CCE
CREATIVITY CULTURE & EDUCATION

Childhood, culture and creativity:
a literature review

Jackie Marsh

Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) Literature Reviews

These reports have been commissioned to introduce readers to the main principles, theories, research and debates in the field. They aim to introduce the major themes and writing pertaining to each area of study and to outline key trends and arguments.

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About the Creativity, Culture and Education Literature Review Series

Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) is a national charity with a vision for all children, regardless of their background, to experience and access the diverse range of cultural activities in England because these opportunities can enhance their aspirations, achievements and skills. We promote the value and impact of creative learning and cultural opportunities through our strong evidence base and policy analysis, stimulating debate among policy makers and opinion formers, and delivering front line high quality programmes.

Through our research and evaluation programme, we promote a systemic approach to creative and cultural initiatives and one which builds on the excellent practice which already exists to make opportunity consistent, to ensure that all children and young people are included and to place quality at the core of any creative or cultural experience.

CCE's work includes:

- **Creative Partnerships** - England's flagship creative learning programme fosters long-term partnerships between schools and creative professionals to inspire, open minds and harness the potential of creative learning. The programme has worked with over 1 million children and over 90,000 teachers in more than 8,000 projects in England. http://www.creative-partnerships.com/

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Fostering creativity is fundamentally important because creativity brings with it the ability to question, make connections, innovate, problem solve, communicate, collaborate and to reflect critically. These are all skills demanded by contemporary employers and will be vital for young people to play their part in a rapidly changing world.

Our programmes can have maximum impact if teachers, parents, children, young people and practitioners themselves learn from the experience and activities delivered through the programmes. For this reason, one of the most significant legacies will be the product of our research and evaluation and how that is effectively communicated to stakeholders.

However, because Creativity, Culture and Education works by creating partnerships drawn from the widest fields of endeavour, the different stakeholders recognise that there is often a 'knowledge gap' between reflection, analysis, and learning. In addition, the wide focus of approach – which is fundamental to the nature of creativity – means that people are often working at the limit of their disciplines.

For these reasons we have commissioned a series of literature reviews exploring the key issues in current literature and summarising the history and latest developments in each subject. Each review is written by an experienced and respected author in their field. They aim to be accessible, clearly referenced and to act as 'stepping-stone' resources to underpin the research conducted by and for Creativity, Culture and Education.

Foreword

In this review, Jackie Marsh offers an overview of the literature surrounding the culture of childhood looking at the debates surrounding how young children (defined here up to age 8) now grow up in complex commercialised and media-saturated social worlds. For over 40 years since the publication of Philippe Aries' *Century of Childhood* in 1962, scholars have explored the idea that childhood is not a natural universal state of being but a specific product of historical circumstances. Jackie Marsh shows us how the new sociology of childhood, an important intellectual movement over the last twenty years, enables us to better understand how children are positioned within the marketplace as well as in the family and how we now understand their drives and their identities. Understanding how children conceptualise themselves and their place in the world is crucial for any initiative working to develop creativity; and schools, as well as partners in the creative and cultural sector, will also find this review a thought-provoking piece of work.

We hope that the review will be useful for those interested in better understanding what changing aspirations for creative work might mean to different stakeholders and what expectations and demands those aspirations might have for schools. It offers a comprehensive and original review of what our deep assumptions about the lives of children might mean for the education we plan for them and how they shape and are shaped by the cultural worlds they inhabit. All those who want to leave a lasting impact on schools, curriculum and indeed the workforce of the future need to engage with the implications of the serious and sophisticated review of key concepts that Jackie Marsh lays out so clearly for us.

Dr David Parker, Creativity, Culture and Education
Dr Julian Sefton-Green

This review of literature relating to childhoods, culture and creativity focuses on three prevalent spheres of study: play, multimodal communication and new technologies.

1 **Introduction**

1. 1 Aims of the review

The aims of this review are twofold: to develop a critical synthesis of literature that explores the relationships between childhood cultures and creativity; and to outline the implications of these relationships for researchers, educators and policy makers. The review addresses literature relating to the cultures and creativity of children aged from birth to eight. This analysis is important in England today, where the education of young children is shaped by political drivers that emphasise academic achievement and standardised assessment. The ramifications of the Rose Review on the teaching of early reading (Rose, 2006) are still being felt in terms of narrow approaches to the teaching of phonics (Wyse and Goswami, 2008). The Labour government's apparent refusal to engage with the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander *et al*., 2009) seems to reject initiatives in the education system which aim to develop children's agency. There is, therefore, a need to attend to the theme of young children's cultural creativity in the face of such adult-centric political and educational activity.

In this review, the focus is on identifying the way in which children's own cultures are significant to notions of creativity. The review is largely informed by the theoretical framework offered by the new sociologists of childhood (e.g. James, Jenks and Prout, 1998) in which children's agency, and their propensity to shape their own lives and impact on the lives of others, is given prominence. Given the vast range of research in this field, the review does not attempt to offer an exhaustive review. Rather, I focus on outlining research in which notions of children's own cultural constructs are central to an understanding of creativity.

1.2 Definitions of childhood

The most obvious starting point for a review such as this is with defining the key concepts that underpin it. This is, inevitably, challenging in the case of the three particular concepts at play here – childhood, culture and creativity - given the extent to which they are contested areas of study that operate across a wide range of disciplinary fields. It might seem that, of these three terms, 'childhood' is the least problematic, following the widespread

acknowledgement that it is a social construct, informed by the work of the new sociologists of childhood in the last decades of the twentieth century (e.g. James, Jenks and Prout, 1998). This work superseded more traditional notions of childhood, which Nick Lee characterises as a 'dominant framework' (Lee, 2001:42) in place across disciplines such as psychology, anthropology and medicine, in which children were viewed as incompetent, dependent beings who were merely on the way to 'becoming' adults. In contrast, the work of the new sociologists of childhood emphasises the notion of the child as social actor and stresses the central place that childhood has in social structures (see Table 1). Whilst acknowledging that there is a biological basis to childhood (James and James, 2004), the new sociology of childhood characterises the child as 'being' rather than 'becoming'; that is, emphasising children's agency and de-emphasising a developmental approach in which children are viewed simply as being on the road to achieving adulthood. However, as Uprichard suggests:

Looking forward to what a child 'becomes' is arguably an important part of 'being' a child. By ignoring the future, we are prevented from exploring the ways in which this may itself shape experiences of being children. (Uprichard, 2008:306)

This points to a need to embrace the biological and temporal aspects of childhood at the same time as recognising the way in which childhood is socially constructed[1]. Of course, recognising the temporal aspect brings its own problems. How do we demarcate the various phases in the human life-cycle? When does childhood end and adolescence begin? How is the concept of childhood impacted upon by the construction of relatively recent phases such as 'tweenhood'[2] (cf Willett, 2006)?

In the UK, several constructions of childhood operate simultaneously. James *et al.* (1998) outline three prevalent discourses: children as evil; children as innocent; and children as having rights. In some cases, more than one discourse is in operation at any one time, such as we see in relation to children's use of the Internet, where they are positioned both as victims who are at the mercy of predators <u>and</u> as cyber-bullies who spend time online damaging each other. Drawing on Zelizer (1985), Meyer (2007) goes

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[1] For a historical review of the construction of childhood, see: Aries, P. (1962) *Centuries of Childhood*. New York: Vintage Books.
[2] 'Tweenhood' is a term used to refer to children around the ages of 9-14. Tweens have been a key focus of attention for market researchers, retail companies and so on.

further to argue that in the 'moral rhetoric of childhood' that operates in current times, the discourse of innocence leads to the *sacralization* of the child, that is children being set apart as a sacred species, as the focus for sentimental, emotional and devotional investments to the exclusion of other concerns. Meyer suggests that this means that a moral case can be made simply by invoking concern for children. Further, one might suggest that recent decades have seen the increased institutionalisation of the child, through standardised approaches to education and the extension of the welfare state into previously marginal areas of childcare and health, with the result that there is both increased provision in these areas for families living in areas of low socio-economic status, and increased surveillance from a range of professionals.

The fact that discourses of childhood are shaped by the political, social and economic concerns of any given society does not prevent an examination of the conditions experienced by individual children. As Qvortrup, Corsaro and Honig (2009:8) argue, 'Conceiving childhood as a unit in the social structure makes it possible to distinguish the individual development of children from the historical and cultural history of childhood.' Or rather, one can relate the individual experiences of children to the wider macro-structures of society which shape their lives (e.g. fluctuations in the economic labour market which can have an impact on their family circumstances), or government policies (which can have an impact on their access to key services). It is thus the interplay of structure and agency which is of most interest in the examination of children within a socially constructed childhood.

This review focuses on early childhood and again this is a phase which is contested in terms of its duration, given the different practices across the globe in relation to the age children begin formal education. However, I am adopting the widespread use of 'early childhood' in an international arena to refer to children between the ages of birth to eight. The focus on this age group is important for two key reasons. First, in much of the literature relating to creativity and early childhood, children's own cultural constructions are rarely emphasised. Instead, there is a strong relationship between creativity and the expressive arts, with a focus on the need to introduce children to both artistic processes and artistic products that are held in high cultural esteem. Thus, a review by Sharp on developing young children's creativity (Sharp, 2004) emphasises art forms such as music and

painting. There is a need, therefore, to identify research that focuses on young children and creativity in relation to their own cultural interests and priorities, which can broadly be defined as 'popular culture'.

