; Wyn et al. 2012). At the same time, several studies have sought to nibble away at presumptions of children’s independence that seem to preoccupy not only some academics, but popular commentators on childhood. An example that particularly detains geographers is children’s so-called ‘independent mobility’, which has apparently been in decline in contexts like the UK for decades (e.g. O’Brien et al. 2000). Writing against the grain, Mikkelsen and Christensen (2009) argue that children’s mobility is, in fact, rarely independent – their travels maybe undertaken with parents, friends, pets and various others – and that, therefore, their

relative 'independence' is not necessarily an indicator of the quality or worth of their movements. Developing relational geographies of age, I return to the relationality of *emotions*, specifically, at several points in this paper.

On the second front, and bearing in mind the above critiques, I want to observe a *tendency* for children's geographies to place emotions directly in the service of some particular, often quite *instrumental* notions of voice and/or agency. Children's geographers are by no means alone here: for instance, Zembylas (2007, 60) notes how, in the field of educational studies, research on emotions is dominated by information-gathering "about the causes of emotion, the way a teacher or student felt" and about how emotion management occurs in the classroom. My point is not to dismiss or downplay the importance of using emotion in such an instrumental way. For, even if one does subscribe to the above critiques of voice/agency, these critiques are not universally applicable. Indeed, there is nothing of necessity wrong with using emotion as a way to highlight how, for instance, anger might be a key driver to children's engagement in decision-making (Valentino et al., 2009).

My argument is, instead, that emotion has *tended* to be used in three relatively narrow ways. Firstly, whilst many studies leave emotion pretty much unremarked, it is notable that several texts *list* 'emotion' as one of a series of possible concerns for participatory work with children (e.g. Holt 2004; Percy-Smith 2010). Emotion is a 'factor', mentioned once or twice before being ticked off. My intention is not to reprimand this impulse and especially not the two examples cited here: indeed, such lists may emphasise that emotion should be placed on equal footing with other considerations for doing participation. I simply want to ask whether – as academics – we are satisfied, *yet*, that we know enough about the complex emotional implications of (in this case) participation to list them in this way.

Secondly, it is evident that several texts evaluate some of the many emotional *outcomes* of doing participation with children (cf Zembylas 2007). Most frequently, it is assumed that participation – especially ‘having a voice’ – has positive benefits for children (e.g. increased self-efficacy), whereas non-participation may have negative outcomes, including anxiety (Tisdall et al. 2006). However, Hemrica and Heyting (2004) caution that the same participatory process may have differential emotional outcomes for different children. In their study, some children who participated in decisions regarding their parents’ divorce settlements were traumatised by the process whereas others were not. Their work questions the assumption amongst most scholars (and practitioners) that the emotional outcomes of participation can be used as an instrumental justification for it being a central tool for adult engagement with children (see also Pinkney 2011).

Thirdly, several authors have indicated how emotions and affects may *constitute* participatory processes (Kraftl and Horton 2007; Jupp 2008). However, a frequent observation is that during meetings with adults (particularly in ‘applied’ settings, rather than academic research), young people are urged to downplay a vast array of emotions in order to transform their feelings into ‘reasoned’ argumentation (Tholander 2007). These critiques are complicated where, on the one hand, participation *feels* increasingly to young people like an obligation and, on the other, as far as young people are concerned, predominantly verbal-participatory techniques efface *how* young people feel (Faulkner 2009). This is a critique, then, of how *some* participatory processes manufacture children’s emotions into a more-or-less acceptable form of ‘voice’.

Two choices (of many): moving beyond instrumentalism, or, moving towards a reinvigoration of ‘voice’?

Thus far, I have criticised a sub-set of work on children's voice/agency, focussing on three deployments of emotion children's geographies research and elsewhere. Before moving on, I want to highlight just two of many possible pathways beyond these critiques. In the first, I want to acknowledge how, despite my comments on emotion/participation above, participatory work with children has been at the forefront of a groundswell of work that has sought to foreground diverse ways in which children may act 'politically' – often without such instrumental recourse to 'voice' or 'agency'. In the second, I briefly examine calls to reassert the significance of 'voice' and a politics of representation. These positions are not necessarily mutually exclusive; moreover, both are in my view viable positions, which will prove valuable for my later argument.

My first argument is that a diverse range of studies has attempted to move beyond (but *not* necessarily dismiss), a focus upon children's voice/agency. This has been accomplished on a number of fronts, and, crucially, involves a sensitisation to *emotion* that operates in various ways. Firstly, visual and performative methods of participatory research (such as participatory diagramming and video) have admitted more inclusive, richer and alternative registers of feeling into participatory processes (Kindon 2003; Waite and Conn 2011). Thus, participatory research becomes an *expressive*, rather than instrumentally *representational/representative*, form of knowledge production where literal 'voice-ing' is accompanied by various other expressive registers (the visual, the haptic, the danced). One inspirational example comes from UK-based organisation *Youth Music*, whose action-research projects combine reporting on the 'measurable outcomes' of community-based youth music programmes with attention to how young people have been moved by the process – often only evident from the sonorous and lyrical qualities of their music (Dickens 2010; see also Dickens and Lonie, this issue). In a very different context, Waite and Conn (2011, 115) characterise their work with young Ugandan women on sexual health thus: ““participatory video drama”” describes [...]

innovative methodological tools to utilise when working with participants who experience voicelessness in their everyday lives”. At the very least, such approaches allow for a return to an *expanded* notion of ‘voice’ – where ‘voicelessness’ may not only denote an inability for a particular young person to represent themselves, but an attempt to challenge more thorough-going systems of oppression *via* multiple expressive registers (see Cahill [2010] for a key example). Another key feature of this work is how children are not considered as ‘independent agents’ within participatory processes, but operate relationally through engagement with each other and in solidarity with adults.

