KINDERCULTURE

THE CORPORATE CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDHOOD

Edited by Shirley R. Steinberg

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The Corporate Construction
of Childhood

THIRD EDITION

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To our girls:

Hava, Luna, and Maci

Bronwyn, Christine, Marissa, and Meghann

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Chapter 1

KINDERCULTURE: MEDIATING, SIMULACRALIZING, AND PATHOLOGIZING THE NEW CHILDHOOD

Shirley R. Steinberg

On June 30, 2010, *La Vanguardia* noted a poll listing the top one hundred most influential newsmakers in the world. Among the group ranked were Taylor Swift (twelve), Miley Cyrus (thirteen), and the Jonas Brothers (forty). In the six years since the publication of the second edition of *Kinderculture,* the world has changed. Along with a sweeping tsunami of politics, religious influences, struggles, and advancing web 2.0 globalization comes an incredible phenomenon, kinderculture: Children and youth have become infantilized by popular culture, schools, and adults, and while being considered "too" young for almost anything, at the same time, they are being marketed to as seasoned adults. The result is a consumer public of little girls, for example, who wear chastity rings and hip-clinging jogging pants with "Kiss My Booty" in glitter on the backside. With one voice, adults tell kids to stay clean, avoid sex and drugs, go to Disneyland, and make vows of celibacy . . . with another other voice, the corporate side markets booty clothing, faux bling, and sexualized images of twelve-year-olds. This edition of *Kinderculture* adds to the other editions by claiming that new times have created a new

childhood. However, these new times are conservative and liberal, sexual and celibate, and innocent and seasoned. Evidence of this dramatic cultural change surrounds each of us, but many individuals have not yet noticed it. When Joe Kincheloe and I wrote the first edition of *Kinderculture* in 1997, many people who made their living studying or caring for children had not yet recognized this phenomenon. By the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, more and more people had begun to understand this historic change, however many child professionals remained oblivious to these social and cultural alterations. Now, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the notions of childhood and youth are more complex, more pathologized, and more alien to adults who educate and parent.

In the domains of psychology, education, and to a lesser degree sociology, few observers have seriously studied the ways that the information explosion so characteristic of our contemporary era has operated to undermine traditional notions of childhood. Those who have shaped, directed, and used contemporary information technology have played an exaggerated role in the reformulation of childhood. *Kinderculture* analyzes these changes in childhood, especially the role that information technology has played in this process. Of course, information technology alone has not produced a new era of childhood. Numerous social, political, and economic factors have operated to produce such changes. Our focus here is not to cover all of these issues but to question the ways media in particular have helped construct what I am calling "the new childhood."

Childhood is a social and historical artifact—not simply a biological entity. Many argue that childhood is a natural phase of growing up, of becoming an adult. The cardinal concept here involves the format of this human phase that has been produced by social, cultural, political, and economic forces operating upon it. Indeed, what is labeled as "traditional childhood" is only about 150 years old. In the Middle Ages, for example, children participated daily in the adult world, gaining knowledge of vocational and life skills as part of such engagement. The concept of children as a particular classification of human beings demanding special treatment differing from adults had not yet developed in the Middle Ages.

SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED CHILDHOOD

Childhood is a creation of society that is subject to change whenever major social transformations take place. The zenith of the traditional childhood lasted from about 1850 to 1950. Protected from the dangers of the adult world, many children (up until the twentieth century, boys) during this period were removed from factories and placed into schools. As the prototype of the modern family developed in the late nineteenth century, "proper" parental behavior toward children coalesced around notions of tenderness and adult accountability for children's welfare. By 1900 many believed that childhood was a birthright—a perspective that eventuated in a biological, not a cultural, definition of childhood. Emerging in this era of the protected child, modern child psychology was inadvertently constructed by the tacit assumptions of the period. The great child psychologists, from Erik Erikson to Arnold Gesell to Jean Piaget, viewed child development as shaped by biological forces.

Piaget's brilliance was constrained by his nonhistorical, socially de-contextualized scientific approach. What he observed as the genetic expression of child behavior in the early twentieth century he generalized to all cultures and historical eras—an error that holds serious consequences for those concerned with children. Considering biological stages of child development fixed and unchangeable, teachers, psychologists, parents, welfare workers, and the community at large view and judge children along a fictional taxonomy of development. Those children who don't "measure up" will be relegated to the land of low and self-fulfilling expectations. Those who "make the grade" will find that their racial and economic privilege will be confused with ability (Polakow, 1992; Postman, 1994). *Kinderculture* joins the emerging body of literature that questions the biological assumptions of "classical" child psychology (Kincheloe, 2008).