Second, a great deal of work has emerged over the last five or six years that pays attention to the cultural interests of this group, and this review provides an opportunity to draw this work together and identify what we still need to know. I am aware that by separating off this age group from a consideration of creativity and culture in other stages of childhood, however, there is a danger of reinforcing a starkly developmental perspective which suggests that there are experiences specific to this group that are due to the children's stage of development. On the contrary, what I would argue is that the themes I identify in the literature relating to this age group can be found in other phases of life, including later childhood and adulthood, the key differences being the level of power and agency an individual can exert over his or her own life at any particular age/stage. There are of course developmental differences between individuals at different stages, but these are not predictable, nor linear in fashion, and so arguably have less impact on matters relating to creativity than social, cultural, economic and historical factors.

In addition, what is often at stake in this particular field is the extent to which it is acknowledged that there are multiple childhoods, in recognition of social and cultural diversity (Cannella and Viruru, 2004). For example, not only are childhoods diverse in terms of children's cultural, racial, ethnic and linguistic heritages and socio-economic status, but family structures are varied, with many children living in one-parent families, extended families or with gay and lesbian parents. Frequently, policy initiatives emphasise a universal childhood that is predicated on white, middle-class notions of what it means to be a child in neo-liberal times (Fuller, 2007). Therefore, in this review, a pluralistic conceptualisation of childhood is adopted, which recognises the diverse nature of children's experiences. The review focuses on surveying literature relating to early childhood in the UK and other countries in which research on children's cultural practices is widespread, whilst recognising that there is an urgent need to map children's engagement with cultural texts, such as media texts, in a global context (Drotner and Livingstone 2008; Mutonyi and Norton, 2007).

Table 1: Models of childhood

Traditional models of childhood	New models of childhood
• Child as dependent upon adults • Child as developing through various stages of immaturity on the way to becoming adult • Children as an object of adult study	• Child as agent • Child as being, not becoming • Child as having rights • Child as active participant in, and impacting upon, wider social world

1.3 Definitions of culture

The focus of the review is on childhood cultures. Whilst accepting that 'culture' is a slippery concept (Eagleton, 2000), in this context I draw from Raymond Williams' notion that it constitutes the 'stuff' of everyday life and that 'culture is ordinary' (Williams, 1958). This is particularly important in countering more élite ideas of culture which suggest that it is a set of experiences and values leading to a more 'enlightened' state of being. These experiences and values are normally associated with the idea of 'high' culture and thus serve to marginalise the human experiences associated with mass culture (Jenks, 1993). In this sense, I am primarily concerned in this review with children's creativity in relation to *popular* culture. Popular culture is no easier to define than culture itself. Storey (2006) explores six definitions of popular culture, ranging from commercialised mass culture to the concept of popular culture as a contemporary version of folk culture, i.e. originating from the people. It is normally distinguished from 'high' culture by its appeal to non-dominant classes in society. This dichotomy is problematic, however, and Lally (1980) suggested almost thirty years ago that we should contest traditional boundary distinctions between forms of culture, but instead view them all both at fixed points in time *and* across time frames (synchronically and diachronically):

> Perhaps part of our difficulty in using the paradigm of elite/popular/mass/folk culture is that we have to tinker with it every time we use it – we define and redefine these four pigeon-holes so that we can sort things out to suit ourselves…I do suggest that we consider a new paradigm by which we first view all culture as one expression of a given society's leisure needs and opportunities, and then distinguish degrees of popularity along two axes: synchronic and diachronic. (Lally, 1980:205)

In relation to this review, popular culture for children may be viewed as the range of texts, artefacts and practices that are popular with large numbers of

children and are either commercially produced or produced and circulated amongst children themselves. Popular cultural forms can be traced both synchronically and diachronically in children's lives. For example, current popular texts and artefacts for children include television, computer games, online social networking sites, and comics and magazines. Some of these have been popular with children for many years (e.g. television and comics) and other cultural forms, such as social networking sites, are relatively new.

The reason for the focus on this aspect of culture is to provide a counterpoint to the literature on creativity in early childhood which tends to privilege particular cultural forms, such as art or music (Sharp, 2004). This is not to suggest that the art, music and dance that are held in high value by adults should not be enjoyed by children; such a position would be foolish indeed. Creative practice in early childhood settings and schools needs to engage with a range of cultural practices; unfortunately, it is often the case that children's cultural interests become marginalised in this process. This is not the case in all research in the field – for example, the editors of a special issue of the *International Journal of Early Years Education* on creativity in early childhood education in 2006 suggested that, in compiling the issue, 'we wanted to challenge assumptions that 'cultural' education is solely about introducing children to high culture through drama, music and the arts' (Faulkner *et al.*, 2006:193). They included in the issue papers that focused on children's spontaneous song-making and drawing, but there was no reference to the role of popular culture in these activities (although it is interesting to note that one of the drawings featured in one paper depicted scenes from the children's film *Peter Pan*). Therefore, this review attempts to build on the work of Faulkner *et al.* (2006) in order to supplement the range of child-initiated activities they focus upon in their review of creativity in early childhood.

Popular culture is firmly embedded into the social fabric of contemporary childhoods. Many young children grow up immersed in popular culture from birth. Parents and other family members buy children toys, books and games linked to television and film characters, for example, even when the children are too young to watch the programmes themselves; and then, as they age, the children develop their own media interests and passions (Marsh, J. *et al.*, 2005). This situation brings with it, necessarily, a need to attend to issues relating to commercialisation and consumerism. Miller and Rose (1997) describe the child constructed as the '"subject of

consumption", the individual who is imagined and acted upon by the imperative to consume' (Miller and Rose, 1997:1). Young children are the targets of commercial advertising from a very young age and their playthings are linked to a web of commercialised products. Take, for example, the doll Barbie™, which has been a popular item with children since its introduction over fifty years ago. It is now linked with a range of commercial items, such as toys, books, games, videos, music, clothing, kitchenware, furniture and foodstuffs. This relationship between childhood and consumerism, moreover, is established well before birth:

> ...it is important for scholars to be cognizant of the often unexamined assumption that posits children as somehow outside the realm of economic life who are then brought into it either by caring adults, like parents or teachers, or dragged in by media and marketers. That line which divides 'in' from 'out' fades every day as structures of capital help structure the imagining of the worlds into which a child enters well before its post-partum existence.
> (Cook, 2008: 236)

There are no simplistic answers to concerns regarding children and the commercialisation embedded within much of popular culture and there is little reliable empirical work in the field that can shed light on how far children accept or resist direct advertising or covert promotional strategies (Buckingham, 2009). As with all kinds of cultural products, children adopt and adapt texts and practices and resist some discourses whilst buying in to others; these processes are different for individual children, depending upon their own backgrounds and interests, and can vary according to context. It remains the case, however, that commercial interests shape much of children's cultural interactions. Children and young people contribute £4.89 billion to the UK economy each year (Prabhaker, 2009) and are inevitably a key target group for businesses. This intensive commercialisation of childhood needs to be acknowledged in any investigation of children's cultural practices. Further, there is a need to recognise the relationship between consumption and production. The two processes overlap in many ways and indeed Bruns (2006) has introduced the term 'produser' to characterise this active relationship between usage and production. Thus, for example, children consume branded items in the production and performance of identity and produce media artefacts (such as YouTube™ videos) as they consume media texts.

1.4 Definitions of creativity

The third and final key concept that informs this review is that of creativity. I would suggest that it is the most problematic of the three, due to its position between the disciplines of science, psychology and the arts. Creativity has been variously defined as involving 'imaginative processes with outcomes that are original and of value' (Robinson 2001:118). As Csikszentmihalyi (1996) points out, however, what is to be considered original and of value has to be socially determined in the first place. A further tension in this field is that between creativity viewed as an act of genius and creativity as everyday original and imaginative production, which Csikszentmihalyi (1999) has characterised as 'Big C' and 'little c'. In an attempt to capture something of the complex and nebulous nature of the concept and move beyond this binary account, Banaji and Burn (2010) outline eight rhetorics of creativity that underpin research, policy and practice in the field. These include the rhetorics of: creative genius; democratic and political creativity; ubiquitous creativity; creativity as a social good; play and creativity; creativity and cognition; creative affordances of technology and the creative classroom.

Rhetorics of creativity (Banaji and Burn, 2010) in childhood have drawn primarily from the fields of cognitive psychology and the arts and traditionally have had little to say about the role of children's culture in promoting creativity (e.g. Bruce, 2004). The proliferation of interest over the last two decades in early childhood curricula that have creativity as a central pedagogical concept, such as that of Reggio Emilia[3] (Edwards, Gandini and Forman,1998) has frequently been related to notions of childhood as a developmental phase of inherent creativity (Albert, 1996; Meador, 1992; Resnick, 2007). Notions that the young child is 'naturally' creative and that this creativity lessens as the child moves into puberty and then adulthood are problematic, however. There is a lack of convincing empirical evidence that this is the case and Runco (1996) argues that creative development is not evenly paced, but occurs in bursts and is highly contextualised according to what is happening throughout the lifecourse.

[3] The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education was developed by Malaguzzi in the city of Reggio Emilia in Italy following the Second World War. It is an arts-based approach that emphasises the need for children to learn through their senses and through opportunities for creative practice.

As suggested previously, the early childhood field has focused principally on creativity with respect to the visual arts, to the detriment of other art forms (Andres, 1998), or has drawn from socio-cultural traditions to explore creativity in relation to cognitive processes such as 'imagination' (Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008) or 'possibility thinking' (Burnard *et al.*, 2006), applied across the curriculum. Research that has examined everyday culture in relation to creativity, located largely within the field of Cultural Studies, has normally been undertaken with young people (Willis, 1990). In this review, I have focused primarily on this aspect of creativity; that is, children's everyday productive acts across a diverse range of domains.