Beyond participatory work, a range of youth studies have also looked beyond voice and *independent* agency to stress the many emotions involved in modes of ‘being political’. Studies of youth activism have connected emotion with collaborative forms of agency that do not always lead to clearly ‘voice-d’ outcomes (Jeffrey 2011), where “socialising and generating emotions” play a significant role in collaborative, engaged youth activism (Juris and Pleyers 2009, 69). Thus, an insightful study of Ukrainian youth activism by Tereschenko (2010) posits civic protest as a powerful act *because* it moves beyond conventional understandings of youth citizenship (*as* ‘voice’). One of Tereschenko’s (2010) examples is the ‘Orange Revolution’, where young people were involved in attempts to overthrow semi-autocratic post-independence political regimes in Ukraine. Mass protests have involved several emotive gestures: humour and irreverence in the production of festival atmospheres that are frequently so central to protest (Brown 2007); the affective impact upon onlookers of wearing orange, and not the blue and yellow of Ukraine; feelings of pride, hope and anxiety wrapped up in the difficult decision to protest.

Finally, several studies have sought to (re)connect emotions of what we can call ‘everyday life’ with a sense of ‘what matters’, in its broadest understanding (Horton and Kraftl 2006; Horton and Kraftl 2009a; Horton 2010). For instance, Ahn (2010) showed how US middle-

class children learn to express culturally-appropriate emotions in everyday situations. Here, emotions were neither directed towards participation ‘in’ some greater political project, nor towards any identifiably political act, but rather, were a core, ongoing component of collaborative sense-making and contingent social formation. Elsewhere, my own work with young people identified how young people expressed styles of hopefulness that were, perhaps counter-intuitively, non-intentionally utopian (Kraftl, 2008). I showed how, for some very disadvantaged 16-25 year-olds living in England, banal, practical acts (like learning to cook soup or keeping warm) could elicit more hopeful dispositions that were crucial to coping and going on with life. Relatedly, Rachel Pain’s work on “emotional geopolitics of fear” (Pain 2009, 466) and hope (Pain et al. 2010) has demonstrated how such gestures, imaginations and hopes may cross between ‘locally-scaled’ emotions and ‘global’ political processes.

In very different ways, all of this work is concerned with how *efficacy* is expressed – whether “through the gear of life politics [...] dress and body politics” (Guidikova and Siuralea 2001, 9) or in some other style. Some of these examples are bound up in nonrepresentational theories, although many are concerned with other theorisations of emotion and ‘what matters’. Perhaps helpfully, these broad constellations of multi-media participation, activism and everyday life have been branded ‘political’, but with a far-expanded sense thereof (Kallio and Häkli 2010). In light of the above examples, though, one could raise a series of questions about ‘politics’; most pressingly, of what are the implications of naming each of these examples ‘political’, and in what sense(s).

A second pathway ‘beyond’ instrumentalism has, in fact, been premised in part on this question about politics: upon what is in essence a *redoubling* of efforts to foreground children’s voice. Recently, Mitchell and Elwood (2012, 789) have urged caution about “heterogeneous and performative” renderings of politics (cf. Kallio and Häkli 2010), and especially those which, drawing upon nonrepresentational theories, seem to efface “holistic

analysis". Lacking attention to systemic forms of inequality, Mitchell and Elwood (2012, 793) argue that nonrepresentational children's geographies have become personal (for scholars), self-referential endeavours more caught up with the research process itself than "theories of dominance and subordination". Apparently, whilst articulating everyday "amorphous concepts", such as hope, they only offer vague senses of "larger issues" (Mitchell and Elwood 2012, 793). Finally, they lack a sense of *voice*, meant in representational terms:

"[w]e argue that representational strategies of articulation [writing, mapping] are vital in forging meaningful social relationships between children and adults; they allow children to cross over from their 'animalistic' infancy and young childhood into the adult-constructed world of 'humanness'. For poor children, in particular, practices that do not engage representational codes are not necessarily liberating (as they may be for privileged adults) but more likely to be the reverse" (Mitchell and Elwood 2012, 801).

Mitchell and Elwood raise a series of important questions about the deployment of emotions in children's geographies that – in my terms – somehow go 'beyond' a concern for voice. Yet, I want to argue, in the process they are mischaracterising much work in nonrepresentational geography and, moreover, downplaying the full range of studies that have sought to engage carefully with the emotions entailed in participatory research, activism and everyday life. Even if many are not labelled 'nonrepresentational', they still seek to move *beyond* representation somehow and, often, to foreground the importance of emotion in ways that do not simply lead instrumentally to narrow conceptions of voice. I therefore want to weave a careful and sympathetic path between their critique and my conviction that nonrepresentational approaches (amongst others) enable a move beyond voice/agency in some productive

ways. Three (of many) issues stand out, and which I shall seek to use constructively in the rest of this paper.

First, Mitchell and Elwood insist that nonrepresentational approaches are all attempting to articulate “a personal, microconception of politics” (Mitchell and Elwood 2012, 793).

However, some nonrepresentational geographers are not trying to propound any conception of ‘politics’ *at all*. Rather, they are interested in ‘what matters’ to children, which may not always be reduced to ‘the political’. For instance, in his study of popular cultures in primary schools around S Club 7 (an erstwhile British pop band), Horton (2010) distinguishes between meaning and mattering. He argues that, all-too-often, youth scholars have focussed on the symbolic *meaning* of popular cultures and related emotions – for instance, how they form symbolic resources for identity construction, with by-now well-known political associations (e.g. Gelder 2005). He argues instead for closer attention to how popular cultures *matter*, in context, to children: because they are ‘just fun’; because they tack together friendships; because adults cannot quite understand what they *mean* (often, because they might not *mean* much). It maybe that to engage in such practices is a mark of privilege (although I doubt it always is), but it would be very problematic if all of life could be reduced to a concern with politics when life means and *feels* so much more to at least some, if not most, children. Section II picks up on this point by examining some ways in which emotions might *matter* in ways that tend to exceed – but not necessarily evade – questions of politics.