Living in a historical period of great change and social upheaval, critical observers are just beginning to notice changing social and cultural conditions in relation to this view of childhood. Categories of child development appropriated from modernist psychology may hold little relevance for raising and educating contemporary children. In the 1950s, 80 percent of all children lived in homes where their two biological

parents were married to each other (Lipsky and Abrams, 1994). No one has to be told that families have changed in the past fifty years. Volumes have been written specifying the scope and causes of the social transformation. Before the 1980s ended, children who lived with their two biological parents had fallen to merely 12 percent. Children of divorced parents—a group made up of more than half of the North American population—are almost three times as likely as children raised in two-parent homes to suffer emotional and behavioral difficulties—maybe more the result of parental conflict than the actual divorce (Mason and Steadman, 1997). Despite such understandings, social institutions have been slow to recognize different, nontraditional family configurations and the special needs they encounter. Without support, the contemporary "postmodern" family, with its plethora of working and single mothers, is beset with problems emanating from the feminization of poverty and the vulnerable position of women in both the public and private spaces (Polakow, 1992).

PARADIGMS FOR STUDYING CHILDHOOD: THE POSITIVIST VIEW OF CHILDREN

It is important to place *Kinderculture* in paradigmatic context, to understand what I am promoting here in relation to other scholarship on childhood studies and childhood education. To begin with, we are directly challenging the positivist view of children promoted in mainstream articulations of psychology, sociology, education, and anthropology. Positivism is an epistemological position maintaining that all knowledge of worth is produced by the traditional scientific method. All scientific knowledge constructed in this context is thus proclaimed neutral and objective. Critics of positivism (see Kincheloe, 1993, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2008) argue that because of the narrow nature of what positivist research studies (what it *can* study given its rules of analysis), it often overlooks powerful normative and ideological assumptions built into its research design. In this naïve realistic context it often seeks empirical proof of what are normative or political assertions—for example, that adults always know better when it comes to issues involving children.

A key goal of critics of positivism involves bringing these normative and ideological assumptions to the surface so observers can gain a much more textured perspective of what research involves and indicates. Indeed, critics of positivism insist that one dimension of research involves the researcher's analysis of his or her own assumptions, ideologies, and values, and how they shape the knowledge produced. In such a spirit, the editors and authors of *Kinderculture* openly admit their antipositivist, hermeneutic epistemological orientations. Concurrently, we admit our critical democratic values, our vision of race, class, gender, and sexual equality, and the necessity of exposing the effects of power in shaping individual identity and political/educational purpose. This is not an act of politicization of research; research has always been politicized. Instead, we are attempting to understand and act ethically in light of such politicization.

In the positivist perspective, children are assumed to be subservient and dependent on adults as part of the order of the cosmos. In this context adults are seen as having a "natural" prerogative to hold power over children. Positivists turn to biology to justify such assumptions, contending that the physical immaturity of children is manifested in other domains as inferiority, an absence of development, incompleteness, and weakness. One does not have to probe deeply into these biological assumptions to discern similarities between the positivist hierarchy of adults and children and the one subordinating "emotional" women to "rational" men. In our challenge to the positivist view of children, we focus on age and generation to depict children as different from adults but not inferior to them. Children are not merely entities on their way to adulthood; they are individuals intrinsically valuable for who they presently are. When positivists view children as lesser than adults, they consistently ignore the way power operates to oppress children around the axes of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc. The positivist construction of the "vulnerable" child in this context actually becomes more vulnerable as real and specific threats are overlooked because childhood is viewed as a naturally vulnerable state. The threats of different social, economic, political, and cultural "childhoods" are erased (Mason and Steadman, 1997).

The positivist view of childhood has been firmly grounded on developmental psychology's universal rules of child development. Regardless

of historical or social context, these rules lay out the proper develop-
ment of "normal" children. This mythos of the universal innocent and
developing child transforms cultural dimensions of childhood into some-
thing produced by nature. By the second decade of the twentieth cen-
tury, this universal norm for the developing child had been established
on the basis of "scientific authority," based almost exclusively on North
American white, middle-class norms and experiences. Schools fell into
line, developing a white, middle-class, patriarchal curriculum that re-
flected the norms of proper development. Reformers, blessed with the
imprimatur of science, based their efforts to regulate play on the princi-
ples of developmental psychology. Advocates of municipal playgrounds,
the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts worked to make sure that children made
appropriate use of leisure time (Spigel, 1998).