1.5 The focus for the review

The aim of this review is to examine the relationship between children's cultures and creativity. There are two key traditions in the study of childhood cultures which provide diametrically opposed views of children's creativity. The first tradition is the exploration of peer-to-peer transmitted culture. Children's folklore studies have attended to matters such as street culture, playground games and rhymes and orally transmitted stories such as urban legends and ghost stories (Tucker, 2008). The second, more recent body of work has examined children's popular culture in the light of their engagement with a variety of media and new technologies (Drotner and Livingstone, 2008). Ironically, despite the longstanding acknowledgement by children's folklore scholars of the relationship between popular culture and children's historical cultural traditions (Opie & Opie, 1959), these two areas of childhood culture have frequently been dichotomised and presented as morally, ethically and commercially different in nature (Kline, 1993). The romanticisation of traditional childhood pursuits such as outdoor play and play with non-commercial toys has led to recurrent condemnation of aspects of children's media culture (Levin & Rosenquest, 2001; Palmer, 2006) despite calls to move beyond these simplistic binaries (Buckingham, 2000). In order to move forward, research is required that attends to the complex relationships between culture, media and childhoods and places these within both historical and contemporary contexts. Childhood culture is contemporaneously constructed by children and shaped by adult interests and it is the tensions between these processes that lead to creativity and innovation.

Inevitably, in a review of this nature, there is a need to focus on specific areas, given the breadth of the topic. This review of literature relating to childhoods, culture and creativity focuses on three prevalent spheres of study: play, multimodal communication and new technologies. The reasons for this are manifold. These are three areas that take central stage in any analysis of childhood in the twenty-first century. Play has long been a significant focus for analysis in childhood studies, but there is a need to revisit some of the dominant discourses that prevail in this area in order to examine the notion of children's creativity in a cultural context. Multimodal communication[4] is central to young children's creative practices and whilst there has been a long tradition of attention to some areas, for example children's language play, less attention has been given to other modes and therefore this review attempts to identify the gaps as well as provide an overview of recent work in the field. Finally, new technologies are playing an increasingly important role in young children's creative practices and there is a need to identify the contribution that technologies make to children's cultural constructions. Ultimately, the review can only point to some of the dominant themes that pervade the study of childhood, culture and creativity in contemporary societies and sketch out a broad map; more detailed cartography needs to be undertaken in the years ahead.

[4] Multimodal communication involves communicating using one or more modes, such as the written word, visual image, sound and movement (e.g. gesture/animation) (see Kress, 2009).

'We can identify creative processes in children at the very earliest ages, especially in their play. A child who sits astride a stick and pretends to be riding a horse; a little girl who plays with a doll and imagines she is its mother; a boy who in his games becomes a pirate, a soldier, or a sailor, all these children at play represent examples of the most authentic, truest creativity.'
(Vygotsky, 2004/1930:11)

2 Play, culture and creativity

2.1 Play

Play is central to rhetorics of creativity in childhood (Banaji and Burn, 2010). Play in this context can be viewed as a phenomenon that, drawing from play theorists such as Pellegrini (1991) and Sutton-Smith (1997) can be defined in numerous ways, but must be seen as an activity which is complex, multi-faceted and context-dependent. Huizinga (1950), a Dutch cultural historian, examined the role of play in society and suggested that it was a basic instinct for people of all ages, not just children. This is evident in contemporary society in relation to the way in which play is central to adult cultural practices, both in terms of play with rules (sports, games) and fantasy play (role-playing computer games, virtual worlds etc.).

Nevertheless, a view of play persists which places it as a practice almost exclusively within early childhood. This carries the danger of locking into a developmental discourse of ages and stages[5] and under-valuing the role that play has in later stages of schooling. Therefore, whilst this review does consider play in relation to young children, it is framed within a broader understanding of the nature of play in society. In this wider view, play can be viewed as socially and culturally framed. What play means to different social and cultural groups can be very different. For example, Fromberg and Bergen (1998:xv) note that activities associated with religious rituals and ceremonies, performed by religious leaders in one cultural or historical context, may be viewed as play in other times or places. The complexity embedded within the concept of play is therefore generative when placed next to issues of culture and creativity. In the following sections, I move on to consider the relationship between play and creativity. I then consider how culture might relate to play and creativity, focusing on four key areas: playground culture, toys, imaginative play and ritualistic play.

2.2 Play and creativity

The relationship between play and creativity in early childhood has been examined largely from a socio-cultural perspective, drawing from the work of Vygotsky (Berk, 1994; Vygotsky, 2004/1930). Vygotsky argued that play was inherently creative:

[5] Developmental psychologists suggest that children progress through various cognitive stages at different ages. For example, Piaget suggested that children went through the following stages: sensorimotor (ages 0-2); pre-operational (ages 2-7); concrete operational (ages 7-11); formal operational (11 - adult) (Piaget & Inhelder, 1972).

> We can identify creative processes in children at the very earliest ages, especially in their play. A child who sits astride a stick and pretends to be riding a horse; a little girl who plays with a doll and imagines she is its mother; a boy who in his games becomes a pirate, a soldier, or a sailor, all these children at play represent examples of the most authentic, truest creativity. (Vygotsky, 2004/1930:11)

Vygotsky also suggested that play was crucial to cognitive development and that it was a 'leading activity' – leading children on to the acquisition of new skills and/ or knowledge and understanding. Vygotsky's work has been highly influential in early childhood research. Play has been identified as a factor in the development of cognitive processes linked to creativity, such as problem-solving (Sylva, Bruner and Genova, 1976), and has been reported to enhance creative practice in a range of areas such as numeracy, literacy and the arts (Holmes and Geiger, 2002; Leiberman, 1977; Vandeburg, 1980; Wood and Attfield, 2005). Numerous experimental studies have indicated that children's creativity in these areas is enhanced through play (Berretta and Privette, 1990; Dansky and Silverman, 1973; Howard-Jones, Taylor and Sutton, 2002). Play and creativity can therefore be seen to be integral in nature; it would be impossible to conceive of play that is not inherently creative.

2.3 Play, creativity and culture: the playground

The place of culture in this dynamic is of primary interest here. The relationship between play, creativity and childhood culture has traditionally been the province of folklore studies in which scholars have identified the transmission of childhood culture through games, both in and out of school (Opie & Opie, 1969; 1997). Children have, for centuries, creatively adapted games and rhymes in playgrounds and streets in ways that have both transmitted and transformed these cultural texts over time. The work of Alice Gomme in 1894 and 1898, which led to the publication of the book *'The Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Ireland'* (Gomme, 1964), 'did much to establish the study of children's folklore as a valid field of investigation in its own right' (Bishop and Curtis, 2001:5). Since then, there has been a wealth of studies, both in the UK and globally, which have carefully detailed the rhymes and games children play in playgrounds,

homes and streets (Douglas, 1916; Howard, 1955; Knapp and Knapp, 1976; Marsh, K. 2008; Opie and Opie 1959, 1969, 1997; Opie 1994). These studies have documented thousands of rhymes, clapping rhymes, skipping games, language play, imaginative play and games with rules, that are all, along with numerous other genres too numerous to detail here, frequently referred to as 'childlore'. These games and rhymes are passed on between children and inevitably are transformed and adapted along the way.

There is widespread evidence that children's daily encounters with media culture inform this play (Bishop and Curtis, 2001; Marsh, K. 2008). Children use and adapt media scripts in their play, such as characters from television programmes (Griffiths & Machin, 2003; Palmer, 1986); they parody advertisements and programmes (Grugeon, 2004) and draw on language taken from media in rhymes and songs (Grugeon, 2005). Kathryn Marsh (2008) offers a detailed account of the way in which the media informs the lore of the playground. She emphasises the way in which the 'parody songs and related parodic movements aptly represent children's subversion of adult culture in their play. The creation of parallel texts allows children to ridicule adult concerns.' (Marsh, K. 2008:171).

Inevitably, much of children's playground lore is transgressive, scatological and carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1984) in nature, with references to sex, body parts, toilet rituals and so on. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, as suggested in Section 1.3, that some cultural theorists look to this realm of play with elements of nostalgia and regret for what they perceive has been lost, that is childhood innocence (Postman, 1982; Winn, 1981). Frequently, play which focuses on the creation and replication of rhymes and games, perceived to be located within a 'traditional' model of childhood, is contrasted with play that involves engagement with toys and artefacts embedded in children's popular cultural worlds, a phenomenon I discuss in the following section.

2.4 Play, creativity and culture: toys

Toys have long been recognised by a number of cultural theorists as playing a central role in the mediation of adult culture to children (Agamben, 1993; Barthes, 1957). Toys reflect the zeitgeist of a given era, as Marina Warner notes:

> In one of the essays in Mythologies, Roland Barthes excoriated the toys of the time: "French toys are like a Jivaro head'" he writes, "in which one recognizes, shrunken to the size of an apple, the wrinkles and hair of the adult." For the toy industry, like children's publishing, always interacts with contemporary values and mores, instrumentalizing the psyche… (Warner, 2009:15)

In the move to the digital age, some types of toys are deemed to be acceptable in that they are assumed to promote creative play whilst others are viewed as detrimental to children's development (Cross, 1997). For example, Levin & Rosenquest (2001) argue that toys made from natural materials, especially wood, and traditional toys, such as dolls or trucks, are often promoted as leading to acceptable types of play, in line with the type of creativity emerging from the rhymes and songs of playground and street play. In contrast, they suggest that toys related to media and electronic toys lead to play which is narrow, unimaginative and uncreative, the play activity tightly framed by the toys themselves. This is an unhelpful dichotomy.

