Still, from its rich empirical evidence to its accessible yet cutting-edge theoretical perspectives, *From Where We Stand* is a crucial read for anyone interested in war generally, or gender and war specifically. Cockburn's attention to detail and positionality is accompanied by a steadfast refusal to lose sight of the big picture – where gender is a linchpin of war, and that relationship can be observed through the careful study of women's peace movements.

Laura Sjoberg

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Deconstructing developmental psychology

Erica Burman, Routledge, 2007, second edition, 368pp., ISBN 9780415395625, £27.95/\$38.95

This book by Erica Burman is a lucid work. Indeed, it serves to illuminate our path through a series of questions which, when addressed, reveal the power relationships that underlie the supposedly objective discourse of child development.

Handbooks of developmental psychology usually treat children's cognitive, social and emotional development as a standardized, almost universal process that is organized in stages, a process of development in which certain conflicts are to be expected but which nonetheless is always moving forward. Generally speaking, the child seems to progress alone, as if the context were merely an external modulator of something internal that was on the move. Emotional development is usually regarded as being subordinate to cognitive development, while the social sphere tends to be reduced to the immediate family environment. But this raises a series of questions. Which children are we talking about here? What is our model of development? Are we talking about an abstraction, about a certain social class or a certain socio-political context? Is the image of the child produced within the scientific discourse modified in light of political interests and discourse? On what basis are decisions made about what is best for children? In what ways might the discourse on childcare end up prescribing and regulating

the behaviour of carers themselves, especially that of mothers? How do we define what is normal and what is pathological?

In order to investigate these questions the author invites us to trace the ways in which our notions of childhood, development and child care are social constructions that have varied over time in different historical, social and cultural contexts. Failure to consider this explicitly can have serious repercussions. For example, we can end up applying a hegemonic model of development that overrides any differences, or we may produce a discourse that naturalizes and individualizes the very social inequalities that it sought to combat. So we should ask ourselves: why, time and again, is it said that the educational difficulties of young people from cultures other than the dominant one are to do with their families? How can we ask parents to be more involved in their children's education and, at the same time, make cuts in state-run services and resources such as nurseries? Why does suspicion still fall largely on the mother when discussion turns to the developmental difficulties of children?

This second and updated edition sets out more incisively and clearly than before the relationships between socio-political models and academic and professional discourses, and the examples and arguments used take into account the changes that have occurred since the book was first published in 1994. Indeed, there is now a new chapter entitled *Models and muddles: dilemmas of childhood*. Among the various dilemmas discussed is the difficult question of intervention in cases of child sexual abuse, and the author considers the pressures and anxieties experienced by the professionals involved. Her discussion of ethnocentric and moralistic stances adopted with respect to child labour in third world countries also helps to clarify this issue.

The analysis of the different, ambivalent and contradictory images of childhood, as well as the dilemmas associated with them, is both revealing and one of the themes that comes most sharply into focus in this second edition. Must the child be turned into a passive subject in order to receive help? Is it necessary to demonize any form of desire in children so as then to avoid blaming the victim in cases of abuse? Can we really expect to hear children's 'true' voice when a power structure in their relationships to adults remains in place? Are children innocent and vulnerable and in need of protection, or do they also cause problems and require discipline? Alongside the feminist perspective these analyses also include critical developments in cultural-historical approaches, post-colonial theory, the sociology of childhood, critical educational research, and the childhood studies movement.

Addressing these issues is not an easy task, since to question foundations is to question certainties and generate anxieties. Yet in doing so we can also open up new spaces and different practices, or at least ones that are more aware

of – and sensitive to – the ‘exploitation and oppression [that] suffuse the structure of developmental psychology’ (p. 303). The author has not taken up a radical hypercritical stance, but rather has written a book that is constantly searching for dialogue, particularly with professionals but also with researchers and students. And as before, this makes it especially valuable. For it is not only an invitation to reflect but also a call for us to take responsibility for whatever we are involved in.

I would like to raise one further issue. In the context of the tightening up of the European directive on immigration the regional government of Catalonia, part of the Spanish state, has recently approved the setting up of special schools for immigrant children who have newly arrived in the region. And the supposed aim of these special centres, which will be physically located outside ordinary school premises, is to promote social integration! This measure has already been denounced as discriminatory by researchers, associations from the immigrant community and some unions. Perhaps this criticism will lose its momentum, but at all events it indicates the need for active, committed resistance that is able to formulate a response. And it is here also that Erica’s book makes a contribution.

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