The decontextualized aspect of the positivist view of childhood
shapes numerous problems for those who don't fit into the dominant
cultural bases of the proper development of normal children. In failing
to understand the impact of race, class, gender, linguistics, national ori-
gin, etc., positivism fails to understand the nature of and the reasons
for differences between children. Too often—especially in twenty-first-
century education, with its obsession with standards, standardization,
and testing—such differences are viewed as deficiencies. In this posi-
tivist regime of truth, children from lower socioeconomic, nonwhite, or
immigrant backgrounds are relegated to the lower rungs of the devel-
opmental ladder. The idea that life experiences and contextual factors
might affect development is not considered in the positivist paradigm
because it does not account for such social and cultural dynamics
(Mason and Steadman, 1997).

In addition, as positivism came to delineate the scientific dimensions
of child development, male psychologists replaced mothers as child-rear-
ing experts. In the early part of the twentieth century, the psychologist
took on a socially important role. Many people believed that if scien-
tific principles were not followed, innocent, malleable children would
be led en masse into immorality and weakness. A significant feature of
these scientific principles involved exposing children only to develop-
mentally appropriate adult knowledge. The secret knowledge of adult-
hood, the positivist psychologists believed, should only be delivered to

children at appropriate times in their development. With these ideas in mind, one can better understand the impact TV made on a nation that bought into major dimensions of the positivist mythos. TV was the fly in the ointment, the window to adult knowledge that could undermine the nation's strength and moral fiber.

The positivist view of childhood could be maintained only through constant social regulation and surveillance of the young. Since childhood is vulnerable and socially unstable, the control of knowledge becomes especially important in the maintenance of its innocent format. Indeed, in the positivist view childhood no longer exists if the young gain access to certain forms of adult knowledge. No wonder the last half of the twentieth century witnessed so many claims that after TV and other electronic media, childhood was dead. The positivist position has been deemed by many as an elitist perspective, as adults are deemed the trolls of the bridge of childhood. It is adults who decide what children should know and how they should be socialized. The idea that children should be participants in making decisions about their own lives is irrelevant here. Simply put, in the positivist paradigm children are passive entities who must be made to submit to adult decisions about their lives (Spigel, 1998).

FINDING A NEW PARADIGM FOR A NEW CHILDHOOD

With the advent of a plethora of socioeconomic changes, technological developments, globalization, and the perceived inadequacy of the old paradigm, which helps produce profoundly diverse actions and reactions, Western societies and increasingly other parts of the world have entered into a transitional phase of childhood. This transitional phase has been accompanied by a paradigm shift in the way many scholars study childhood and situate it in social, cultural, political, and economic relations. This scholarly shift takes direct exception to the positivist view of childhood and its expression of a universal, uniformly developmentalist conception of the normal child. This conception of the child as a passive receiver of adult input and socialization strategies has been replaced by a view of the child as an active agent capable of contributing

to the construction of his or her own subjectivity. For those operating in the parameters of the new paradigm, the purpose of studying and working with children is not to remove the boundary between childhood and adulthood but to gain a thicker, more compelling picture of the complexity of the culture, politics, and psychology of childhood. With its penchant for decontextualization and inability to account for contemporary social, cultural, political, economic, and epistemological changes, the positivist paradigm is not adequate for this task (Cannella, 1997; Hengst, 2001; Cannella and Kincheloe, 2002; Cannella, 2002; Cook, 2004; Steinberg, 2010).

Insisting that children existed outside society and could be brought in from the cold only by adult socialization that led to development, the positivist view constructed research and childhood professional practices that routinely excluded children's voices. Advocates of the new paradigm have maintained time and again that such positivist silencing and general disempowerment is not in the best interests of children. In the name of child protection, advocates of the new paradigm have argued, children are often rendered powerless and vulnerable in their everyday lives. As they construct their view of children as active constructors of their own worlds, proponents of the new paradigm work hard to emphasize the personhood of children. The children of the new paradigm both construct their worlds and are constructed by them. Thus, in ethnographic and other forms of new paradigm childhood study, children, like adults, are positioned as co-participants in research—not as mere objects to be observed and categorized. Advocates of the new paradigm operating in the domain of social and educational policy-making for children contend that such activity must always take into account the perspectives of children to inform their understanding of particular situations (Mason and Steadman, 1997; Seaton, 2002; Cook, 2004; Steinberg, 2010).

