

# Childhood, Futurity, and Settler Time

Bridget Stirling

Volume 47, Number 3, June 2022

Ecological Challenges with/in Contemporary Childhoods Special Issue

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1090105ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18357/jcs202219927>

[See table of contents](#)

## Publisher(s)

Canadian Association for Young Children

## ISSN

2371-4107 (print)

2371-4115 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

## Cite this article

Stirling, B. (2022). Childhood, Futurity, and Settler Time. *Journal of Childhood Studies*, 47(3), 34–46. <https://doi.org/10.18357/jcs202219927>

## Article abstract

Settler childhood's futurity is grounded in settler time: the colonial temporal structures of settlers that view time as strictly delineated, in opposition to Indigenous temporal heterogeneity—the coexistence of a multiplicity of temporalities. Mark Rifkin describes this temporal heterogeneity as having the power to unsettle settler frames of reference. In response to Adam Gaudry's call for settlers to engage in insurgent research by engaging with Indigenous research and worldviews while focusing on settler problems, turning to the tension of settler time with Indigenous temporal sovereignty alongside Barbara Adam's conception of temporal care relations offers a way to unsettle settler childhoods. Bringing together two ways of rethinking temporality through Dwayne Donald's conception of ethical relationality enables a critique of colonialism without seeking to take up Indigenous childhoods to fill the broken spaces in settlers' own. This effort reflects Alexis Shotwell's warning to attendees of the Common Worlds colloquium Responding to Ecological Challenges with/in Contemporary Childhoods: An Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Climate Pedagogies to be attentive to epistemic extractivism and the problem of settlers seeking to resolve the damage of colonialism through seeking to behave as if they are Indigenous. Instead, I propose a way forward in which children are reentangled in both common worlds and common fates.

Copyright © Bridget Stirling, 2022



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

## Childhood, Futurity, and Settler Time

Bridget Stirling

Bridget Stirling is a PhD student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta. She is interested in questions of temporality and the political instrumentalization of childhood. This article draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. Email: bstirlin@ualberta.ca

*Settler childhood's futurity is grounded in settler time: the colonial temporal structures of settlers that view time as strictly delineated, in opposition to Indigenous temporal heterogeneity—the coexistence of a multiplicity of temporalities. Mark Rifkin describes this temporal heterogeneity as having the power to unsettle settler frames of reference. In response to Adam Gaudry's call for settlers to engage in insurgent research by engaging with Indigenous research and worldviews while focusing on settler problems, turning to the tension of settler time with Indigenous temporal sovereignty alongside Barbara Adam's conception of temporal care relations offers a way to unsettle settler childhoods. Bringing together two ways of rethinking temporality through Dwayne Donald's conception of ethical relationality enables a critique of colonialism without seeking to take up Indigenous childhoods to fill the broken spaces in settlers' own. This effort reflects Alexis Shotwell's warning to attendees of the Common Worlds colloquium Responding to Ecological Challenges with/in Contemporary Childhoods: An Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Climate Pedagogies to be attentive to epistemic extractivism and the problem of settlers seeking to resolve the damage of colonialism through seeking to behave as if they are Indigenous. Instead, I propose a way forward in which children are reentangled in both common worlds and common fates.*

**Key words:** childhood; futurity; decolonization; temporality; settler colonialism; relationality

Within settler environmental discourses, childhood serves as a major signifier, while children themselves are frequently peripheral to environmental social movements, even when they serve as figureheads within those movements. Instead, the child stands in for the future as a symbolic replacement for future generations. Children become the repository for the hopes and fears of adults. Environmental discourses reinforce the not-yet-human status of children and childhood within Euro-Western frameworks, reifying children's futurity while rendering children as others, not yet persons who are also disconnected from nonhuman others. Within this structure, to grow up is to become a person—that is, to move across the settler colonial division of the nonhuman to the fully human world occupied by adults.

