

Producing governable subjects: Images of childhood old and new

Karen Smith

Childhood 2012 19: 24 originally published online 22 August 2011

DOI: 10.1177/0907568211401434

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://chd.sagepub.com/content/19/1/24>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:

Norwegian Centre for Child Research

Additional services and information for *Childhood* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://chd.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://chd.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations: <http://chd.sagepub.com/content/19/1/24.refs.html>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Feb 20, 2012

[OnlineFirst Version of Record](#) - Aug 22, 2011

[What is This?](#)



Producing governable subjects: Images of childhood old and new

Childhood

19(1) 24–37

© The Author(s) 2011

Reprints and permission: sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0907568211401434

chd.sagepub.com

 SAGE

Karen Smith

Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland

Abstract

Conceptions of childhood in terms of ‘evil’ and ‘innocence’ transcend time and culture. These conflicting images are deployed by Chris Jenks as the Dionysian and Apollonian models of childhood to symbolize external and internal forms of control. Drawing on the literature on governmentality this article revisits these models and introduces a third – the ‘Athenian’ child – loosely analogous and supplementary to those developed by Jenks. This model is necessary in order to take account of relatively recent strategies in the government of childhood, which, predicated on understandings of children in terms of competence and agency, operate via responsibility and reflexivity.

Keywords

childhood, discourse, governmentality, innocence, subjectivity

Over the last decade or so there has developed a fairly substantial body of literature examining strategies for *governing* childhood associated with contemporary neoliberal and ‘advanced liberal’ rationalities of rule (e.g. Ailwood, 2004, 2008; Dahlberg and Moss, 2005; Fendler, 2001; Kampmann, 2004; Kelly, 2000, 2006). As yet there has been little exploration of the relationship between these strategies – premised on individual autonomy and responsibility – and more traditional approaches to exercising control over the young. Chris Jenks (2005) offers a useful way of thinking about childhood and control with his Dionysian (evil) and Apollonian (innocent) images of childhood. This article draws on the literature on governmentality in revisiting these models and taking inspiration from Jenks presents a new model of childhood – the ‘Athenian’ child – as a tool for representing and interrogating governmental strategies of ‘responsibilization’. The article begins with a brief overview of the concept of governmentality and its relevance to childhood. I then examine the Dionysian and Apollonian images of childhood

Corresponding author:

Karen Smith, School of Social Science and Law, Dublin Institute of Technology, 40–45 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1, Republic of Ireland.

Email: karen.smith@dit.ie

using the historical literature on childhood as well as that on governmentality to build upon and modify Jenks' account. After looking at the emergence of conceptions of childhood in terms of competence and agency, I draw on the literature to examine how these ideas have been taken up in advanced liberal government of childhood. The model of the 'Athenian' child is then presented and examined. Finally there is a brief discussion on the interconnection between discursive constructions of childhood and relations of power from the perspective of the three models.

Governmentality: Producing governable subjects

Governmentality refers to any rational approach to *government* (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999a), conceptualized by Foucault (2007) as the 'conduct of conduct'. The idea of government indicates a mode of exercising power, characteristic of liberalism, which in contrast to sovereign power, seeks to shape, rather than foreclose, human agency (Foucault, 2007). The primary concern of government is the 'administration of life' (Dean, 1999: 99). Liberal government represents a form of rule in which the exercise of sovereign power has been transformed by mechanisms of power – *discipline* and *biopolitics* – connected with the administration of life both at the level of individuals and populations (Foucault, 2004, 2007, 2008; see also Dean, 1999).

Discipline targets individuals in order to enhance efficiency and obedience (Foucault, 1977: 170). Central to disciplinary power is the idea of the norm, a common standard which operates to individualize the masses through differentiating the 'normal' from the 'abnormal' (Foucault, 1994a: 403–4). Within liberal regimes disciplinary norms are for the most part internalized and are largely derived from *biopolitical* norms. Biopolitical norms extracted from population-level statistical data operate to make *collective* behaviour calculable and predictable, rendering the 'hands-off' approach of liberal government the most efficient means of exercising political power (Dean, 1999).

Containing inherent limits to the direct control of personal behaviour, liberalism is predicated upon the willingness and capacity of autonomous individuals to *choose* to exercise responsible self-government. Therefore, liberal government is primarily a matter of fostering responsible, 'governable subjects' (Rose, 1999a). Much of this effort takes place in homes and schools with children representing the raw material. This is not to be understood in a crude way in terms of moulding the young according to a predetermined form. At the same time the efforts of parents and educators to guide their young charges necessarily engage (however indirectly) with standards of 'normal' childhood shaped by prevailing ontological and epistemological assumptions (Jenks, 2005). While the norms governing childhood are these days derived from science, rather than religion or philosophy as in the past, they can be regarded neither as the product of purely objective enquiry nor neutral in their effects.