Second, at the same time, Mitchell and Elwood gloss how nonrepresentational geographers, and others, *have* woven considerations of emotion, affect, embodiment and banality into (apparently) ‘larger’ concerns. Take, for instance, the examples above provided from participatory geographies through which issues of ‘voicelessness’ (Waite and Conn 2010), health service provision (Kraftl and Horton 2007), urban change (Jupp 2008) and immigrant identities (Cahill 2010) are not divorced from more-than-representational strategies for

witnessing young people's lives. Or, take recent studies of 'activism' by/for young people, where 'what counts' as activism is constituted *through* the seeming banalities and feelings of everyday life (Martin et al. 2007; Horton and Kraftl 2009a, 2009b). I return to the intermingling of emotion, banality and 'what matters' (including questions of politics) in sections II and III.

Third, Mitchell and Elwood (2012, 801) end with an interesting reflection on the path from 'animalistic infancy' to adult-constructed human-ness, where representational strategies are apparently key to their progress (see above quotation). Theirs is an astute point, which repeats some critiques of 'participatory' work that seek to shoe-horn children's emotions into adult, representational frames (Faulkner 2009). In section II, however, I want initially to offer a different spin on this argument – one that *recognises* the more-than-human (if you like, 'animalistic') components of emotion. This will become part of my argument for not only moving beyond voice/agency, but (for a moment at least), beyond 'politics'. However, having argued thus, and in this case fully concurring with Mitchell and Elwood, I will (re)turn to some important cautionary questions about politics and emotion in section III.

II Emotions, social relations and more-than-social (biosocial) childhoods

“Psychotherapeutic approaches suggest that, wherever interpersonal contact exists, the quality of care relationships is not dependent solely or even primarily upon the ability of the carer to deploy expert knowledge about care needs: *the relationship itself is also vital* [as] needs and feedback about care are communicated. This communication is multi-faceted: it may be verbal, visual, tactile, intuitive, tacit, unconscious and so on. [...] It is also invariably *emotionally laden*” (Bondi 2008, 262, my emphasis).

In this section, I argue that there remains significant scope for opening out the nature and quality of what Bondi, above, calls ‘emotionally laden’ *relationships* between people, which, building on my arguments in the previous section, explicitly incorporate but go beyond both voice and agency. This is a task that Blazek (this volume) accomplishes in a richer empirical sense, through reflections on the emotional relationship between two brothers. More broadly, the relationality of emotion has become a key point of articulation for (feminist) geographers writing on care (e.g. Milligan 2005), recent studies of intergenerationality and intimacy (R. Evans 2010) and much more besides (Bennett 2009). At the same time – contra Mitchell and Elwood (2012) – much work on affect has sought to emphasise its trans-individual, pre-personal operation (McCormack 2003).

In this section, then, I develop a closer attunement to the relationality of emotion. But I do so by focussing on a series of examples of what I am terming *more-than-social*, emotional relations. In doing so, it is possible to move beyond notions of voice, agency and politics in a suite of *complementary* ways to those I indicated to section I. This is a particularly pressing task for *children’s* geographers because, whilst the nonhuman constituents of social life have been recognised for some time elsewhere (e.g. Latour 2005; Hinchliffe and Whatmore 2006), there has been a reticence to engage with ‘more-than-social’ processes in *social* studies of childhood (Prout 2005; Ryan 2011). First, I examine recent critical attention to ‘hybrid’ childhoods, drawing upon Lee and Motzkau’s (2011) discussion thereof, and arguing for attention to what I term *more-than-social* emotions. Second, in thinking-through the implications of hybrid childhoods for children’s emotional geographies, I explore the deployment of more-than-social emotions in two contexts: in some alternative education spaces; and in recent theories of attachment. This section proceeds through several examples,

gleaned both from academic literatures on childhood and education, and reflections upon a large-scale research project¹.

Biosocial dualisms, hybrid childhoods

A number of geographers have taken part in a broader turn to poststructural theorisations of the (post-)subject, intra-action (Colls 2007) and power that emphasise entanglements of human and non-human agents (Whatmore 1997). There is not space to consider this wider body of work, but rather to note that particular elements thereof (like Actor-Network Theory) could have afforded childhood scholars the opportunity to chip away at some of the founding assumptions of childhood studies. But the take-up of such approaches remains small. The most obvious example is Prout's (2005, 2) carefully-argued concern that social studies of childhood have for too-long assumed a series of dualisms to reinforce the idea that childhood is a social construction (also Taylor 2011). For him, these arguments look increasingly jaded – in particular where “the social view of childhood is counterposed to a natural or biological one” and where there has been an overly repetitive emphasis on “children as social actors” (Prout 2005, 2). Instead, he seeks to promote the “requirement that childhood studies move beyond the opposition of nature and culture [...to] a hybrid form [...wherein] children's capacities are extended and supplemented by all kinds of material artefacts and technologies, which are also hybrids of nature and culture” (Prout 2005, 3-4). Prout's sample of hybrids includes information technologies, genetics and psychopharmaceuticals.

Recently, a limited number of childhood studies scholars (although few geographers) have taken up Prout's challenge, forging what Ryan (2011, 2) has called a “new wave” of childhood studies that seek to mingle, or evade, a dualism between biological and social

¹ For further details about this project, see Kraftl, 2013b

explanations of childhood. Lee and Motzkau (2011, 8) argue that this ‘biosocial’ dualism has been a “navigational aid” to researchers in the establishment of distinct – if overlapping – fields of enquiry, wherein one side of the dualism tends to be emphasised more strongly (essentially in social constructivist versus developmental psychological approaches).