In studies of children's use of technology in the home, children's play with technological hardware and software has been identified as being active in nature rather than passive (Marsh, J. *et al.*, 2005; Plowman McPake and Stephen, 2010), in that children interact with the toys and games and demonstrate agency in their use. Evidence indicates that children are creative in their use of these toys (Plowman, 2005). This is not to imply that passive responses to toys suggest a lack of creativity, however; children may be engaged in creative thinking and problem-solving whilst sat watching television, for example. Contrary to those who express anxiety at children's use of media and electronic toys and look nostalgically at toys popular in childhoods of the past, such as Levin and Rosenquest (2001) and Kline (1993), there is no guarantee that the use of 'traditional' toys will lead to creative play, given the limited and stereotypical cultural scripts that some of the toys, such as dolls and prams, are linked to.

Whatever the nature of the toys to hand, children have long displayed the ability to be creative in their use of them, no matter how limiting they appear to be to adult observers. There is a long tradition of transgressive toy play, as Formanek-Brunell (1993) points out in her account of girls in the 19th century, who played funerals by burying the dolls they had been given. Similarly, Rand discusses the long-standing abuse of Barbie dolls by girls

(Rand, 1995). Children use toys in ways that are counter to producers' intentions. Wohlwend (2009a) outlines the findings of a three-year ethnographic study of literacy play in early childhood classrooms in the USA. She details how girls playing with Disney Princess dolls resisted the discourse of emphasised femininity associated with these characters, with one girl transforming Princess Aurora from victim to rescuer. In their play, children created their own storylines and developed characters based on aspects of their own and their friends' and families' identities. This does not mean, however, that the commercial products held no sway over this play. As Wohlwend suggests:

> Productive consumption is located in the tension between agency and subjection; children are neither cultural dupes at the mercy of global corporations nor cultural geniuses who shrewdly access and expertly manipulate vast networks of gendered multimedia for their own purposes. Although Zoe exercised more agency than the *Sleeping Beauty* story line actually provided, she still maintained masculine/feminine hierarchical relationships by excluding Peter from doll play, by using princess dolls to write and play family-focused stories, and by culminating her books and plays with weddings for happily-ever-after endings. (Wohlwend, 2009a:45)

There have been numerous concerns expressed regarding the globalisation of children's culture, related to the 'McDonaldisation' thesis (Ritzer, 2000). These fears arise from an increase in late modernity in the global production of toys by multinational companies (Cross, 1997). One example of this is the success of Disney Inc. in marketing their brands worldwide and integrating toys into a complex and widespread media-mix (Ito, 2004a). Disney princesses, therefore, appear in doll-form, in films, books, games, on clothes and artefacts (such as lunch-boxes) and online through immersive advertising, a strategy used increasingly by multinational companies aiming products at children using the Internet (Shade and Grimes, 2005). It is possible, however, to trace how children make local the global media-related texts and artefacts they encounter, as in Lee's (2009) analysis of ten Korean girls' (aged 5-8), response to Disney films. She found that the girls consistently reframed the texts to focus on their own cultural understandings, rooted in their experience in Korean immigrant families in the USA.

The notion of 'mediascapes' is significant in this respect. Appadurai (1996) developed a framework for exploring disjunctures between economy, culture and politics in a globalised economy and identified five global cultural flows which he termed:

- Ethnoscapes
- Mediascapes
- Technoscapes
- Financescapes
- Ideoscapes

Mediascapes refer to the global distribution of electronic media and images of the world created by media. These inter-relate to create narratives in which commodities and ideology are combined in complex ways and Appadurai argues that these mediascapes offer scripts for imagined lives. Globalised mediascapes are incorporated into children's play and their everyday lives. Thus, creativity in play is not so much related to toys and artefacts themselves as to the social and cultural context in which the play takes place and the level of the child's take-up of the affordances offered by the toy or artefact. Examples of this phenomenon can be found, for example, in Tobin's (2004) edited collection of studies of the use of Pokémon by different groups of children across the world, in which it is clear that the texts, practices and artefacts related to these Japanese cartoon characters were mediated in different ways in different cultural sites.

2.5 Play, creativity and culture: imaginative play

Children frequently draw on media sources in imaginative play, whether that is fantasy play, in which they take on the role of media characters such as superheroes, or socio-dramatic play, in which they act out scenarios observed in everyday life. This type of play is frequently criticised as being imitative rather than creative (e.g. Linn, 2008). Children, it is assumed, merely replicate the scripts they encounter in the media and are thus simply mimics. Numerous studies outline the originality that underlines this type of play, however, with children adapting characters, storylines and settings in imaginative and creative ways (Bromley, 2004: Marsh, J., 2006a; Wohlwend, 2009a).

An aspect of children's creative play that is rarely addressed is its often ritualistic nature. Huizinga suggested that one of play's most important features is its 'spatial separation from ordinary life' (Huizinga, 1950:19), realised either materially or ideationally. In addition, it is also subjected to time-limitations. The spatial and temporal aspects of play are related, he argues, to ritual. Huizinga's conceptualisation of play as removed from everyday life has been contested over the decades (Winnicott, 1971; Pelletier, 2009), but rather than focus on whether or not play is to be seen as excluded from everyday concerns, we could perhaps conceive of it in a spatial and temporal sense as a liminal practice. Liminality is an abstract concept that refers to a state of being on the threshold, 'betwixt and between' in time and/or space and has long been associated with ritual (Turner, 1969). Ritual play is also a theme taken up by Sutton-Smith, who argues that, 'in the early play of young children…play and ritual are handmaidens' (1997:169). In looking at young children's media-related and digital literacy practices in the home, one of the patterns that has emerged over a number of studies is that of the relationship between play, media and ritual. So, for example, studies have indicated that children replay scenes from favourite films and programmes, sometimes involving family members, in a ritualistic manner (Marsh, J., 2006a). Such ritual often involves repeated use of symbols and props – toys and artefacts related to the media narratives are used and re-used in the play. This ritualistic play serves to develop what Bellah *et al.* (1986:227) call "a community of memory" within the family. A sense of communitas is invoked through shared participation in this play, which often occurs in relation to media texts. Parents/ carers sometimes make deliberate efforts to foster these rituals in their purchasing and leisure-time choices.

Thus it can be seen that the relationship between play, creativity and culture is one of complexity and dynamism. Play as a social and generative practice is intricately linked to creativity and embedded in cultural contexts. Popular culture is a significant factor in the playful lives of young children, and the texts, artefacts and practices related to popular culture are embedded in creative play. In the following section, I move on to consider the multimodal communication of young children; however, this is not to suggest that play should be divorced from this area. Nevertheless, it will be helpful to focus in depth on issues relating to multimodality in order to examine its relationship to creativity and culture in early childhood.

For young children, learning to become confident and competent communicators involves the ability to understand and create multimodal texts using a range of media.

3 Multimodal communication, culture and creativity

3.1 Introduction

Multimodal communication involves a wide range of modes, such as written word, visual image, oral language and gesture. Kress (2003) suggests that in the new media age, communication relies less on traditional print and instead multiple modes are key to communication. As attention moves from the page to the screen, new literacy practices emerge that involve reading and writing using a wide range of modes and media (Lankshear and Knboel, 2006). For young children, learning to become confident and competent communicators involves the ability to understand and create multimodal texts using a range of media. The relationship between multimodal communicative practices and creativity is an intensively researched field in childhood studies and addresses the areas of oral language, written communication, gesture, movement and dance, the visual arts and music. The relationship of childhood culture to these areas has been a strong element of research in some of the domains and almost totally absent in others. In the following section, each of these areas is examined in turn although it is recognised that for young children, modes are likely to be used simultaneously in creative communication (Flewitt, 2008).

3.2 Oral communication, culture and creativity

From a very early age, children engage in verbal play which is richly creative and embedded in their cultural contexts. Julia Gillen and Liz Stone emphasise the importance of young children's verbal play and engagement in 'protoconversations' (turn-taking between children and others, before children are able to articulate complete words):

> Research on protoconversations and playful interactions in early language provide support for an argument that it is the exchange of patterned sounds, not the transmission of propositional knowledge, that is at the heart of communication, and that language is intrinsically multimodal and created in dialogue. (Stone and Gillen, 2008:42)

Culture is central to this process, as it is the words and phrases that are embedded in everyday cultural contexts that become the stuff of early language play (Gillen, 2003). In addition, children's early vocalisations move between speech and song, in a practice known as 'communicative

musicality' and Barrett (2006) suggests that in this practice, children draw on songs from popular culture.

Research focusing on children's oral cultures in playgrounds and play spaces (Halliwell, 1970[1849]; Opie and Opie, 1959) has emphasised the inherent creativity embedded within these oral practices as traditional cultural material is refashioned and transformed in the light of new, popular influences. In their classification of play traditions, Bishop and Curtis (2001:14) highlight: general verbal play, jeers, epithets, narratives, jokes, riddles, entertainment rhymes and counting out. The creativity of children's language play in this context has been documented in recent years by Grugeon (2005) and K. Marsh (2008), amongst others, both of whom detail how media texts integrate with more traditional rhymes and oral communication. Grugeon (2004) worked with pre-service teachers on projects in which they documented the play of primary children in playgrounds. Frequently noted was the way in which children drew from the language of film and television:

> The children sang the song from the TV ads: "Football crazy, chocolate mad, Grab a Power Pod and play football with the lads." It was sung constantly. Girls changed it to "netball crazy." (Grugeon, 2004:79)

Children's engagement with popular culture did not simply lead to rhymes and language play, but also more complex forms of talk on the playground, as another student teacher observed:

> ...many children were involved in games based on *Pokémon, Bouncing Bone Heads*, and *Beanie Babies*…They were not necessarily playing with the objects, but using them as a stimulus to develop very involved drama- based games requiring discussion, collaboration, negotiating, and listening. (Grugeon, 2004:78)

We might view these playgrounds as a 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994; Soja, 1996) in which home and school languages collide and remix, creating a range of hybrid texts. This notion of hybridity occurring through cultural border-crossing has a long history, as Heidegger (1975) argued, and was strongly articulated in the work of Bakhtin, who suggested that the "most intense and productive life of culture takes place on the boundaries of its individual areas and not in places where these areas have become enclosed

in their own specificity" (1986:2). Children's creativity with oral language, therefore, appears to be closely linked to their popular cultural lives. This seems also to be the case with written language.