Thus, central to the new paradigm is the effort to make sure children are intimately involved in shaping their social, psychological, and educational lives. In many ways accomplishing such a task is much easier said than done. In contemporary U.S. society in particular, to attempt it is to expose oneself to ridicule and dismissal by conservative child advocates in diverse social, political, cultural, and educational arenas. Such child-empowerment advocacy is represented by right-wing commenta-

tors as a permissive relinquishing of adult power over impudent and disrespectful children (Mason and Steadman, 1997; Ottosen, 2003). Undoubtedly, it will be a difficult struggle to reposition the child in twenty-first-century social relationships. In this context Henry Jenkins argues, as an advocate of the new paradigm, that his work seeks to provide children with tools that facilitate children's efforts to achieve their own political goals and help them construct their own culture.

In rejecting the positivist paradigm of childhood passivity and innocence, advocates of the new empowerment paradigm are not contending that there is no time when children need adult protection—that would be a silly assertion. Children, like human beings in general, too often find themselves victimized by abuse, neglect, racism, class bias, and sexism. The salient point is that instead of further infantilizing children and rendering them more passive, the new paradigm attempts to employ their perspectives in solving their problems (Mason and Steadman, 1997). In addition, such transformative researchers and child professionals work to help children develop a critical political consciousness as they protect their access to diverse knowledge and technologies. As is the nature of developing a critical consciousness in any context, we are arguing that children in social, cultural, psychological, and pedagogical contexts need help in developing the ability to analyze, critique, and improve their position in the world. This task is a central objective of *Kinderculture*.

Another dimension of the new paradigm of child study involves the explicit rejection of positivism's universalist conception of childhood and child development. When advocates of the new paradigm enter diverse class and racial/ethnic cultures, they find childhoods that look quite different from the white, middle- and upper-middle-class, English-speaking one presented by positivism. In these particularistic childhoods researchers find great complexity and diversity within these categories. For example, the social, cultural, and political structures that shape these childhoods and the children who inhabit them are engaged in profoundly different ways by particular children in specific circumstances. Thus, such structures never determine who children are no matter how much consistency in macrostructures may exist. The particular and the general, the micro and the macro, agency and structure always interact

in unpredictable ways to shape the everyday life of children. A central theme of the new paradigm re-emerges—children shape and are shaped by the world around them.

The editors and authors of *Kinderculture* maintain that the delicate and complex balance between these constructive forces must be carefully studied and maintained. If we move too far in our emphasis of structure over agency, we lapse into a structural determinism that undermines the prerogative of individual social actors—thus, there is nothing a child can do to escape the ravages of poverty. If we move too far in our emphasis of agency, we often lose sight of the way dominant power operates to undermine children's role in shaping their own lives and constructing their own subjectivities. Indeed, the overemphasis of particularism and agency will often obscure just how powerless children can be. Thus, to develop our thicker and more complex view of childhood, we must constantly work to integrate the micro and the macro, to discern new cultural and political economic contexts in which to view and make sense of child behavior (Garey and Arendell, 1999; Ottosen, 2003). In this context new paradigmatic researchers must not only nurture these macro (social, political economic), meso (institutional, e.g., school, media, religious institution, welfare agency), and micro (individuals) interactions but attend to the ways such levels connect to one another. For example, what is the proximity of the individual child to particular social and institutional structures?

These are complex questions, and different students of childhood will answer them in divergent ways. Indeed, some scholars of childhood make distinctions between proponents of the new paradigm who emphasize structural issues and those who stress the agency of individual children. In this dichotomy scholars who emphasize the importance of commercial relations and corporate marketing in shaping children's culture have been relegated to the "structuralist" camp—the authors and editors of *Kinderculture* included. Structuralists are represented in this configuration as emphasizing the corporate invasion of childhood and its resulting exploitation. In this context structuralists are said to view such exploitation as similar in nature to the exploitation of women. The agential perspective often focuses not on the exploitative but the "empowering" dimensions of children's participation in commercial culture.

By arguing that children construct their own lives, such agential scholars maintain that children are capable of avoiding the manipulations of corporate advertising and making positive use of the consumptive act and consumer products. For example, advocates of agency maintain that children appropriate toys and media productions in creative ways that make meanings of them totally unanticipated by the producer.