Reflecting on contemporary life sciences, biotechnologies and what Rose (2007, 12) terms a “style of thought” that takes life-itself as referent, Lee and Motzkau argue that the biosocial dualism has waned in its usefulness. Citing examples such as obesity and neuroscience, this

“mean[s] that life processes and social processes now appear regularly to mix with and to influence one another without regard to a biological/social boundary. As we see it, many present and emergent bio-political formations of childhood consist of novel and unpredictable connections among materials and processes, forces and events that are not best understood through bio-social dualism” (Lee and Motzkau 2011, 8)

After Prout (2005), Lee and Motzkau think through the implications of *hybrid* childhoods that can be conceived somewhere beyond the biosocial dualism. Significantly for the present paper, Lee and Motzkau reflect on the implications of such hybridities for children’s voice:

“The multiplicity of ‘voice’ certainly concerns the ethico-political matter of children’s representation and participation [...]. But it also concerns maturation as a passage from voiced but speechless infancy [...] and the complex interplay this has with the many circumstances in which children can and cannot find voice, along with the range of institutional and technological conditions in which their voices are interpreted, mediated and amplified” (Lee and Motzkau 2011, 11)

Thus, voice is viewed as a situated, contingent process that emerges out of heterogeneous constituent parts – everyday interactional practices, hearing technologies, the relative functioning of a child’s ear and their mastery of language, adult-child power relations, predominant discourses about childhood, and so on. The “heterogeneous and performative” elements of childhood research so derided by Mitchell and Elwood (2012, 789) are reframed *within* and *as part of* apparently ‘larger’ concerns. Following poststructural conceptions of scale, ‘big’ issues are initially placed horizontally with everyday practices and seemingly banal technologies, until it (sometimes) becomes possible to say whether it is governmental discourses, technologies or everyday practices that hold most explanatory power in a given situation (Jacobs 2006).

Lee and Motzkau (2011, 13) argue that “the contemporary bio-politics of childhood is a mostly uncharted space in which novel and unpredictable connections between forces and processes of many kinds can occur”. In the rest of this section, I focus on some of the implications of the hybridity argument for studying children’s *emotions* – something that Lee and Motzkau do not directly address and which, in my mind, represent some of the vast ‘uncharted’ territories to which they refer. I offer what I term ‘more-than-social’ emotions as a ‘navigational aid’ for traversing and making some sense of the infinite range of hybrid childhoods. I prefer the term ‘more-than-social’ for four reasons. First, to avoid the term ‘biological’, in a way that accounts not only for the multiple ways in which what are called ‘biological processes’ become socialised, but that recognises that (especially) contemporary forms of sociality are constituted by technologies and knowledges wherein it is impossible to discern where the ‘social’ starts or ends (Anderson 2012). Second, then, the term encapsulates a going-beyond the usual terms of social relations (for instance, of inter-generational relations), but by no means an attempt to dispense with or deny their importance. If anything, it is an additive move that seeks an expanded sense of the constituents in

relations between and beyond human beings – of, for instance, the role of neuroscientific chemical processes in intergenerational relations between parents/carers and children. Third, the example of neuroscience should indicate that I am interested not only in nonhuman matter ostensibly situated ‘outside’ the human body (say, a toy), but with those processes that occur within, through and across them (for a fabulous discussion of food in this vein, see Bennett 2010). Thus, the ‘more-than-social’ denotes how nonhuman components of emotional processes are internalised (perhaps, personalised), as much as and at the same time as they are externalised (perhaps, socialised). This should not be taken as a return to the apparently “personal” excesses of nonrepresentational theory (Mitchell and Elwood 2012, 793), but to the process of emotions that are *both* excessively personal and exceed beyond personhood. Fourth, the term is meant to resonate with the ‘more-than-representational’ connotations of affect (Lorimer 2005), as some kind of atmosphere produced through constellations of human and nonhuman agents (Anderson 2009).

More-than-social emotions I: alternative learning spaces

In this section, I focus upon articulations of emotions within alternative education. By ‘alternative education’, I mean pedagogies, practices and spaces that are deliberately positioned as some kind of alternative to mainstream, state-sponsored/controlled schooling, where that latter system is either mandated or assumed for children’s education. In the UK and other Minority Global North contexts, alternative education can take many forms, including homeschooling (Kraftl 2013a), Steiner Schooling, Montessori Schooling, Forest Schooling and Care Farming. Other than a tendency towards an increase in such forms of alternative education, they are notable for two reasons. First, they tend to emphasise values that are directly distinguished from those that apparently prevail in contemporary (neoliberalising) education systems – such as an attention to deep inter-personal connections

versus the seemingly inhuman(e) large scale of many modern schools (Sliwka 2008). Second, and herein, they are notable for considerable emphasis upon emotions, affects and habits developed through learning practices and spaces. Thus, I wish to draw on some examples, briefly citing secondary sources on alternative education as well as my own research at over fifty alternative learning spaces in the UK.

My examples come from forms of outdoor, 'therapeutic' or 'green' learning in the UK (Ecclestone and Hayes 2009; Kraftl 2013b). In response to a perceived 'deficit' of 'natural' experiences amongst Minority World children (e.g. Louv 2005), a range of Forest Schools, Care Farms and other enterprises has emerged since 2000. What interests me is not whether these deficits exist, but how 'natures' – how *more-than-social* relations – are articulated by practitioners and (occasionally) academics in these contexts. At Care Farms, various 'normal' farming activities – horticulture, animal grooming, mucking out – are used to promote the physical and mental health of clients (Hine et al 2008). Care Farms provide 'health-promoting interventions that [...] use both biotic and abiotic elements of nature in treatments [that aim] to maintain or promote a person's social, physical, mental or even educational well-being (Haubenhofner et al., 2010 p 106). They are carefully choreographed spaces – but in the sense that *particular* 'natures' (like manure, running through a farmyard on a rainy day) are viewed as beneficial, because they are part and parcel of the care experience. Caring is thus conceived in a *combinative* way that involves social and more-than-social relations: on the one hand, the experience of working with animals or plants is said to have restorative or therapeutic properties; on the other, it has been shown that engagement in Care Farm activities increases a person's disposition to empathise and communicate with other humans (Berget and Braastad 2008).