Images of childhood

While acknowledging variation, Chris Jenks (2005: 62) suggests that two images of 'normal' childhood – the Dionysian and the Apollonian – have a potency that transcends time and culture. The Dionysian 'evil' child is characterized in terms of wildness, wilfulness

and sensuality, a view of childhood which in western culture has been shaped by the Christian doctrine of 'original sin' (Jenks, 2005: 62–3). The Apollonian 'innocent' child – the paradigmatic, modern, western conception of childhood – is represented as intrinsically good, even angelic (Jenks, 2005: 64–5). Drawing loosely on Foucault's analysis of disciplinary power, Jenks links these two images with two contrasting models of social control. The model of child-rearing signified by the Dionysian image, whereby adults exercise strict controls over children, is associated with a social order – 'the old European order' – governed by rigid codes of behaviour with little opportunity for individuality (2005: 66). Adult control over children is backed up by force, if necessary – the act of physically chastising the recalcitrant child serving as an affirmation of collective values (2005: 70). By contrast, the Apollonian image is linked to a social order – 'the new order of modern industrial society' – in which an emphasis on shared values is displaced by a premium on individuality (2005: 66). Exercising control over children is to be achieved not through domination, but through 'child-centred' approaches in which the child is accorded the freedom to develop his/her own interests and talents (Jenks, 2005: 65).

The Dionysian and Apollonian images of childhood provide useful tools for conceptualizing the links between constructions of childhood and child-rearing and wider patterns of social relations, however the danger of using models of childhood in this way is that complexity and contingency may be sacrificed for a cohesive narrative. In particular, Jenks' account risks reifying two distinct 'social orders' – the pre-liberal/authoritarian order of pre-modern Europe and the liberal capitalist order of modern industrial societies – characterized by conceptions of childhood and practices of child-rearing which stand in direct opposition to each other. Although Jenks acknowledges that the Dionysian and Apollonian images have been deployed within the same time periods, his emphasis on 'social orders' tends to elide the wide variation in both strategies of control and constructions of childhood (for example by class or gender) at various points in time, as well as the significant differences to be found in individual child-rearing practices. Arguably an analogous criticism could be levelled at Foucault's analysis of discipline (somewhat modified in Foucault's later work on governmentality), however a key point of differentiation is that Jenks' account of childhood and control appears to be grounded in divergent social structures rather than the close scrutiny of the interrelationship between knowledge and power which is the hallmark of a Foucauldian/governmentality approach.

Viewed from the vantage of governmentality the Dionysian and Apollonian images can be regarded as symbolic targets of specific configurations of power/knowledge. These correspond to the disciplinary techniques which emerged in the early modern period and the subsequent transformation of discipline associated with the emergence of biopolitical power in the 18th century (Foucault, 2004, 2007). The rise of discipline is associated with the idea of the 'malleable humanist subject' (Chen, 2005: 12) which serves as both condition and end of disciplinary modes of control (Foucault, 1977: 170). In early modern Europe the humanist subject was to be regulated via external precepts derived from religion or philosophy. Statistical and scientific advances from the 18th century facilitated new ways of conceptualizing the objects and *subjects* of government (Rose, 1999a). This made possible the idea of the 'population' as 'a quasi-natural reality' subject to its own laws and processes (Foucault, 2004: 245–7). It also provided new means of conceptualizing and managing individuals on the basis of scientific norms

(Rose, 1999a), derived in a sense from the ‘nature’ of man (Dean, 1999). These shifting conceptions of governable subjects are reflected in the discursive constitution of the Dionysian and Apollonian images of childhood in the prescriptions of pedagogues and child-rearing experts.

Although described by Jenks as ‘competitive to the point of absolute incompatibility’ (2005: 62) the Dionysian and Apollonian images of childhood share common discursive elements. As manifest in western culture via Christianity the distinction between these images is not so much between innocence and evil, as between *innate* innocence and *acquired* innocence. In early Christianity sinfulness was transmitted through generation, but absolved through baptism. Thus as Gittins (1998: 146) writes, innocence was acquired through external means, with active parental intercession required to preserve innocence as children developed (Nelson, 1994: 86). Following the Protestant Reformation the acquisition of innocence through baptism was no longer a possibility for non-Catholics, increasing the importance of the parental role in producing virtuous souls. It is therefore unsurprising that there is a noticeable increase in the volume of child-rearing and pedagogical literature in the early modern period (Ariès, 1962; Foucault, 2007). This development Ariès (1962) regards as indicating the demarcation of childhood as a separate sphere, however, as yet, the primary focus of moral and educational concern was upper-class boys.