3.3 Writing, culture and creativity

The study of the relationship between writing and creativity in childhood has primarily focused on the use of writing as a means of personal expression, with imagination and affect central to the process. Writing has always had a central place in the creation of childhood worlds outside of school, such as in the production of diaries, home-made comics, or scrapbooks. The role of children's culture in their school-based writing has become a more significant focus for study in recent years, with the work of Anne Haas Dyson in particular demonstrating how children re-appropriate popular cultural resources in their written texts.

Dyson (1997; 2001; 2003; 2010) has provided a series of insightful glimpses into the social discourses informing children's writing and has illuminated how popular culture permeates childhood worlds. Her research offers a conceptual framework for analysis that draws on Bakhtin's (1986) concept of heteroglossia, which refers to the discernible presence of multiple voices within a single text. Children reshape and rework the media culture in which they are immersed into their writing and the result is a heady mix, an intertextual product in which a piece of writing may reference, or utilise the language of, specific media texts familiar to children. In *Brothers and Sisters Learn to Write* (2003), Dyson referred to the rich and varied range of texts and artefacts from which children draw as a "shared textual toybox" into which children dip and she describes six purposes to which these popular cultural texts are put. These materials were, in her studies:

- a source of pleasure;
- material for personal expression and performance;
- a context for dramatic play;
- a source of displayed knowledge and expertise;
- a resource for both social affiliation and differentiation; and,
- resources for participation in school literacy events.

Thus, the textual toys of home and community were powerful tools that children used to forge entry into the official discourses of schooling and, as toys, they ensured that this entry was playful and inventive in nature.

A close analysis of children's writing in which popular cultural forms are embedded would suggest that children do not just adopt these narratives in an unreflective manner. They build on and develop these narratives in interesting, creative ways. For example, Willett (2005) outlined how a group of six 8-9 year olds drew from film narratives in the development of written stories and creatively extended them through the use of techniques such as parody and pastiche. Bearne and Wolstencroft discussed the impact of children's understanding of computer-game narratives on their story writing. They suggest that children's "knowledge of game narratives of different kinds adds significantly to their potential for constructing written narrative texts" (2005:73) in that they are able to create complex, multilayered narratives that draw on some of the features of games such as multiple-choice pathways through the narrative and the use of sound and visual effects to enhance meaning.

Writing is embedded in a range of cultural forms, not just print on paper; and creative practice in relation to writing includes dance, for example. Recent research by Phillips (2009) outlines the way in which gang members in the USA create letters and words through their dance movements. Children as young as nine were recorded performing these moves, which indicates that younger children will have been involved in these practices as audience members and perhaps even performers. Similarly, graffiti and other forms of mark-making in urban spaces provide a further means of written communication for contemporary children, although this is normally the terrain of older children and young people (Moje, 2000).

3.4 Visual arts, culture and creativity

In the study of the relationship between the visual arts and creativity in childhood, emphasis has traditionally been placed on drawing, painting and sculpture as expressive and aesthetic pursuits. In the past decade, however, the relationship between visual arts and childhood culture has been acknowledged by scholars who have traced evidence of children's popular

cultural interests in their mark-making, drawings and paintings (Anning and Ring, 2004). In more recent work, the increasing significance of digital media in children's visual meaning-making has been recognised. Yamada-Rice (2010) outlines a study of four-year-olds' visual communicative practices in homes in Japan and identified that children were immersed in a wide range of visual media in their everyday lives. Digital media such as cameras and DVDs were central to this meaning-making.

Such is the power of the visual mode, that it can offer a means of integrating divergent aspects of children's cultural lives. Anning and Ring (2004) report on a study of the drawings of seven children collected over three years across homes and early years settings. Themes from popular culture and media permeated the drawings, signifying the centrality of these cultural texts, practices and artefacts in the children's lives. In early years settings, drawing became a means of integrating home and school discourses for some children. Anning and Ring describe the drawings of a group of girls during 'wet playtime':

> The content of their drawings reflected not only the growing influence of the decorative cartoon heroines of video imagery and their fascination with hair length and shoe height, but also their replaying of their teacher's role through, for example, the completing of registers and ticking of sums. (Anning and Ring, 2004:115)

As this vignette indicates, just as gendered practices are embedded in other modes of communication in early childhood (Marsh, J., 2010a), this is also the case for drawings. Albers, Frederick and Cowan (2009) outline how, in a visual discourse analysis of drawings produced by 23 Grade Three children in Canada, boys and girls drew stereotypical images of what they perceived to be the interests and practices of both genders.

Drawing provides a powerful means for young children to bring into being scripts and imagined objects that otherwise lie outside of their immediate experience. This is wonderfully rendered in Karen Wohlwend's (2009b) account of children from print-centric early years classrooms, who long to play with the new technologies and media that are part of their everyday experiences outside of school. She details how one child, thwarted by the limitations of the toys on offer in the classroom, drew his own mobile phone:

He gave an oblong piece of paper rounded corners and penciled a 3 by 3 array of squares below a much larger square to represent a numeric pad and an LCD screen. Additional phone features (receiver, compact size) were emphasized by adding play actions: he held the opened paper flat in the palm of his hand, raised his hand to his ear, talked into the paper for a few seconds, then snapped it shut with one hand, and tucked it into his pocket. (Wohlwend, 2009b:125)

The 5-7 year old `early adopters' in Wohlwend's study used paper and pencil to create mobile phones, ipods and video games in order to bring their own cultural worlds into the early years classroom in the face of technological neglect.

3.5 Music and dance, culture and creativity

The two areas in which there has been limited study on popular culture and creativity are music and dance. Movement and dance have traditionally been the focus for study with older age groups, with publications in the field of childhood focusing primarily on the development of dance pedagogy (Davies, 2003) and the use of dance to learn about wider culture (Lutz & Kuhlman, 2000). Research investigating the relationship between music and creativity in childhood, however has recently started to pay attention to cultural issues.

Popular forms of music are significant in the lives of young children. Young (2008) examined the daily musical experiences of children under the age of two in England and found that popular music was key to their interests and, in particular, digital technologies were embedded into their musical practices through electronic toys, CD players and karaoke machines. Lamont (2008) studied the musical lives of 32 children aged 3 in the UK, across the children's homes and the early years settings they attended. She reported that a third of the children's music exposure was through media, particularly television and computer games.

This pattern has been identified across cultural groups. Lum (2008) studied the home music environments of 28 Grade 1 children in Singapore and identified that the soundscape of home included musical choices of the family that were related to media and technology use. Similarly, Yim and

Ebbeck (2009) noted that popular music forms, such as Cantopop and television theme songs, were well-liked by 4 and 5 year olds in Hong Kong.

Current research on playground activities emphasises the role that digital technologies play in the production of creative practices, with children sharing MP3 players and engaging in multi-layered communicative practices in which verbal dexterity is integrated with musical inventiveness in order to construct and delineate social relationships. Tyler Bickford's (in press) ethnographic study of one primary school's (known as 'HCS') playground over the course of a year indicates how children use MP3 players as a marker of friendship. He emphasises the centrality of music in the children's lives:

> Music was central to children's peer culture at HCS, a constant topic of conversation and debate, and children listened to music whenever they could get away with it, using the MP3 players that more and more of them carried with them (and which school authorities increasingly viewed with suspicion) or sneaking views of music videos on websites they found to bypass the Internet content filters on the school's recently installed computers. (Bickford, in press.)

In the playground, children shared the earbuds on MP3 players with each other as a marker of social intimacy. The MP3 players fostered the 'technosocial mediation' of friendship and music was a key currency in the cultural brokering that occurred in this playground. This was also the case in Willett's study of young girls performing popular songs in a primary school playground[6] (Willett, in press). Willet traces the way in which a group of girls perform pop songs, transforming and adapting them in the process and using them at times to display friendship and construct particular representations of gendered identities.

Whilst there is increasing interest in popular forms of music in children's lives, there has been little work that relates to the role of dance in their experiences. In Marsh, J. *et al.* (2005), it was found that many children regularly danced along to television programmes and film. Barrett (2009) outlines the musical family life of a two-year old, William, in Australia. Dance is an important part of his activities, and dance is usually initiated in response to media:

[6] This study is part of a larger study of children's playground games and rhymes in a new media age, funded as part of the AHRC's Beyond Text programme: http://projects.beyondtext.ac.uk/playgroundgames/index.php

I often see the children dancing together in circles around the room accompanying their actions on one or more of the instruments, and they accompany the songs on DVDs of the *Wiggles* and *PlaySchool* by playing the beat as they listen and sing. On one occasion, William and Lucy, fresh out of the bath, race into the lounge room and dance in front of the television. Playschool is on and the children watch intently whilst dancing to the song. Joanna asks the children questions, prompting them to add sound effects to their 'animal dances'. William picks up a tambourine and proceeds to dance in a circle around the lounge room striking the instrument as he walks (video diary, September 2005). (Barrett, 2009:126)

Many children have access to dance mat games, such as those related to console games (PlayStation) or Nintendo Wii (Marsh, J. *et al.*, 2005). Nonetheless, whilst there has been research in the medical/science field on the benefits of these activities for physical fitness (cf Graf, Pratt, Hester & Short, 2009), the use of these dance games is relatively unexplored in accounts of media use in early childhood.