At Forest Schools, a similar combinative approach is used. Forest Schools operate via a number of principles, of which the necessity of engagement with 'nature' (which can in

practice mean anything from a scrap of urban wasteland to a remote forest) is only one. To generalise, these principles include: a visit to an unfamiliar place that children would not normally access; repetition – usually for an afternoon a week for a course of six weeks; managed risk, and particularly tasks like fire-lighting and den-building that children would not do in school (Knight 2009; Ridgers et al. 2012). Forest School is therefore not about putting children in ‘some nature’ for an afternoon, but a carefully-thought-through process in which, admittedly, nature is conceived in some peculiar ways (section III) but, at the same time, it is activated and engaged *through* repetition, through unfamiliarity, and through tasks like fire-lighting which are as much about human adaptation of ‘nature’ as they are *a priori* ‘natural’.

These observations lead to two critical points about outdoor, therapeutic and green learning. The first is that, whilst natural processes are afforded greater attention and, in some cases, allowed more ‘agency’ (in Actor-Network parlance) than in many mainstream schools, readers will note that I have hesitated from a stronger argument about the *specific* role of ‘nature’. In part, this is because, whilst psychological studies have demonstrated the benefits of green care and Forest School for young people’s self-esteem, happiness and well-being (Knight 2009) it is not (yet) possible to *disentangle* what the role of ‘nature’ might be.

Several practitioners told me about ‘special moments’ where a group of children had suddenly become silent in response to a particular ‘nature’ event – seeing a wild animal, listening to wind in the trees – but it transpired that these events only *mattered*, in emotional and educational terms, because they were situated within the carefully-choreographed practices of practitioners and children. The package – the more-than-social package, which attempts to *admit* nature, albeit in specific ways – might work, but that is all that can be said.

The second critical point is about emotion. In my research, I came across a range of ways in which emotion ‘mattered’ – in an ostensibly *non*-political sense – to Forest School and Care

Farm practice. At one farm in Scotland, Tony, who ran the farm, told me about his approach to working with young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, at risk of permanent exclusion from their mainstream school, and who had been referred to his farm as a temporary educational alternative. He insisted that Care Farms must incorporate some aspect of ‘learning’ – that the everyday, banal experience of being there was important, but always entwined with a sense that young people also needed to move on with their lives (cf Mitchell and Elwood 2012). As he put it:

“There have to be targets, and we report on them, as you would at school. We do not provide care. Although we are called a care farm. If someone needs care, they come with a carer. We supervise them going through their education. [...] Targets are not always objective. Sometimes it’s about trying to find how someone’s *moved* in a direction. Can we say he is more confident?”(Tony, Care Farm, Scotland, original emphasis)

Tony had been invested in an ongoing deliberation about how to demonstrate not only that what he did made a difference, but that the emotion-work they did *mattered*. This, it transpired, was a common struggle faced by many alternative educators – not only Care Farmers and Forest Schoolers, but across the whole spectrum of alternative learning spaces. This is where I am wary of Mitchell and Elwood’s (2012) narrower conception of voice in the name of a particular conception of ‘politics’. For, I want to argue, emotion mattered in so many more, excessive ways than that conception of politics (indeed, *any* conception) might allow. For instance, across many learning spaces, practitioners articulated different conceptions of how their work aimed at producing particular kinds of *habit*. At Tony’s farm, another practitioner, Clive, told me:

“With young people it’s mostly about changing behaviour. [...] Not too much pressure, and reorienting, so that when they see a half-broken pipe,

they don't just instinctively kick it, they ask straight away, how can I fix that? It's *channelling the same energy* [...] changing the mindset – using a power tool, if [it] feels the same, you get the same kind of buzz, release, but look at the end result. [...]. The way they stand, things like that, their body language, it's the only way you can judge it really.

“Or, like David [pseudonym for teenage client], they will become confident to make decisions – how much food for the hens, measuring it out. Say. I showed him for the first couple of weeks, but then, took a step back. I didn't tell him, he just [started] doing it without thinking. Not all of them will get it right, but they will gradually be distanced, from me, and do things by themselves” (Clive, Care Farm Practitioner, Scotland, emphasis added)

Resonant with philosophical conceptions of habit (Carlisle 2009; Bissell 2012), Clive figures habit as a channelling of emotional energies towards particular ways of relating to the world that are, specifically, un-thought (done ‘without thinking’). This engagement is four-fold, interweaving: engagements with nature (animals, trees, horticulture, a wildlife project at the farm); engagements with material objects (kicking or fixing a pipe); engagements with others (with Clive and, ultimately, a return to school); engagements with emotion (with the drivers of habit and affect that I will discuss later). Understood thus, Clive's articulation of habit is, once again, *more-than-social*.