The leitmotif of early modern child-rearing literature, whether of Catholic or Protestant origin, was obedience (Fletcher, 1994; Logan, 1994). The patriarchal family was at its zenith at this time, mirroring the centralization of political control in the age of absolutism (Jenks, 2005: 147). The prevailing pessimistic understanding of human nature necessitated firm controls in the interest of order. This view was most systematically delineated in Hobbes’ *Leviathan* regarded by Jenks as ‘the philosophical antecedent for the evil child’ (2005: 146). While rejecting the idea of an intrinsically wicked human nature, Hobbes understood virtue as socially produced – via discipline – rather than innate (Burchell, 1999: 509–10). This emphasis on human nature as *formed* rather than revealed reflects the conceptual shift towards humanist conceptions of selfhood in the early modern period (Chen, 2005; Niestroj-Kutzner, 1996), evident in the deployment of horticultural metaphors in contemporary child-rearing literature (Cunningham, 1995; Logan, 1994). The ancient theme of childhood innocence acquired a particular potency when combined with the humanist emphasis on perfectibility – the *malleability* of the child offers the opportunity to manipulate the future, something which became increasingly important with the gradual development of the modern state (Rose, 1999b). Childhood innocence, whether understood as innate or acquired, thus becomes reconceptualized as the ‘blank slate’ upon which the future can be written.

The Dionysian notion of acquired innocence resonates with modes of socialization in which virtuous habits must be inculcated through external discipline. The innate innocence symbolized by the Apollonian child indicates an alternative form of socialization, grounded in subtler modes of manipulation, by which children are allowed to develop ‘naturally’. This approach came to prominence with the publication of Rousseau’s *Émile*, which according to Jenks (2005: 65) represents the formalization of the Apollonian child. Containing the groundbreaking assertion that children are inherently virtuous, *Émile* reflects the more positive valuation of human nature which underpinned demands for

popular sovereignty. Rousseau was unique in the strong emphasis he placed on the special nature of childhood; he urged that children be treated *as children*, a significant departure from prevailing practices. At the same time *Émile* belongs to a pedagogical tradition in which childhood was viewed in classed and gendered terms. It was not until Rousseau's ideas were taken up via the Victorian Romantic movement that 'Apollonian' conceptions of childhood were deployed in relation to the entire child population (Cunningham, 1995).

The rise of the Apollonian child was gradual and uneven, reflecting competing claims to knowledge as well as varying patterns of control by gender and especially social class. While the 19th century stands out as the period when huge efforts were made to extend 'childhood' to the masses, working-class children were generally positioned as the Dionysian 'other' to the innocent middle-class child. Far from being 'child-centred', measures such as compulsory education seemed designed to contain the threat posed by the inadequately socialized children of the poor (Hendrick, 1997) and were grounded in the assumption that working-class parents were as yet unfit to assume the burdens of self-government (Rose, 1999b). As regards the child-rearing norms that governed parental behaviour generally, the influence of Romantic conceptions of childhood was tempered by Evangelical insistence on the venality of the young (Hendrick, 1997).

The 19th-century liberal subject was a *moral* subject; the product of socialization was *character*, to be produced via external intervention through a dual process of disciplining body and mind (White and Hunt, 2000: 104). A task accomplished primarily in childhood, character development depended upon methods of socialization designed to promote moral well-being. The aim was to liberate the individual from 'slavery' to the senses by subjugating the 'lower passions' to the will (Valverde, 1996). From the turn of the 20th century subjectivity came to be understood more in terms of *personality*, a shift associated with internal forms of control (White and Hunt, 2000) and grounded in self-conscious attempts within the field of psychology to move towards a more 'modern' scientific conception of self-hood (Heinze, 2003). The impact on childhood was profound as biopolitical norms extrapolated from statistical data on the 'nature' of childhood increasingly provided the prism through which children were perceived (Rose, 1999b). Concern with children's moral welfare was subsumed under the growing emphasis on psychological development. This was associated with a gentler mode of self-formation and increased appreciation of the maternal role, reinforced by the centrality of 'attachment' to developmental psychology in the period following the Second World War. The rise of welfarist rationalities at this time went hand in hand with a growing optimism that state intervention informed by scientific expertise could promote a healthy, 'well-adjusted' society by supporting the production of healthy, well-adjusted selves (Rose, 1998, 1999b). 'Investment' in childhood – the future – was an important aspect of the postwar welfare state (Cunningham, 1995; Rose, 1999b), stimulating development of the panoply of child-centred policies, programmes and practices associated with the Apollonian image of childhood.

Rethinking childhood

Whether conceptualized as innate or acquired the concept of innocence has for centuries shaped understandings of childhood. In recent decades the image of the innocent child

has been subject to critical scrutiny, in particular from scholars within the ‘new’ social studies of childhood as well as advocates of children’s rights. Their arguments are too familiar to require much elaboration here, but centre on the underestimation of children’s abilities and restriction of their role in society as well as the negative consequences for children who have not conformed to the innocent ideal (Corteen and Scraton, 1997; Kitzinger, 1997; Meyer, 2007). These arguments form part of a broader attempt to ‘denaturalize’ childhood by challenging the biological determinism of popular and scientific – in particular psychological – thought (Holloway and Valentine, 2000: 4–5). Efforts to enhance the status of children have been supported by the relatively novel conception of children as ‘competent social actors’. This ‘strong’ rather than ‘weak’ image of childhood is an increasingly important point of reference in theory, policy and practice, underpinning moves to promote children’s inclusion as *participants* in society rather than ‘apprentice adults’ (Alanen, 1998; Mayall, 2000; Roche, 1999).