3.6 Integrating the modes in creative production

Thus far I have discussed various modes separately, but it is important to recognise that in much of children's creative production, i.e. their creation of texts and artefacts, the modes are integrated. Pahl (2009) outlines how, in a classroom in which 6-7 year old children created multimodal, three-dimensional texts, the children's talk was an integral part of the activity and the productive process could not be fully understood without paying attention to this element. As Bearne (2009) suggests, in a detailed analysis of a range of children's multimodal texts:

To return to Kress's question about whether different modal elements do the same job as each other (Kress, 2003b), it seems that there are differential balances between modes and the media through which each text-maker communicates meaning that work towards the rhetorical force of each text. It is in the complementary of the modes that the meaning resides. (Bearne, 2009: 184)

Bearne proposes a framework for analysing children's multimodal texts that pays attention to:

- **Image**: content, size, colour, tone, line, placing/use of space
- **Language**: syntax and lexis
- **Sound/vocalisation**: content, emphasis, volume, vocal intonation, pause, pace
- **Gaze**: direction of gaze of communicator or character in representation
- **Movement**: gesture and posture.

This enables a multi-layered analysis in which it becomes clear how modes work together to create meaning. It is a major concern, therefore, that assessment frameworks for children's creative productions in early childhood focus primarily on language in isolation from other modes. For example, in England the Early Years Assessment Profile (QCA, 2008) is currently used to determine children's competence across a range of areas. The 'Communication, Language and Literacy' strand focuses primarily on oral language and written texts, to the exclusion of other modes, and there is scant attention paid to the way in which children need to integrate modes in their authorship and understand the way in which modes interact in a text when reading it.

Research on young children's multimodal communicative practices indicates that there is a great deal of creativity in their everyday lives, creativity which draws heavily on popular culture as a source for inspiration and ideas. In the final section of this review, I move on to consider the relationship between new technologies, culture and creativity. Obviously, the practices shaped by technologies are inherently multimodal in nature and it is therefore somewhat artificial to consider them in a separate section, but this is necessary in order to consider the issues in sufficient depth.

'Media and digital cultures are arguably at the centre of leisure practices for many children in developed countries and this area of childhood culture has, more than any other, led to concerns regarding the commercialisation of childhood' (Kenway and Bullen, 2001). This commercial aspect is frequently posited as oppositional to notions of creativity.

4 New technologies, culture and creativity

4.1 Young children's access to new technologies

There is extensive evidence that young children are, from birth, immersed in a media and technology-rich environment. In the UK, Marsh, J. *et al.* (2005) conducted a survey of 1,852 parents of children aged from birth to six in ten Local Authorities in England in which young children's use of popular culture, media and new technologies was identified. The 'Digital Beginnings' study concluded that many young children were competent users of technologies from an early age and that parents felt that children developed a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding in this use. Plowman, McPake and Stephen (2008; 2010) report on a study conducted in Scotland in which they surveyed 346 families in Scotland and conducted 24 case studies of young children's use of technology in the home. This study identified that children and parents were active users of technology, that patterns of interaction differed across families due to a range of factors, such as parents' attitudes towards and experiences of technology, and that an increase in technological items in the home does not necessarily relate to amount of use of technology by children. This work resonates with a study conducted in the USA which indicated that children under the age of six are immersed in technology from birth (Rideout, Vandewater and Wartella, 2003). Much of this use of digital technology can be characterised as creative and playful in nature (Willett, Robinson and Marsh, 2008) as it offers potential for children to engage as 'produsers' (Bruns, 2006), to re-mix and mash-up cultural content in the production of new texts (Lankshear and Knobel, 2006). Media and digital cultures are arguably at the centre of leisure practices for many children in developed countries and this area of childhood culture has, more than any other, led to concerns regarding the commercialisation of childhood (Kenway and Bullen, 2001). This commercial aspect is frequently posited as oppositional to notions of creativity.

4.2 New technologies, creativity and culture in homes

Creative practices are widespread in young children's use of new technologies and media in the home. In the 'Digital Beginnings' study (Marsh, J. *et al.*, 2005), parents reported children being able to use

camcorders and the video cameras on mobile phones to capture everyday scenes. There are certainly products now marketed at young filmmakers in the home, with plastic-cased video cameras retailing for less than £100. This 'D-I-Y media culture' (Sharp, 2006) is becoming prevalent across society, to the extent that it is now possible for Sky TV viewers to send in their home-made videos for broadcast on the satellite television channel 'Sky News'. Satellite/cable viewers can receive a channel entitled 'Bedroom TV', which broadcasts karaoke-style videos, made by members of the general public and uploaded to the channel's website, featuring themselves, family and friends miming along to popular songs. In addition, many children now have an array of electronic toys which promote creativity, such as laptops – enabling the creation of music, for example. Digital still cameras are prevalent in homes and Yamada-Rice's work (2010) indicates that children use these frequently to capture family life.

Recent work also indicates that young children are becoming increasingly creative in their use of the Internet. Whereas in previous eras children may have simply accessed favourite Internet sites, often media-related, to play games, there is now evidence that children are using social networking sites to interact with others in online play. This play sometimes takes place in virtual worlds. These are online simulations of offline spaces and involve the use of an avatar to represent individual users. Current projections[7] indicate that there are over 200 virtual worlds in operation or development for children, and many of the most popular worlds have in excess of ten million registered users worldwide.

For some, this move to the virtual is worrying. For example, towards the end of the last century, the Tamagotchi was very successful. This was a small, hand held toy with a liquid crystal display screen on which a virtual pet could be seen. Children had to 'feed', 'water' and 'exercise' this pet regularly, otherwise it died. The craze led to many schools banning the toys as children frantically tried to keep their pets alive and so were allegedly distracted from their tasks. Some researchers saw the introduction of this toy as a sad reflection on the times:

> …the Tamagotchi is a metaphor of our times, representing the blurring of boundaries between real and reciprocal relationships and surrogate, one-way, imaginary ones. It highlights the dominant role of technology in our

7 http://www.kzero.co.uk/. Accessed December 2nd 2010.

> lives; no longer simply a tool for use in science and industry, but now a substitute for human relationships. (Bloch and Lemish, 1999:295)

Valentine and Holloway (2002) identified the negative stance adopted by some commentators on virtual worlds (e.g. McLaughlin, Osbourne and Smith, 1995) and suggested that, 'In the eyes of the debunkers, the "virtual" (the false, the inauthentic, the new, the disembodied) threatens to invade or pollute "the real" (the genuine, the authentic, the traditional, the embodied)' (Valentine and Holloway, 2002:304). Their study of 11-16 year old young people's use of online spaces, however, indicated that in fact there was much overlap between young people's online and offline worlds, as young people interacted online with peers with whom they socialised at school. This phenomenon has been noted by other researchers (Davies, 2008; Thomas, 2007), suggesting that it is futile to separate children's engagement in 'real' and virtual environments in this way; instead, we should view their experiences along a continuum in which children's online and offline experiences merge.

In Marsh, J. (2010b) a study of 5-8 year old children's play in virtual worlds is reported. Children were surveyed and interviewed about their play in two virtual worlds, *Club Penguin*™ and *Barbie Girls*™. Inevitably, play in these environments locks children into commercialised practices. Commodity purchasing is a key activity in both *Barbie Girl*™ and *Club Penguin*™. Users earn coins by playing games and then are able to spend the coins dressing their avatars and 'homes'. Both virtual worlds offer both free membership but also an additional layer of paid membership which provides access to additional goods and in-world opportunities. It would appear that just as forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1990) operate in virtual worlds inhabited by adults such as *Second Life*, the child-orientated worlds are also shaped by social, economic and cultural capital. So, for example, children who can afford to buy membership have more economic capital, which in turn enables them to acquire more cultural goods in the virtual worlds and develop extensive social networks with other paid members in exclusive, 'members-only' events. In addition, *Barbie Girls*™ is located within a nexus of commercialised practices that operate across online and offline worlds (Grimes, 2008). For example, children can buy an MP3 player in the offline world that unlocks a greater range of merchandise in the virtual world. This merging of the 'real' and virtual, the online and

offline worlds, is creating interesting hybrid practices as children move fluidly across boundaries. So, for example, in using the Disney virtual world *Pixie Hollow*™, children can use a clickable device, a bracelet, in the offline world to exchange virtual goods with friends and upload them into the virtual world environment.

In the Marsh, J. (2010b) study, children reported being involved in a range of play in the virtual worlds These types of play are best categorised using classifications developed in studies of play in the offline world. Types of in-world play included fantasy play, socio-dramatic play, play with rules and ritualised play. Creativity is embedded into many of these in-world activities in the choice of language, the creation of plots, the use of characters and so on. There is limited creativity in terms of user-generated content, however. Unlike those virtual worlds for young people and adults which include the opportunity to script computer programs in order to create in-world objects and artefacts and customise avatars (as is the case in *Second Life*, for example), the virtual worlds aimed at younger children do not foster such creativity. Given the extent to which children and young people are engaged in developing user-generated content in out-of-school contexts (Lankshear and Knobel, 2006), indeed becoming 'produsers' (Bruns, 2006), this appears to be a short-sighted approach. Nevertheless, older children develop creative productions in virtual worlds through the use of screen-capture software, and they then place these machinima[8] on YouTube. In Marsh, J. (2010b), young children discussed how they used the search engine on YouTube to find and watch these machinima, thus indicating that they were fans of the older young people's work.