A final question – perhaps the most significant – is why all of this *matters* to alternative educators, parents, and to children themselves. Clearly, this kind of inquiry requires extended consideration (see Kraftl 2013b). But let me offer four suggestions, which, in the terms of my critique of Mitchell and Elwood (2012) at once extend beyond *and* reverberate with politics. First, the training of habit is meant – ideally– to lead to some important emotional outcomes:

to improved well-being, happiness, self-esteem and children's ability to socialise and communicate with others – how someone 'has moved'. Second, at places like Care Farms and Forest Schools, the channelling of habits is geared towards some instrumental outcomes whose benefits one can debate, but which are generally considered to be advantageous: in particular, providing young people with the confidence to go back to school, paid work, a difficult family situation or, even, in the case of a school I visited for badly-bullied children, the hard-fought ability to simply look another child in the eye (see Hayes and Herbert 2011). These might seem like minor, 'personal' achievements (cf Mitchell and Elwood 2012) – but I can say with certainty that understood in their contexts, they are much more than this. Third, many educators view the training of habit and the acquisition of particular emotional intelligences, competencies and forms of compassion as central to their broader ethical stance on the world. Thus, several alternative educational philosophies (including Human-Scale education and Steiner education) encourage forms of spirituality and mindfulness that are intended to foster dispositions of responsibility amongst children – especially to strangers both near and far (cf Massey 2005). In this way, the for-the-moment affects created in Steiner schools through architecture, smells and colours (Kraftl 2006) are entangled in a longer-standing ethical demand. Hence, as Oberski (2011 p 14) clarifies, with reference to Steiner education: 'the actual purpose of [creative] activities lies much more in the development of pupils of willing, feeling and eventually intuitive thinking through the imagination faculty, which may later foster moral imagination.' Or, to recap my earlier qualifications to Mitchell and Elwood's arguments: at many alternative learning spaces, everyday, banal, emotional and affective encounters *matter*, in multiple ways, that extend beyond the 'local', but which also exceed overtly political concerns with 'agency' or 'voice' (in Steiner education, the development of a *moral* 'compass' with a global sense of responsibility). I have argued that hybrid conceptions of more-than-social emotions are one key to understanding these accounts

of mattering. The fourth suggestion is that, for all of this mattering, hybrid or more-than-social emotions also raise concerns, with which (children's) geographers are well-placed to grapple. I return to these in section III.

More-than-social emotions II: attachment theories

In this second example, I question what are the implications for children's geographers (and studies of the family and intergenerational relations more broadly) for acknowledging more-than-social processes that are more commonly the realm of neuroscience, genetics or development psychology. What *else* can we say about emotions entailed in the relation – say between a parent and child – that social-constructivist approaches do not routinely admit, and that are glossed in practitioners' accounts of alternative education? Using recent work on attachment, I sketch out some limited responses. Given the constraints of an academic article, I draw on a necessarily small selection of recent scholarly writings on attachment theory. I do so less to narrowly insist that children's (emotional) geographers engage in cross-disciplinary work with attachment theorists, or adopt neuroscientific or behavioural-psychological methods (although these may be viable options for future research), but more to highlight how attachment theorists *conceive* more-than-social emotions, in order to open up a range of critical questions and potential areas of substantive interest for future geographical research. Some of these responses connect with my previous discussion of alternative education spaces.

Attachment theory has its bases in psychoanalysis, psychiatry, evolutionary theory, ethology and, latterly, neuroscience. Whilst the term attachment has various colloquial uses, it is most frequently used to describe bonds forged between an infant and an attachment figure (frequently a mother). Early work by Bowlby (1969) and others figured attachment theory as

“a kind of ‘spatial’ theory in which the closer the attachment figure, then the more happy and at ease the infant” (Music 2011, 61). Theorised thus, micro-spatial interactions where two people try to figure out each other’s feelings – what Hart (2006, 6) calls a “carefully planned choreography” – are the bases for forming attachments. Contemporary attachment theorists (especially Music, 2011, 62) try to avoid moral judgments about whether forms of attachment are ‘good or bad’, as even in close relationships “mothers and babies rarely match each other’s moods and states exactly [...b]oth parties match each other’s bodily rhythms and affects, but not perfectly, which is much as happens with adults [even those who] tend to like each other more” (Music 2011, 38). Whilst psychologists understand affect in a different way from most geographers (as “the basic neurological foundation for the formation of feelings or emotions” [Hart 2006, xvi]), there is resonance here with nonrepresentational work in geography that has sought to witness the inter-subjective creation of affect in micro-spatial, embodied interactions (e.g. McCormack 2003).

Whilst critiques of developmental psychology remain as pertinent as ever to social-constructivist accounts of childhood, its study has both diversified and developed since the 1970s – a point made wonderfully in Aitken and Herman’s (1997) seminal re-reading of Winnicott’s notion of ‘transitional space’ in young children’s play. Where Aitken and Herman (1997) focussed upon developing relations between infants’ selves and the material world, I am specifically interested in the inter-personal relations accounted for by contemporary theories of attachment. Again, acknowledging critiques of the questionable political ends to which neuroscience may be put (Pykett 2012; section III), I want carefully to suggest that insights from the emergent discipline of neuroscience might help geographers to engage in the development of a “complex biopsychosocial model” of attachment (Hart 2006, xiv).

Thus – in the vein of Bennett’s (2010) recent work – it might be possible to admit the genetic, chemical and electrical processes through which human lives (and attachments) are formed. This is to emphasise the role of the more-than-social *in* the constitution of the social in ways that most social studies of childhood do not. Thus, as Kandel (2005) argues, it is possible to recognise the neural bases for mental processes determined by genes and brain proteins, *but*, as Hart (2006, xiii) states, it is also to recognise that “experience alters gene expression [and that] learning changes neural connections”. Or, again,

“[t]he brain is sculpted [...] in a close interaction between genetic conditions and environmental stimulation [...] development progress follows a highly complex choreography that integrates and coordinates the neuroanatomic and neurobiological development with the infant’s experiences through close interpersonal relationships” (Hart 2006, xii).