Illustrating the divergence of the agential and structuralist positions, those labeled structuralists contend that while such creative appropriation certainly does take place, it often does nothing to subvert the ideological meanings inscribed on corporate constructions. When children appropriate toys and media productions, they sometimes make meanings that subvert ideological inscriptions while at other times their appropriations operate to validate the status quo. Such appropriations are complex and must be studied on a case-by-case basis. Our notion of kinderculture is dedicated to the notion that often the separation of structural and agential interpretations creates a false binarism. Indeed, in every situation we study (see Joe Kincheloe's *Sign of the Burger: McDonald's and the Culture of Power* for an expansion of these ideas) we discern both structural and agential dimensions at work. A child, like an adult, can concurrently be exploited and possess agency. Whenever individuals deal with hegemonic and ideological productions, they deal with these competing dynamics (Mason and Steadman, 1997; Ottosen, 2003; Cook, 2004).

As in any sociopolitical situation with the potential for hegemonic and ideological exploitation, children (or adults) can learn to be more sensitive to the ways exploitation takes place while developing strategies for avoiding it. And, as in any pedagogical situation, children (and adults) can develop these strategies on their own or, in a Vygotskian sense, in cooperation with teachers who provide a new zone of proximal development that allows for a deeper understanding of the way power operates. This, of course, is the basis of *Kinderculture*'s critical media literacy for children (Steinberg, 2007).

David Buckingham (2003) dismisses the value of structuralist concerns with exploitation and argues that pedagogies of empowerment such as the one advocated here have "increasingly been seen to amount to little more than rhetoric." By denying the possibility of a media literacy of

power, Buckingham lapses into a pedagogy of nihilism that provides no raison d'être for scholarly activity in the area of children's culture. Power and exploitation are erased in Buckingham's articulation, as any effort to alert children to the ways the social, cultural, political, and economic domains operate to harm both them and other individuals is represented as a misguided form of "salvationism." Buckingham then equates this so-called salvationism with right-wing attempts to protect childhood innocence via forms of censorship and moralistic regulation. Most discussions between the agential and structuralist positions in the new paradigm of child studies are not—nor should be—this contentious. It is important to specify *Kinderculture*'s location in this conceptual matrix.

Kinderculture represents the critical new paradigm in childhood studies and childhood education. The use of "critical" in this context signals the "critical" in critical theory (Kincheloe, 2004, 2008) and its concern with power structures and their influence in everyday life. In the case of contemporary children, the sociopolitical and economic structures shaped by corporate power buoyed by the logic of capital as well as patriarchal structures, with their oppressive positioning of women and children, are central concerns of the critical paradigm (Garey and Arendell, 1999; Scott, 2002). Using the production of pleasure as its ultimate weapon, the corporate children's consumer culture we are labeling "kinderculture" commodifies cultural objects and turns them into things to purchase rather than objects to contemplate. Kinderculture, thus, is subversive but in a way that challenges authority in an effort to maintain rather than transform the status quo. It appeals to the agential child and agential child advocates as it offers children identities that Jane Kenway and Elizabeth Bullen (2001) label as autonomous, rational, and hedonistic. Thus, kinderculture is produced by ingenious marketers who possess profound insights into the lives, desires, and cultural context of contemporary children. Such marketers know how to cultivate intense affect among children and use such emotion to elicit particular consumptive and, in turn, ideological reactions.

A key dimension of this consumptive-ideological dimension of *Kinderculture* involves the marketers' understanding that children, particularly middle-class children, are especially interested in TV, movies,

Internet, toys, and even foods (see Kincheloe's chapter on McDonald's and Kincheloe, 2002) that transgress parental norms of "good taste," social status, and educational development. Indeed, this ideology of opposition is central in many cases to what separates contemporary children from their parents and other adults. Such oppositionality operates to subvert the bourgeois educational project of modernity—rational child development based on the achievement of universal stages of reason reflecting adult behavior and ways of being. As it commodifies and lures children into this oppositional conspiracy, it meshes consumption, education, information, knowledge, cultural capital, emotional bonding, entertainment, and advertising (Kenway and Bullen, 2001; Hengst, 2001; Steinberg, 2007). Advocates of the critical new paradigm of childhood studies argue that kinderculture can no longer be ignored in the effort to understand the social, psychological, and educational dimensions of children. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, corporate children's culture has replaced schooling as the producer of the central curriculum of childhood.