Whilst there is evidence to suggest that some children are engaged in creative practices in relation to technology in the home, there is limited research regarding parental engagement in this. In Marsh, J. *et al.* (2005) the majority of parents supported their children's engagement with technologies, but rather than reporting joint creative practices, they focused on the significance of these experiences for their children's future as citizens in a digital world. This is hardly surprising, given the discourses surrounding parenting in developed countries. Nichols, Nixon and Rowsell (2009) report on a geo-semiotic study of the kinds of texts on parenting that parents had access to in three sites: two in and around Adelaide,

[8] The word is a conflation of machine + cinema and refers to films produced in computer games of virtual worlds.

South Australia and a third site in Princeton, NJ, USA. They report on two key types of texts that were presented to parents – those from the commercial world (such as adverts for electronic toys) and those that were produced by health or education workers to promote parental engagement in learning. Nichols *et al.* suggest that:

> The commercial and institutional texts that together constitute a symbolic world of parents and early learning each, in different ways, present a reductive view of parenting practice as it relates to children's learning. Toy advertisements present a world in which the child's interaction with an object produces the simultaneous experience of fun and learning and the most important parent identity is as consumer. The promise held out is that merely the provision of this book, toy or baby computer is sufficient parental involvement for learning to occur. Missing from this discourse is the social context of relationships in the family. Health and educational providers, on the other hand, emphasise social relations and make parent–child interaction central. Missing from this discourse is overt parent power, and recognition of the in-practice simultaneity of parents' literacy work with other kinds of work as well as their continual negotiation of multiple subject positions as parents. (Nichols *et al.*, 2009:73)

This points to the need for early years educators to be aware of competing discourses in relation to parenting, to offer opportunities for parents to reflect on how they already support children's creativity with new technologies and to help them identify ways in which they might want to develop this further in order to foster enjoyment and intergenerational learning.

Whilst there is a range of evidence to suggest that children are creative in their use of new technologies in homes, the evidence is rather more limited in early years settings and schools. Nevertheless, in the last few years, there has been a burgeoning of work in this area that has the potential to inform policy and practice as we move into the second decade of the twenty-first century. I review this in the next section.

4.3 New technologies, creativity and culture in early childhood settings and schools

Whilst there has been a proliferation of work in schools that facilitates creative approaches to the use of technologies (Loveless, 2007), this has not always been the case in early years classrooms. For example, O'Hara (2008) points out that practice is not uniform, with pockets of excellent practice in some areas and other settings in which technology is under-used. This under-utilisation of technologies in early years classrooms has also been highlighted in a review of research in the area conducted for BECTA (Aubrey and Dahl, 2008). This has implications for children's understanding of reading and engagement in reading practices in homes and schools. Such a dissonance may mean that children fail to transfer the knowledge and understanding gained in home on-screen reading and writing practices to their school activities. Indeed, there is evidence that on transfer to school, children begin to lose confidence in using the screen-based reading strategies they have developed in home use of technologies (Levy, 2009).

Even in early years settings and schools in which new technologies are more widely adopted, children's own cultural interests have not been central. One of the key areas of creative work in schools with children aged eight and above is in relation to media production, important in that film is such a central part of children's lives (Parry, 2009). There is limited evidence that film-making is commonplace in classrooms with younger children, however. In a review of research which has focused on the analysis and production of the moving image, Burn and Leach (2004) identified only twelve studies in the UK which were relevant to their review and, of these, four involved children of primary-school age. None involved children in the Foundation Stage (three- to five-years-old). There have been a few studies conducted which have explored the production of films in schools. Reid, Burn and Parker (2002) evaluated the work of 50 schools which introduced digital filming and editing into the curriculum and found that introducing work on moving image media supported the development of a range of transferable skills, including, 'problem-solving, negotiation, thinking, reasoning and risk-taking' (Reid *et al*, 2002:3), all important aspects of creativity. In addition, they determined that the opportunities afforded by animation work were strong because of the way

in which children could combine voice, gesture, music, image and language. It would seem to be important, therefore, to ensure that our youngest children have opportunities to engage in these kinds of creative production. There are indications that this is becoming more widespread. Marsh, J. (2006b; 2009) reports on two projects in early years settings in the UK in which 3-5 year old children were involved in making animated films. Hill (2010) describes a South Australian project in which twenty-five teacher-researchers built on children's technological competences developed in the home and introduced film-making activities into the classroom. They developed a 'Multiliteracies map' to plan and assess this work, ensuring that critical engagement was embedded within practice in addition to operational and cultural elements. This research has emphasised the potential for such activities to bridge home and school contexts and offer a curriculum that is more appropriate for a digital age (Jewitt, 2008).

Marsh, J. (2008a) outlines four key theoretical models which have informed the use of children's cultural texts, practices and artefacts in the classroom in order to promote creativity. The first is a utilitarian model, which indicates that children's cultural practices can be leveraged in the classroom in order to ensure that children are orientated to schooled literacy practices by becoming more motivated to engage in reading and writing tasks that are focused on their cultural interests. The second model is the 'cultural capital' model which draws from Bourdieu's (1990) work to suggest that by incorporating popular cultural texts into the classroom, we are recognising children's cultural capital and thereby lessening the potential for symbolic violence to occur. Symbolic violence is the consequence of a dominant class imposing its own cultural values and interests on a dominated group, who then accept this situation without question. Historically schools have privileged canonical texts at the expense of working-class children's textual pleasures, but in this second model, popular culture can offer a bridge between home and school cultures. The third model draws on critical theory to suggest that popular cultural texts have integral value and can be studied in their own right, as part of a critical literacy curriculum in which texts of all kinds, both popular and canonical, are subject to critical analysis. The final model draws on third space/recontextualisation theories to suggest that the classroom can offer a space which blends both home and school cultures. By enabling

pupils to draw on out-of-school discourses in the classroom, new kinds of knowledge can be created. The kinds of vernacular, localised knowledge children develop in out-of-school practices combines with the more formal structures of curriculum knowledge and this recontextualisation produces new knowledge which crystallises experiences across home and school. Some studies of the use of children's popular culture in classrooms draw on one or more of these models, others are located within one particular paradigm. What work in this field has gradually moved to acknowledge over the years is that institutional spaces for learning can offer creative and enabling environments for work that embraces children's culture, but this is achieved only through careful consideration of the ways in which children's own identities and agency can be valued in the process. An example of this process can be found in Parry's (2010) account of film-making in a primary classroom, in which children were encouraged to draw on their home experiences of viewing films in the production of their own filmic texts. She relates how this enabled one child, Connor, who was otherwise disengaged from school, to explore aspects of his own identity and to value his own cultural interests. This required a sensitive approach from the teacher in which the child's passion for film was recognised and sensitively drawn upon to inform classroom practice.

With the increasing popularity of Web 2.0 sites and products, recent research has indicated how powerful the adoption of some of these out-of-school practices can be for learning. For example, blogging is now quite prevalent in many schools and in some early years settings, as it can offer valuable opportunities to connect with 'real-world' audiences outside of school (Bazalgette, 2010; Marsh, J. 2009; Merchant, 2009a). Other Web 2.0 practices are becoming utilised in schools. In Marsh, J. (2010c), the work of a teacher of 6 and 7 year old children in the north of England, Martin Waller, is outlined. He allows the children in 'Orange Class' to use the social networking system (SNS) *Twitter* to log their thoughts and activities over the course of a school day. *Twitter* users can upload to the internet messages containing up to 140 characters, known as 'tweets'. *Twitter* enables users to log accounts of their activities over the course of a day if they so wish, with some decrying this seemingly trivial use of technology (Sandy and Gallagher, 2009). Others, however, suggest that these apparently mundane exchanges have the effect of thickening offline social ties and that there are numerous examples of the way in which SNS

can have a positive impact on the lives of individuals (Dowdall, 2008; Ito *et al.*, 2008). Martin enables the children to upload their photographs on 'Twitpic', which are then attached to one of their 'tweets' and used to extend the children's communication, or reinforce their messages. Adults and other children using Twitter respond to 'Orange Class' and in this way, Martin ensures the children have an external audience for their work. As Merchant (2009a) suggests:

> This raises questions about what happens as bounded classrooms are connected to diverse and fluid networked spaces with new possibilities for presenting, exchanging and making meaning. Other studies (Burnett, 2009; Merchant, 2009) have suggested that teachers feel challenged once children move into fluid networked spaces and begin to explore their own paths. (Merchant, 2009a).