The rise of the ‘participative child’ is evident in the public sphere of law and politics – facilitated by the right to participate in decision-making accorded by Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – but also in the private domains of families and schools. Child-rearing and education appear more ‘democratic’, based much more on open communication and negotiation than in the past (Beck, 1998; Cunningham, 1995; Vandebroek and Bouverne-De Bie, 2006). It has been suggested that this quite profound shift in child–adult relations is linked to changes in adulthood as well as childhood. For instance, Lee (2001: 7–8) writes that in an era defined by permanent flux, it is not just that children are no longer ‘incomplete adults’, adulthood has been divested of the mantle of completeness. In a similar vein Beck has suggested that the disappearance of ‘goals or certainties that must be “inoculated into” young people’ means that the transition to adulthood ‘is now possible only through “self-socialization” ’ (1998: 163). As with Lee, Beck’s explanation for this shift focuses on broad social, economic and cultural changes, but the picture is a little different from a governmentality perspective. From this vantage the ‘self-socializing’ child appears as a form of ‘governable child subject’ constituted via strategies which aim to draw upon children’s (newly recognized) capacities for self-regulation.

Childhood and advanced liberal government

Scholars working within a governmentality framework see strong parallels between the rise of the ‘competent child’ and the significance placed on such values as responsibility and self-reliance within what Rose (1999a) terms ‘advanced liberal’ approaches to government. Advanced liberalism does not refer to a single rationality but is intended to signify:

... the broader realm of the various assemblages of rationalities, technologies and agencies that make up the characteristic ways of governing in advanced liberal democracies. (Dean, 1999: 149–50)

Central to advanced liberal rule are the neoliberal concepts of ‘competition’, ‘choice’ and ‘enterprise’ which permeate contemporary strategies for ‘conducting conduct’ (Rose, 1999a: 141–2). Within advanced liberal regimes risks which were once deemed social

now accrue to individuals (Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie, 2006: 136); in order to manage individual risk the advanced liberal subject or 'entrepreneurial self' (Foucault, 2008) is urged to adopt a life-long project of investment in personal 'human capital'. As Vandebroek and Bouverne-De Bie caution, we cannot 'draw a straight line' between changing conceptions of childhood and neoliberal policy (2006: 140). At the same time evidence from research suggests that ideas about children's competence and agency have been taken up – for example in early years curricula (Ailwood, 2004, 2008; Graham, 2007), 'student voice' initiatives (Bragg, 2007) and even in the design of infant toys (Nadesan, 2002) – in ways which resonate strongly with the idea of the self-maximizing, entrepreneurial subject of neoliberal and advanced liberal thought.

Contemporary child-rearing and educational norms may be more 'democratic' than in the past, but they are linked to forms of knowledge and expertise which view children's agency in instrumental terms (Dahlberg and Moss 2005; Fendler, 2001). Looking at developmental psychology, which remains a privileged source of knowledge, we find in recent years much greater recognition of the social context of development as well as the active role of children in the developmental process (Hogan, 2005: 34). Here the idea of the participative child is associated with the extension of the psychological gaze into the inter-personal and *intra*-personal aspects of children's worlds (Fendler, 2001). The manner in which children relate to others and *to themselves* is thereby opened up for measurement and management. When translated into pedagogical theory and practice the newly constituted agentic subject of developmental discourse lends itself to novel forms of conduct aimed at inculcating the ability to monitor and adjust desires, attitudes and behaviour in line with educational goals (Fendler, 2001: 121–2). This emphasis on reflexivity represents a shift by which, like adult 'life-long' learners, 'children are not only obliged to shape their own learning, but also to take responsibility for this shaping' (Kryger, 2004: 154–5). Child educational subjects are thereby positioned as 'autonomous choosers' (Marshall, 1996), which serves to problematize young people who do not 'choose' appropriately (Graham, 2007) reinscribing disadvantage as a personal or familial failing.

The individualization of risk, characteristic of advanced liberal government, is reflected in the expansion in the number of programmes and initiatives, formal and informal, by which children and young people (and usually their parents) are called upon to assume responsibility for risk management by modifying their own attitudes and behaviour (Kelly, 2000: 468–9). This is apparent in relation to the 'fight' against obesity (Share and Strain, 2008) and in efforts to reduce alcohol/substance abuse or promote 'safe' sexual practices (Schee and Baez, 2009; Shoveller and Johnson, 2006). Within these kinds of strategies the idea of child or youth 'participation' is deployed more as a tool for constituting particular kinds of selves – 'prudential subjects' (O'Malley, 1996) – than promoting a broader role for children in society. Indeed, going hand in hand with these strategies of 'responsibilization' has been the development of new forms of surveillance and regulation of youth which have been extended to encompass a much wider proportion of the 'non-adult' population (Kelly, 2000: 468).