Two concrete examples of how neuroscientists understand inter-personal relations and emotions may help. Firstly, in a famous study, Rizzolatti (2005) wired monkeys so that it was possible to see a particular neuron firing when they reached for some food. But his astounding finding was that when one of the researchers reached for *his* food, the *same* neuron fired in the monkey’s brain. Thus, the ability to empathise with others’ emotions *is* learned (in context) but also has neurological bases (which in turn can be trained – like the habits of which many alternative educators speak). Secondly, a study by Bartels and Zeki (2004) partially uncovered some of the neurological bases of maternal affection. They found that vasopressin and oxytocin receptors and the brain’s reward system – the activation of dopamine – are central not only to the activation of feelings of attachment between mothers and children, but between adults experiencing romantic love. Strikingly, they also found that the activation of vasopressin and oxytocin receptors

“deactivated[...] networks used for critical social assessment and negative emotions [whilst] bonding individuals through the involvement of the reward circuitry, explaining the power of love to motivate and exhilarate” (Bartels and Zeki 2004, 1156).

The deactivation of neural networks is as important as the reward system, however, because

[it] may be that once one is closely familiar with a person (in a positive or negative way), the need to assess the social validity of that person is reduced.

[...] The neural mechanisms suppressed here might be the same that, when active, are responsible for maintaining an emotional barrier towards less familiar people” (Bartels and Zeki 2004, 1164).

There are several implications to this (admittedly complex) work. Most significant for this paper is that contemporary attachment theories resonate with the rather more overtly spiritual, less ‘scientific’ impulses of alternative pedagogies discussed earlier. Each body of work seems somehow to reinforce the other because each is willing to admit that: a) the capacity for any kind of emotional or affective habit, is something more-than-social, working in complex interplay with and as learned, performative gestures (cf. Goffman 1959) in shaping human interactions, but; b) the capacity for feeling *means* nothing without and is shaped via learning, socialisation and inter-personal expressions of attachment; c) expressions of love or empathy *are not* unique to the mother-child relationship but to various forms of loving relation, including those between children and adults who are not related and may also be pupils and teachers (Kraftl 2013b); and d) most importantly of all, that whilst “there is compelling evidence for a universal attachment system in human infants”, all “concepts of attachment theory contain cultural biases [where c]oncepts like ‘timely responsiveness’ or ‘maternal sensitivity’ might mean something different in different cultures” (Music 2011, 68). At the same time as these resonances might offer ways in to what I am calling ‘more-than-social’

emotional relations, they raise a series of potential concerns and critical questions, to which I turn in the final part of the paper.

III Discussion: thinking critically about children's emotional geographies 'beyond' voice and agency

In his recent discussion of emotion and affect, Pile (2010, 17) warned that

“[one of] the greatest threat[s] to emotional geography is that it should tie itself ever more closely to [...], an ever-expanding shopping list of expressed emotions [...] without ever reflecting on why emotional geographies should be conducted in the first place”.

Whilst this is a slightly dismissive critique of some recent work in emotional geographies, a central aim of this paper *has* been to initiate further reflection of exactly this kind – both within the narrower realm of work on (geographies of) childhood and youth, and more broadly. In initiating this reflection, I moved through critiques of ‘voice’, ‘agency’ and ‘politics’, through geographies of participatory, activist and everyday emotions, through calls to reinforce representations of/by children, and through what I termed ‘more-than-social’ emotional relations that might in some ways go beyond previous approaches to children’s emotional geographies. Section II highlighted some possible ways to think and do children’s emotional geographies ‘beyond’ questions of voice, agency and politics. Let me reiterate that I do not see these approaches as a ‘break’ from previous studies, and see important connections with geographies of children’s participation, activism and everyday lives that go beyond representational concerns. I have only scratched the surface of what might be meant by ‘more-than-social’ relations and emotions. But I hope to have persuaded readers that, beyond acknowledging the hybridity of children’s lives, and aside from accounting for more-

than-social agents and processes, the questions I have raised around education and attachment may offer some “navigational aids” (Lee and Motzkau 2011, 8) to future research on children’s emotional geographies and, more broadly, on the varied terrains of emotional and affectual geographies.

At the same time, I want to raise a set of concerns about both the empirical content and the approaches I discussed in section II. As will become clear, I will, in part, link back to Mitchell and Elwood’s (2012) questions about the politics of childhood; but I will also turn to some other political questions effaced by their partial reading of nonrepresentational geographies. However, these concerns are, I suggest, not only pertinent to the fields of alternative education and attachment theory, but may offer complementary, critical points of departure for (re) thinking and (re) doing children’s emotional geographies – and, indeed, for reflecting more broadly upon *how* and, even, *why* geographers study emotion and affect.

My first concern is with the possible uses of attachment theory in propounding and analysing certain modes of ordering social spaces. For, one implication of attachment theories is that, despite decades of work on the social construction of childhood, gender and the family “it is nonetheless important to recognize that bonds of affection and affiliation, nurture and care, may indeed offer the family certain advantages” (Conroy 2010, 334). Conroy argues that “[t]his represents what is for many an uncomfortable indication that traditional forms of life may indeed be more powerful than contemporary constructivist accounts of personhood are prepared to admit” (Conroy 2010, 335). It is here that it is important to navigate a very careful path. For, in some cases it is an important political act of affirmation to recognise that there may be natural bases for wanting to foster attachment – particularly when (as Conroy goes on to argue) the idea that attachments are socially constructed has been used to justify the separation of children from parents in ways that perpetuate the governmental power of the State (e.g. de Leeuw 2008). However, careless readings of recent studies of attachment (and I

am not suggesting that Conroy's is such) might be behoven to conclude that neuroscientific studies reinforce the centrality of the *mother* as a key, natural, attachment figure and the *family* (read as a private, nuclear family) as the most desirable unit of social organisation for bringing up children. Both Hart (2006) and Music (2011) are at considerable pains to insist that neither is the case. Yet 'the family' has become – at least in Britain in the past decade and especially since the change of Government in 2010 – invested with such responsibility, that there is a danger that to re-emphasise the biological foundations for familial attachment might at this historical moment simply reinforce contemporary politicisations of family life. Whatever one's political commitments, my foray into attachment theory might prompt further reflection upon the thinking and doing of children's emotional geographies. For instance, with its emphasis upon the many kinds of feeling-relations *between* adults and even very young children, (how) does attachment theory resist or support the idea that children are 'other', (Jones 2008)? Or, to take another of Jones' (2008) ethical questions – how do we balance what we might gain from such insights with what might be lost by further pursuing these relations, especially in terms of the political space afforded to children *as* children rather than children understood as part of the 'family' unit? These are questions that require considerable further thought.