IS THERE A CRISIS OF CHILDHOOD?

Changing economic realities coupled with children's access to information about the adult world have drastically changed childhood. The traditional childhood genie is out of the bottle and is unable to return. Recent writing about childhood in both the popular and scholarly presses speaks of "childhood lost," "children growing up too fast," and "child terror in the isolation of the fragmented home and community." Images of mothers drowning children, baby-sitters torturing infants, kids pushing kids out of fourteen-story windows, and trick-or-treat razor blades in apples saturate the contemporary conversation about children. Popular culture provides haunting images of this crisis of childhood that terrify and engage our worst fears. The film *Halloween*, for example, is at one level a story of the postmodern childhood—fear in isolation. The isolation referenced here involves separation from both absent parents and a nonexistent community. No one is there to help; even on the once-festive Halloween night, children are not present.

Even in "safe" suburbia, the community has fragmented to the point that the safety of children trick-or-treating cannot be guaranteed (Ferguson, 1994; Paul, 1994). The crisis of contemporary childhood can be signified in many ways, all of which involve at some level the horror of danger faced in solitude.

This crisis of childhood is part imagination, part reality. While children, like all people, are vulnerable to social ills and the manipulations of unscrupulous adults and power wielders, there is a degree of moral panic and general hyperbole in the view that children are facing threats from predators unlike anything they have experienced in the historical past. While certainly not dismissing everyday threats to childhood in the twenty-first century, we should be careful not to let hysterics from diverse ideological perspectives paint a fear-driven portrait of the social landscape. A balanced view would demand that we position the crisis of childhood within the twenty-first-century social, cultural, and economic context. There is no doubt that childhood in Western societies is affected by the decline of industrialized economic arrangements.

In such industrialized societies labor was the most important social force for social integration. In a postindustrial condition people make life meanings outside the boundaries of their work lives. The labor process in this new context plays less and less of a role in shaping identity and constructing life experiences. As industrial jobs that lasted a lifetime with pensions and social benefits decline, more women have entered the workforce. Buoyed by the women's movement, more and more mothers have sought work outside the home, subsequently placing more pressure on fathers to participate in child-rearing activities. In such contexts children learn to cope with busy and often preoccupied parents. Consequently, they become more self-reliant than middle- and upper-middle-class children from previous generations earlier in the twentieth century.

The changing role of women profoundly changes the role of children in contemporary Western societies. Even though more and more women work outside the home, this does not lead to an equal sharing of domestic work—women still do more than men (du Bois-Reymond, Suenker, and Kruger, 2001). Increasing numbers of single poor women combine both paid labor and child care without the help of a spouse or

partner and with little assistance from the state. Without economic or social support women and children in these categories have experienced harsher and harsher conditions and less and less hope for upward mobility. For middle- and upper-middle-class children, these social, economic, and cultural trends have sometimes provided them more independence and influence in the family. In lower socioeconomic circumstances, such trends exacerbate the effects of poverty and sometimes lead to more neglect and alienation.

In many middle- and lower-class homes, these larger socioeconomic trends operate to make children "more useful" than they had been throughout much of the twentieth century. As women become more and more embedded in the workplace, traditional role expectations continue to erode. In order to adjust to these modified familial relationships, children and youth from the ages of six to nineteen have taken on more responsibilities for caring not only for themselves but for their parents as well. Studies (Hengst, 2001) illustrate that children increasingly are the family members who buy the food. Indeed, the home appliance industry—understanding this trend—is directing more and more of its advertising budget toward children and youth magazines. Industry demographics tell them that a key and growing segment of those who buy food, microwaves, and other kitchen appliances are from this six-to-nineteen age bracket (du Bois-Reymond, Suenker, and Kruger, 2001). This represents a profound change in the way children are positioned in the social order.

This change of the social positioning of children holds dramatic implications for the education of children. As age boundaries blur and age becomes less important in shaping human abilities and role expectations, the crisis of childhood becomes the crisis of education. Children emerging in the new social conditions no longer reflect the expectations for childhood embedded in the structures and organization of schools. "New children" who experience more adultlike roles in other phases of their lives may not react positively to being treated like "children" in the classroom. Teachers who infantilize their elementary students may be shocked by the resentment independent children direct back toward them. Indeed, such dynamics already occur as teachers voice complaints about "children who talk like adults and have

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