The Athenian child

Cultivating the qualities necessary for success in advanced liberal regimes requires a mode of socialization significantly different from the models of child-rearing symbolized

by either the Dionysian and Apollonian images of childhood. The Dionysian child denotes an approach to child-rearing aimed at producing what White and Hunt (2000: 103) describe as an 'upright' moral subject; there is a strong emphasis on the moral welfare of children and the paternal role is prioritized. The Apollonian child represents a 'child-centred' form of socialization more concerned with producing unique, but 'well-adjusted', individual subjects; the psychological welfare of the individual child is central, associated with a stronger emphasis on the maternal role. Analogous to the Dionysian and Apollonian models of childhood the 'Athenian' child is presented in this article as a symbolic target for the relatively novel governmental mode of regulating children via strategies of participation and 'responsibilization'. Named for the Greek goddess of wisdom (Minerva in Roman mythology), the Athenian child is associated with child-rearing norms in which welfare is closely associated with autonomy, so that the child is in a sense a 'partner' in the socialization process. Daughter of Zeus, Athena emerged from her father's forehead fully grown – she is thus the perfect representative of the (partially) self-governing 'competent child-actor'.

While the Athenian child represents a break with older constructions of childhood, she is nevertheless both produced out of and in relation to the Apollonian child. The innately virtuous Apollonian child was constituted from an emancipatory discourse which challenged the restrictive 'Dionysian' child-rearing model, instead advocating a form of 'restricted liberty', to use Rousseau's terms. Children were to be raised apart from adult society in a natural setting through methods that sought to develop the child's ability to self-govern, while under discreet, but continuous, adult surveillance. In this sense, Jenks suggests that the Apollonian child was to be 'seen and not heard' (2005: 69). The Athenian child is similarly produced from emancipatory discourses, which at the same time represent novel means of 'conducting conduct', this time predicated on children's 'voice' and 'choice' and their (qualified) participation in, rather than complete separation from the adult world.

The idea of the competent, participative child opens up new opportunities for children while simultaneously facilitating forms of control which place potentially onerous responsibilities upon the young (Kampmann, 2004: 129–30). This apparently contradictory interconnection between freedom and control brings us to the heart of the idea of governmentality. From the perspective of governmentality it is not just that government operates *through* freedom, but that individual freedom is itself a form of control – sovereignty over the self (Rose, 1999a). Traditionally children were not free in this sense; indeed the extension of freedom (in the sense of citizenship rights) to the mass of the adult population in western states is associated with increasing external regulation of childhood. Children's 'rights' were understood in a narrow sense in terms of restrictions on parental sovereignty designed to ensure compliance with child-rearing norms. Acceptance of a broader understanding of children's rights over the last few decades is associated with changing conceptions of freedom and related to this, changing conceptions of the kinds of selves to be governed (Rose, 1999a).

The central insight from the governmentality literature is that subjectivity – the relationship of the individual to the self – is constituted via the multifarious forms of knowledge and expertise deployed in practices of government. In this regard Rose (1999a: 84–93) identifies the interrelated domains of consumption and 'psychotherapeutics' as

crucial in providing the conceptual resources by which we have come to relate to and *regulate* ourselves in advanced liberal regimes. Central to Rose's argument is the intersection between pop-psychology ideas around individual fulfilment and 'self-actualization' and consumerist notions of 'lifestyle choice', a concept which he suggests has spread out from the domain of purchasable goods to infiltrate the most intimate spheres of human existence (Rose, 1999a: 86). According to Rose (1998, 1999a) the resulting 'regime of the self' has led to freedom becoming more closely associated with individual autonomy, narrowly understood as the 'right to choose'. This is a right increasingly accorded to children.

Cook's work demonstrates that the interaction of psychological expertise and marketing strategies has been of huge importance in constituting the child as an autonomous 'choosing subject'. Indeed Cook suggests that 'children's participation in the world of goods as actors, as persons with desire, underpins their current emergent status as rights-bearing individuals' (2004: 12). Representations of agentive childhood in advertising and the media call upon adults – including parents, educators and policy-makers – to relate to children in particular ways and provide important resources through which children come to relate to themselves. This kind of fluid discursive diffusion – what Rose terms 'translation' – between the kinds of knowledge and expertise which individuals draw upon to govern themselves and the forms of rationality deployed in political strategies of rule is 'what makes government possible' (Rose, 1999a: 47).

Rose has written that an important factor in the durability and adaptability of the neo-liberal discourse of enterprise is its deep resonance with the psycho-consumerist emphasis on 'self-actualization through choice' (Rose, 1999a: 165–6). In shifting responsibility for success or failure from society to the individual, neoliberal and advanced liberal rationalities of rule create the need for reflexive, adaptable, 'enterprising' subjects equipped with the capacity to actively work upon themselves. While this is associated with 'flexible' forms of socialization, as Fendler (2001: 137) suggests, the end goal – the production of 'flexible souls' – is fixed and can be viewed in the context of a concept of success defined in restrictive economic terms. Kelly has made this point well:

It is not that 'initiative', 'enterprise', 'responsibility' or 'activity' are not worthwhile human capacities... Rather, it is that within the frame of an entrepreneurial Selfhood, as it is imagined at the turn of the second millennium CE, 'initiative', 'enterprise', 'responsibility' and 'activity' are narrowly imagined in relation to the performance of exchange relations in the extended order of capitalist markets-of all sorts... And we must all assume an entrepreneurial disposition to this life form. We fail to do so at our own risk. (Kelly, 2006: 28–9)

The risks of success or failure in advanced liberal regimes are far from evenly distributed and the government of childhood must be viewed in the context of wider patterns of inequality. Norms such as negotiation and participation, from which the Athenian child is produced, have been described as 'white, western middle-class, norm(s)' by Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie (2006: 138), who caution that parents as well as children are regulated via norms of socialization. They find a high degree of continuity over time in the way in which child-rearing norms privilege some children and parents while marginalizing others. While approaches have varied, a persistent theme shaping the government of

childhood over the last two centuries is the inability of working-class parents to adequately socialize their children. Rose (1999b) describes how the moralizing strategies of Victorian philanthropists gave way in the 20th century to the normalizing strategies of scientific expertise in educating the mass of parents in the 'correct' way to raise their children. Although drawing on different conceptions of childhood these strategies are linked by a common emphasis on 'investing in the future' (Hendrick, 2003: 15–16).

Within the discourse of investment the dichotomous position of the disadvantaged child as simultaneously both 'victim and threat' means that intervention in the lives of working-class families has been viewed primarily as a means of reducing future expenditure on welfare provision and prisons (Hendrick, 2003). Investing in the future remains an important aim of contemporary 'advanced liberal' government of childhood, but with the twist that children themselves are offered an active role in the development of individual human capital. At the same time, alternative tutelary, exclusionary or coercive strategies may still be utilized for those young people and their families deemed unwilling or unable to prioritize long-term goals over short-term gains. Hence we can say that the Athenian child supplements rather than supplants earlier modes of conceptualizing/regulating childhood. As Meyer writes, 'the discourse of evil persists and the discourse of rights has not displaced the discourse of innocence or gained the status of supremacy' (2007: 87). Across policy domains – in particular child protection and youth justice (Meyer, 2007) – child subjects may yet be constituted in Dionysian or Apollonian terms in strategies which can vary, according to age, gender, class or ethnicity.

While they remain important elements of popular and political discourse, it is important to emphasize that the Dionysian and Apollonian images of childhood may be re-figured within contemporary rationalities of rule via 'Athenian' strategies of responsabilization. For instance, the innocent, vulnerable child typical of child welfare discourse has in recent years been expected to shoulder some of the burden of protection. An example of this form of strategy is the kind of 'stay safe' programme designed to enable children to recognize and respond to potentially dangerous situations. While this can bring benefits in terms of increased knowledge and self-confidence, Kitzinger (1997: 179–4) notes some potential dangers of placing responsibility on children in this way. One concern is that the risk of violence against children who resist their abusers could be increased. There is also the possibility of stimulating feelings of guilt in children who do not resist abuse. More importantly, such programmes are limited in their potential to challenge the unequal power relations through which children's vulnerability is produced in the first place (Kitzinger, 1997).

In a similar fashion, when measured against the Athenian ideal, the 'evil' child of criminal justice discourse may be subject to forms of intervention, which seek to make her not innocent as in the past, but *responsible*. A good example is the use of restorative justice as a strategy for inculcating a sense of responsibility not only in young offenders, but usually in their families as well. While supporting young people and their families to reach their own solutions can be seen as a form of 'empowerment', any approach which deals with youth crime primarily in individual or familial terms can serve to obscure the wider inequalities in terms of resources and opportunities which can lead to some young people becoming involved in criminal behaviour.

All of this is not to suggest that child participation is not ‘a good thing’; instead the lesson from research on the government of childhood is that ‘everything is dangerous’ (Foucault, 1994b: 256). The reconceptualization of children as competent social actors brings potential benefits to children in terms of heightened status and increased autonomy, however the salutary lesson from the governmentality literature is that these ideas can be taken up in ways which can burden or disadvantage children (Kampmann, 2004). Enjoined to become ‘responsible choosers’, within contemporary rationalities of rule children are positioned to a certain extent as self-governing. Unfortunately, the promise of autonomy which this entails does not necessarily challenge generational inequalities and may serve to stigmatize ‘irresponsible’ children and their parents in ways which reinforce the effects of structural inequalities (Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie, 2006).

Discussion

The images of childhood presented in this article – the Dionysian and Apollonian models developed by Chris Jenks, supplemented by the ‘Athenian’ model of childhood introduced in the preceding section – do not represent the totality of ways of conceptualizing and regulating childhood in the early 21st century. They do, however, serve as a useful framework for examining the links between discursive constructions of childhood and relations of power, first in terms of relations between children and adults and second in terms of the relations of power such as class, gender or ethnicity which cut across childhood.