The opportunities for rich learning are not simply confined to official curriculum activities. Björkvall & Engblom (2010) report on a study in Stockholm which explored the informal learning that occurred when children used laptops at school in 'unofficial' school practices – what Maybin (2007) has termed in relation to print-based activities, 'under-the-desk' literacies. They suggest that:

> ...self-chosen exploration of affordances of computer hardware and software lead to discoveries of new semiotic resources and semiotic potentials and can also be described as processes of learning. Based on the analysis presented in this paper, unofficial techno-literacy activities seem to be beneficial for such learning processes to occur, e.g. involving visual and interactive resources. Since such unofficial activities are already present in the computer-equipped classrooms, whether acknowledged by teachers or not, they could be regarded as underused and underestimated resources for learning with the potential to re-enforce and widen the learning processes in official, teacher-assigned, activities. (Björkvall & Engblom, 2010)

There have been a number of highly favourable outcomes in terms of pupil engagement and achievement reported from projects which utilise digital technology for creative production in the classroom. The focus on integrating media and new technologies into the literacy curriculum has had a discernible impact. For example, in the 'Digital Beginnings' project

(Marsh, J. *et al.*, 2005), nine early years settings introduced aspects of popular culture, media and new technologies into the communication, language and literacy curriculum. Activities included making electronic and digital books, watching and analysing moving image stories and creating presentations using electronic software. One of the aims of the study was to examine the impact of these action research projects on the motivation and engagement of children in curriculum activities related to communication, language and literacy. In order to identify this, practitioners undertook three observations of 14 children prior to the project and three observations of the same children during the project, using *The Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children* (Laevers, 1994). Outcomes indicated that children's levels of engagement in activities were higher when the curriculum incorporated their interests in popular culture, media and new technologies (Marsh, J. *et al.*, 2005).

Table 2 (opposite) outlines some of those competences/outcomes which were developed across the various projects outlined above and discussed in further detail in Marsh, J. (2008b; 2010), although the table is not intended to offer an exhaustive list.

What is now needed is a fundamental change to the assessment of literacy so that it moves beyond an emphasis on the word and on the printed page to acknowledge some of these skills and competences. In Bearne (2010), ways in which teachers might assess children's ability to analyse multimodal texts are outlined.

Table 2: Competences developed in multimodal, multimedia production in the early years

Key competences	Examples from projects
Understanding of the affordances of various modes (the inherent properties of modes that enable or do not enable certain uses of those modes) and the ability to choose appropriate modes for specific purposes	Children produced a wide range of multimodal texts that required understanding of the affordances of modes and how modes could work best together to achieve goals. These included: texts that were solely written or oral or consisting of only still images or moving images; texts combining one or more of these modes; animated films; live action films; podcasts; animated PowerPoint presentations; photostories.
Understanding of various media and the ability to choose appropriately for specific purposes	Children used a wide range of media in the production of texts and made critical judgements about which media to use.
Skills in the various modes that enabled them to decode, understand and interpret, engage with and respond to and create and shape texts	Children developed a wide range of skills including: knowledge of the alphabetic principle and abilities in reading and writing print; ability to read both still and moving images; understanding of the features of various genres; understanding of the principles of transduction in the production of multimodal texts; ability to navigate texts across media, follow hyperlinks, read radially etc.
Ability to analyse critically a range of texts and make judgements about value, purpose, audience, ideologies	In the development of multimodal texts, children were reviewing a wide range of online and offline texts in order to inform their work. They also regularly reviewed their own and peers' work.
Ability to relate texts to their social, cultural, historical contexts and literary traditions	Children were able to relate multimodal texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts and were adept at recognising intertextuality.
Ability to select and use appropriately other texts for use in the design process	In the blogging project, children produced texts that remixed media content. Children made animated and live action films, and PowerPoint presentations, that incorporated music.
Ability to collaborate in text production, analysis and response	Children were successful in collaborating both with known and unknown others in the production and analysis of texts. Social networking software (SNS), for example, enabled them to comment on others' work and develop an understanding of the value of networks.

Children's culture needs a much more central place in explorations of childhood and creativity than has hitherto been the case if we are to offer a meaningful, relevant and genuine model of 'child-centred' education.

5 **Conclusion**

5.1 Childhood, culture, creativity

It will be clear from the evidence marshalled within this review that contemporary childhoods are as creative as ever. There is a rich range of modes and media available to the majority of children in the developed world, and the research outlined here suggests that they use these well. There are still major concerns about the uneven distribution of this creative capital across the globe. Even within the UK there are still children who, for various reasons, lack both economic capital and access to the array of resources that many children enjoy (Drotner and Livingstone, 2008). There is also still a great deal of creative practice that uses a limited range of modes and media and I would not wish to suggest that it is only through the use of new technologies that children can be creative. Nevertheless, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the digital age has brought with it a great deal of opportunity to promote creativity and to disseminate creative practice in a way which was just not possible in previous eras. For example, there are greater opportunities for shared creative practice across the Internet and for engagement in what Jenkins *et al.* (2006) characterise as 'participatory culture'.

What is strong in the accounts outlined in these pages of children's creative practice in homes, early years settings and schools is the way in which their own cultural interests and priorities are key. This, it seems to me, is of central significance to those interested in young children's learning and development. The notion of 'child-centred education' has been celebrated in early childhood research and practice for decades, but the application of this phrase does not always take account of what is central to children, that is, children's own 'ruling passions' (Barton & Lancaster, 1998). Children's culture is multi-faceted and indeed it is limiting to refer to it in the singular. As the work outlined here has indicated, children's culture is created both by children and adults, singly and together. This, however, is nothing new. Present-day cultural practices in childhood need to be contextualised within the historical tradition of children creating and re-creating their own cultural practices and artefacts through engagement with the wider society and through the appropriation of adult-centred discourses. What is different in contemporary societies is the extent to which children are themselves targets of marketing practices. This indicates the importance of schooling to foster critical literacy practices in order to enable children to engage actively and fully with the ideologies of texts and practices in a commercialised world.

5.2 Childhood, culture, creativity – and criticality

This review has identified a range of current work that illustrates how far contemporary childhoods are immersed in cultural worlds that foster creativity. As suggested in the previous section, however, there is an additional 'c word' that needs to be highlighted here – criticality. It should not be assumed that young children lack critical skills, or that they are at such an early stage of development that the focus for educators should be on skills acquisition first and then critical engagement later. The work of Vasquez (2004), Comber and Simpson (2001) and others demonstrates that this is certainly not the case. In their creative productions, children are making critical judgments constantly as they remix and mash-up modes and media, in whatever form that is – playground games, mobile filming or uploading pictures to Twitpic. Nevertheless, not all children will have ready access to a repertoire of critical practices and there will always be a need to develop the skills children already utilise, which is why it is important that early years educators attend to this issue. In the following section, I move on to consider the implications of this review for policy and practice.

5.3 Implications for policy and practice

In the previous section, I emphasised the need to recognise the critical nature of children's creative production. Criticality, however, needs fostering and cannot simply be left to chance. Take, for instance, the need to ensure that young children are able to reflect critically on the ideological nature of the material with which they engage. This skill is important in relation to children's engagement in the marketplace and their need to determine the way in which they are positioned as consumers. In addition, the potentially negative or harmful content of some of the texts they encounter means that children's critical capacities need to be well-developed. The necessity to engage in this kind of activity has been constant throughout time and cannot simply be viewed as a contemporary social issue, however. The carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1984), scatological and transgressive nature of children's culture is a longstanding feature; what changes from generation to generation is the material for these practices. Much of this material is ultimately inoffensive in nature, but is not without its challenges; discriminatory behaviour, for example, is sometimes embedded within it, and

critical engagement with conservative or even offensive material is not always present. Rather than respond with alarmist and thinly evidenced claims regarding the nature of childhood culture, however, educational professionals should engage in research with the pupils they teach in order to discern the nature of their cultural worlds and how those worlds might find a place within the classroom. Such work has the potential to motivate and engage, as well as to enable pupils to extend their critical engagement with their own cultural practices.

A further implication of the recent developments in childhood and culture is that matters of identity become paramount as children's agency is increasingly recognised in educational institutions. In a discussion of the potential developments in forms of literacy in the years ahead, Carrington and Marsh suggested that, 'Issues of identity and affect are central to creative approaches to literacy learning and will become more salient to curricula and pedagogy in the future' (2008:15). If children are given permission to bring their cultural identities to the site of learning, then that will, inevitably, mean that educators will need to pay attention to the identity performances and self-motivated practices of children. This could mean planning pedagogical activities in which children are given space and time to map their practices and learning across domains and reflect on them. This is an approach being developed with older learners in a project in Norway in which researchers are studying 'how learners' narratives about themselves (both past and present) become resources which are then mobilised within the learning process.' (Erstad, Gilje, Sefton-Green & Vasbo, 2009:101). I would suggest that this kind of practice would be important to foster in early years pedagogy.

5.4 Implications for research

As in all reviews of literature within a particular field, spaces emerge which are either a result of too narrow a lens being focused on the area, or an indication that there is room for further investigation. There are numerous opportunities for further research on matters relating to childhood, culture and creativity, but I will focus on just three here. First, much of the research that illuminates the relationship between these three areas has been undertaken in the developed world and there is a need to extend this to ensure that childhoods in a global context can be the site for analysis. Second, there is

still much that needs to be understood about the way in which children's culture is constructed through inter-generational practices as well as peer-to-peer interaction. Emergent research on the inter-generational use of console games, such as Nintendo Wii, for example, (Stevens, Satwicz & McCarthy, 2008; Voida & Greenburg, 2009) indicates that the dynamics between family members are a rich site for further analysis in the development of an understanding of how family cultures shape creative practice. Finally, there is a need for more extensive and detailed studies of children's cultural practices as they move across formal and informal learning spaces, as previous studies have tended to focus on just one domain or the other. Information gained from such work will enable 'mainstream' research on creativity in early childhood to move beyond the promotion of an arts-based curriculum, important though that is, to include a greater focus on children's own cultural interests and activities. Children's culture needs a much more central place in explorations of childhood and creativity than has hitherto been the case if we are to offer a meaningful, relevant and genuine model of 'child-centred' education.

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A series of research monographs exploring key issues in current literature and summarising the latest developments in the fields of creativity and learning.

This literature review analyses the literatures exploring the relationships between childhood cultures and creativity of young children.