My second, related, concern seems at first glance to be limited to fields of alternative education that have presaged 'therapeutic' values in learning spaces. But it is not. In fact, it raises a critical question – in part posed by Mitchell and Elwood (2012), and in part implied in the scope of this special issue – about *why* it is that we need to know how children feel. By this generic 'we' I mean in this instance not only academics, but educators, policy-makers, and the whole gamut of practitioners working with or for children. What *is* it that we seek to gain from knowing, and intervening in, how children feel? Why is it that 'therapeutic' approaches – and attendant interests in 'emotional literacy', neuroscience and habit formation

– have become so prevalent not only in alternative sectors but in the educational mainstream (see, for instance, Pykett 2012)? For (a brief) example, qualifying recent enthusiasm for ‘therapy’ in many sectors – including alternative education – has been a range of critiques (Furedi 2004). Writing on therapeutic education, Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) identify several potential dangers. Firstly, the popularisation of ‘therapy’ in self-help guides, popular magazines and autobiographies, whereby it is impossible to discern ‘what works’. Secondly, the branding of whole groups of young people as ‘disaffected’, with little sense that that branding is any less stigmatising than labelling them ‘immigrants’, or ‘thick’, or whatever derisory term one may choose (Ecclestone and Hayes 2009, xi). Thirdly, a sense that those who require improvement are “diminished selves” (Ecclestone and Hayes 2009, xiii), emotionally fragile and incomplete. Fourthly, that emotional “interventions for developing learning power are simply part of ‘good teaching’ and, far from being therapeutic, eliciting students’ feelings about what they are learning [enhances] the teaching of subjects (Ecclestone and Hayes 2009, 155; see also Probyn 2005). Finally, perhaps most controversially, that “therapeutic education [is] profoundly anti-educational [...] abandon[ing] the liberal project of education [...as it] creates a curriculum of the self that lowers educational and social aspirations in its quest to be more ‘personally relevant’” (Ecclestone and Hayes 2009, xiii). Whilst readers may wish to make up their own minds about the particular worth of “therapeutic culture” (Furedi 2004, 4), such critiques raise a dual question. On the one hand, what is it that we – including children’s geographers and, perhaps other geographers – seek to gain by knowing how children feel, and does that impulse, that *emphasis* on emotions, actually prop up some of what might be the more insidious elements of therapeutic cultures? On the other hand, what is the scope for children’s geographers, and others, to *intervene* in these questions within and beyond academe; in what ways can our fine-grained analyses of the multiple workings of emotion in children’s lives ‘speak back’

to both prevailing orthodoxies and counter-narratives about the deployment of emotion in mainstream or alternative schools, youth work settings, health settings, etcetera? These are not questions I can address here, but which I hope encourage reflection on the broader implications of (not) emphasising emotions and affects in childhood research.

My final concern is with inter-related studies of biopolitics, hybridity and affect. Tellingly, in their analysis of hybrid childhoods, Lee and Motzkau (2011, 14) issue a warning about whether and how, “once researchers are engaged in, curious about or invested in such a topic and ready to recognize the full range of factors involved in it, how can that engagement be converted into manageable empirical questions?” For, once cognisant of different kinds of hybridity, it is unclear how (say, compared with different social constructions of childhood) those hybridities might be contrasted, or how those findings might be applied to different contexts (Lee and Motzkau 2011). In their view, the firm ground provided by either biological or social approaches is no longer sufficient in light of contemporary biopolitics. Nevertheless, an attention to hybridity does little to contextualise or aid critical, politicised comparisons (and here I agree with Mitchell and Elwood 2012). But, rather than dismiss hybridity, Lee and Motzkau call for particular “multiplicities” – resource, voice and life – in which hybridities can be channelled and articulated in order to allow critical comparison between case studies. My concern for children’s emotional geographies, then, comes in three parts. First, in terms of how children’s geographers might become involved in critical studies of the biopolitics of childhood and the circulation of affects about childhood – although strides have already been made in terms of work on hope (Kraftl 2008) obesity (B. Evans 2010) and neuroscience (Pykett 2012), to name but three examples. Second, in terms of children’s geographers’ articulation of ‘multiplicities’ in which spatial processes maybe invoked: I have suggested that two possible multiplicities might centre around questions of ‘therapy’ in alternative and mainstream education, and around the more-than-social emotional relations that have become

the focus for attachment theories. Third, Lee and Motzkau (2011) do not account in any great depth for the experiences of children (nor do they purport to). It is here, then, that questions of ‘voice’ and ‘agency’ may return: as constituent elements in children’s emotional geographies that go *beyond*, but do not seek to dismiss voice/agency as they appear in more-than-social relations. Like all of my concerns in this final section, the issue may well not always be reducible to politics as, for instance, multiplicities surrounding ‘therapy’ encompass but extend beyond politics, into (equally important) questions of well-being and morality. At the same time, these concerns are political in a broader sense, because, like other interventions (e.g. Vanderbeck 2008), they ask children’s geographers to consider their motivations for whether and how they do children’s emotional geographies.

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