As discussed above, the norms which govern child–adult relations are linked to discursive constructions of childhood, which are in turn shaped by wider relations of power/knowledge. It is characteristic of modernity that what it is to be human – and consequently what is to be a child – is a question which belongs to the domain of science. At the heart of the human sciences is the promise of perfectibility associated with the malleable subject of humanist thought (Foucault, 1977). As human beings in the earliest stages of development children are imbued with particular potential and perfectibility is the common thread which links the discourses of childhood represented by the Dionysian, Apollonian and Athenian models of childhood. The Dionysian child while flawed might be perfected through external intervention, whereas the Apollonian child is naturally perfect but needs to be safeguarded from the corrupting influences of the adult world. Both of these models underline the peculiarity of childhood; in different ways each has underpinned the separation of children from adults (at both the conceptual and experiential levels) which we associate with modern childhood. In the governmental regimes associated with the Athenian child the boundaries between childhood and adulthood have weakened. Adults *like children* are to be governed by modes of ‘conducting conduct’ premised on learning, while children *like adults* are to be governed by modes of ‘conducting conduct’ premised on autonomy and participation (Kryger, 2004). Here participation serves as a means to perfectibility with ‘flexible souls’ (Fendler, 2001) as the desired end products. The Athenian child thus represents a mode of governing childhood in which, somewhat ironically, ideas about children’s agency can be deployed in the kinds of instrumental, future-oriented strategies that the image of the child as ‘competent social actor’ was developed to counter.

Discourses of childhood can be deployed in ways which simultaneously obscure and reinforce unequal relations of power such as those based on class, race or gender. We know from Foucault (1977) that discourses are ‘normalizing’ in that they operate to differentiate between the ‘normal’ and the ‘abnormal’. The three discourses of childhood discussed in this article are grounded in assumptions about the nature of childhood which construct the normality/abnormality dichotomy in different ways. At the same time the shared element of malleability means that these discourses each operate within a broader framework of ‘investment’ which positions children as either potential assets or potential liabilities from a societal point of view. As is clear from the literature, whether viewed through the prism of morality/immorality (the Dionysian child), in ‘Apollonian’ terms of adjustment/maladjustment or ‘Athenian’ terms of responsibility/irresponsibility, children reared in low income families have frequently been regarded as inadequately socialized and consequently as potential liabilities to be contained. We thus find a high degree of continuity in the manner in which responsibility for tackling inequality and disadvantage is rebounded onto parents (and more recently children themselves) within diverse strategies for governing childhood.

Funding and Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Office of the Minister for Children, Republic of Ireland which funded the research associated with this article. Grateful thanks also go to Dr. Patricia Kennedy and Dr Nessa Winston for their generous support and guidance and helpful comments at various stages. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers whose thoughtful comments have helped to significantly strengthen the article.

References

- Ailwood J (2004) Genealogies of governmentality: Producing and managing young children and their education. *The Australian Educational Researcher* 31(3): 19–33.
- Ailwood J (2008) Learning or earning in the ‘Smart State’: Changing tactics for governing early childhood. *Childhood* 15(4): 535–551.
- Alanen L (1998) Children and the family order: Constraints and competencies. In: Hutchby I and Moran-Ellis J (eds) *Children and Social Competence: Arenas of Action*. London: The Falmer Press, 29–45.
- Ariès P (1962) *Centuries of Childhood*. London: Random House.
- Beck U (1998) Democratization of the family. *Childhood* 4(2): 151–168.
- Bragg S (2007) ‘Student voice’ and governmentality: The production of enterprising subjects? *Discourse* 28(3): 343–358.
- Burchell D (1999) The disciplined citizen: Thomas Hobbes, neostoicism and the critique of classical citizenship. *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 45(4): 506–524.
- Chen X (2005) *Tending the Gardens of Citizenship: Child Saving in Toronto 1880s–1920s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Cook D (2004) *The Commodification of Childhood: The Children’s Clothing Industry and the Rise of the Child Consumer*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.
- Corteen K and Scraton P (1997) Prolonging ‘childhood’: Manufacturing ‘innocence’ and regulating sexuality. In: Scraton P (ed.) *‘Childhood’ in Crisis*. London: UCL Press, 76–100.
- Cunningham H (1995) *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500*. London: Longman.
- Dahlberg G and Moss P (2005) *Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education*. Abingdon: RoutledgeFalmer.

- Dean M (1999) *Governmentality*. London: Sage.
- Fendler L (2001) Educating flexible souls: The construction of subjectivity through developmentality and interaction. In: Hultqvist K and Dahlberg G (eds) *Governing the Child in the New Millennium*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 119–142.
- Fletcher A (1994) Prescription and practice: Protestantism and the upbringing of children, 1560–1700. In: Wood D (ed.) *The Church and Childhood: Papers Read at the 1993 Summer Meeting and the 1994 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*. Oxford: Blackwell, 325–346.
- Foucault M (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Allen Lane.
- Foucault M (1994a) The political technology of individuals. *Power: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984 Volume 3*, ed. Faubion JD. London: Penguin, 403–417.
- Foucault M (1994b) On the genealogy of ethics: An overview of work in progress. *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984, Volume 1*, ed. Rabinow P. London: Penguin, 253–280.
- Foucault M (2004) *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976*. London: Penguin.
- Foucault M (2007) *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foucault M (2008) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gittins D (1998) *The Child in Question*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Graham L (2007) (Re)visioning the future: Education reform and the ‘ideal’ citizen of the future. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 39(2): 197–215.
- Heinze AR (2003) Schizophrenia Americana: Aliens, alienists, and the ‘personality shift’ of twentieth-century culture. *American Quarterly* 55(2): 227–256.
- Hendrick H (1997) Constructions and reconstructions of British childhood: An interpretative survey, 1800 to the present. In: James A and Prout A (eds) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, 2nd edn. London: Falmer, 34–62.
- Hendrick H (2003) *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Hogan D (2005) Researching ‘the child’ in developmental psychology. In: Greene S and Hogan D (eds) *Researching Children’s Experience: Methods and Methodological Issues*. London: Sage, 22–41.
- Holloway S and Valentine G (2000) Children’s geographies and the new social studies of childhood. In: Holloway S and Valentine G (eds) *Children’s Geographies: Playing, Living, Learning*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1–26.
- Jenks C (2005) *Childhood*, 2nd edn. London: Routledge.
- Kampmann J (2004) ‘Societalization of childhood: New opportunities? New demands?’ In: Brembeck H, Johansson B and Kampmann J (eds) *Beyond the Competent Child: Exploring Contemporary Childhoods in the Nordic Welfare Societies*. Roskilde: Roskilde University Press, 127–152.
- Kelly P (2000) The dangerousness of youth-at-risk: The possibilities of surveillance and intervention in uncertain times. *Journal of Adolescence* 23(4): 463–476.
- Kelly P (2006) The entrepreneurial self and ‘youth at risk’: Exploring the horizons of identity in the twenty-first century. *Journal of Youth Studies* 9(1): 17–32.
- Kitzinger J (1997) Who are you kidding? Children, power and the struggle against sexual abuse? In: James A and Prout A (eds) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*. London: Falmer, 165–189.
- Kryger N (2004) Childhood and new learning in a Nordic context. In: Brembeck H, Johansson B and Kampmann J (eds) *Beyond the Competent Child: Exploring Contemporary Childhoods in the Nordic Welfare Societies*. Roskilde: Roskilde University Press, 153–176.

- Lee N (2001) *Childhood and Society: Growing up in an Age of Uncertainty*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Logan O (1994) Counter reformatory theories of upbringing in Italy. In: Wood D (ed.) *The Church and Childhood: Papers Read at the 1993 Summer Meeting and the 1994 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*. Oxford: Blackwell, 275–284.
- Marshall J (1996) The autonomous chooser and ‘reforms’ in education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 15(1–2): 89–96.
- Mayall B (2000) The sociology of childhood in relation to children’s rights. *The International Journal of Children’s Rights* 8(3): 243–259.
- Meyer A (2007) The moral rhetoric of childhood. *Childhood* 14(1): 85–104.
- Nadesan M (2002) Engineering the entrepreneurial infant: Brain science, infant development toys and governmentality. *Cultural Studies* 16(3): 401–432.
- Nelson J (1994) Parents, children and the church in the earlier Middle Ages. In: Wood D (ed.) *The Church and Childhood: Papers Read at the 1993 Summer Meeting and the 1994 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*. Oxford: Blackwell, 81–114.
- Niestroj-Kutzner B (1996) Women as mothers and the making of the European mind. In: Graumann CF and Gergen KJ (eds) *Historical Dimensions of Psychological Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 227–242.
- O’Malley P (1996) Risk and responsibility. In: Barry A, Osborne T and Rose N (eds) *Foucault and Political Reason*. London: Routledge, 189–208.
- Roche J (1999) Children: Rights, participation and citizenship. *Childhood* 6(4): 475–493.
- Rose N (1998) *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power and Personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rose N (1999a) *Powers of Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rose N (1999b) *Governing the Soul*, 2nd edn. London: Routledge.
- Rousseau J (1974) *Émile*, trans. Foxley B. London: JM Dent and Sons.
- Schee C and Baez B (2009) HIV/AIDS education in schools: The unassembled youth as a curricular project. *Discourse* 30(1): 33–46.
- Share M and Strain M (2008) Making schools and young people responsible: A critical analysis of Ireland’s obesity strategy. *Health and Social Care in the Community* 16(3): 234–243.
- Shoveller J and Johnson J (2006) Risky groups, risky behaviour and risky persons: Dominating discourses on youth sexual health. *Critical Public Health* 16(1): 47–60.
- Valverde M (1996) ‘Despotism’ and ethical liberal governance. *Economy and Society* 25(3): 357–372.
- Vandenbroeck M and Bouverne-De Bie M (2006) Children’s agency and educational norms: A tense negotiation. *Childhood* 13(1): 127–143.
- White M and Hunt A (2000) Citizenship: Care of the self, character and personality. *Citizenship Studies* 4(2): 93–116.