In the 1980s, environmental justice emerged as a concept within the broader environmental movement as a means to address the disproportionate impacts of environmental harms on Indigenous people, racialized communities, and people living in poverty. Distributive justice—that is, the principle that harms and benefits should be equitably shared (Sze & London, 2008)—is an essential principle in environmental justice movements. Establishing a model of environmental justice that is temporal as well as spatial, social, and political calls for a forward-thinking interpretation of distributive justice that includes the interest of future citizens. To be truly

democratic, environmental justice must consider temporality as more than simply the futurity of environmental decision making (Stirling, 2020). To establish environmental justice, we must also consider Barbara Adam's call for care relations that extend across time (Adam & Groves, 2007). Environmental education in the face of the climate crisis must be relational with children in their present and future lives as well as with generations past and future

in a network of more-than-human<sup>1</sup> relations (Shotwell, 2016; Stirling, 2020). However, within settler colonial frameworks, children's relationships become displaced into their future selves; children become objects on which time and social forces act to produce future persons.

Settler environmental education is often oriented toward the development of environmental knowledge and concern in adulthood, grounding children's relationship with the environment in their futurity as humans-in-the-making rather than as present persons. The futurity of settler childhood enables us to displace children's interest in environmental protection and adults' hopes for resolutions to environmental risks into the lives of future adults. Childhood as the site of adults' utopian imaginings distances us from responsibility toward children's present, allowing us to view children as future persons rather than equal relations in environmental decision making and knowledge. By recentring children in temporalized environmental justice, we make room for children in an other-responsive interdependency in which distributive justice includes temporal justice, not merely in imagining forward but also in considering how a settler colonial structure of childhood affects the temporal and environmental experiences of present children.

Settler childhood's futurity is grounded in what Mark Rifkin (2017) names settler time: the colonial temporal structures of settlers that view time as strictly delineated, in opposition to Indigenous temporal heterogeneity and temporal multiplicity—the coexistence of a multiplicity of temporalities or ways of “being-in-time that are not reducible to being in a singular, given time” (Rifkin, 2017, p. 3). While there is no one universal Indigenous understanding of time and temporality, Indigenous temporalities are grounded in relations with land, human and nonhuman animals, ancestors and descendants, and other beings past and present, frequently in tension with linear settler temporalities (Buhre & Bjork, 2021; Kidman et al., 2021; Voinot-Baron, 2020). Rifkin describes this temporal heterogeneity as having the power to unsettle settler frames of reference.

In response to Adam Gaudry's (2015) call for settlers to engage in insurgent research by engaging with Indigenous research and worldviews while focusing on settler problems, turning to the tension of settler time with Indigenous temporal sovereignty alongside Adam's conception of temporal care relations offers a way to unsettle settler childhoods. Bringing together two ways of rethinking temporality enables a critique of colonialism without seeking to take up Indigenous childhoods to fill the broken spaces in settlers' own. This effort reflects Alexis Shotwell's (2020) warning to colloquium attendees to be attentive to epistemic extractivism and the problem of settlers seeking to resolve the damage of colonialism through behaving as if they are Indigenous. Instead, I propose a way forward in which children are reentangled in both common worlds and common fates.

## Settler critique

I begin with the problem of epistemic extractivism and the double tangle of settlers seeking to resolve settler colonialism through a turn to Indigenous knowledge. As a settler living and working in amiskwaciwâskahikan—the place more commonly known as Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, part of Treaty 6 territory—I have grappled with how to address my work in the context of settler colonialism and the knowledge that Euro-Western, neoliberal ways of thinking about childhood are not the only ways to think about childhood. Frequently, I am faced with the suggestion, well intended, that I address the problems I uncover in my work by turning to Indigenous ways of thinking about childhood and shaping adults' relations with children. This suggestion has, certainly, made me deeply uncomfortable, but I knew that I would have to recognize that my work has holes in it shaped like other childhoods than those of white, settler children. As Erica Burman (2008) describes, dominant imaginaries of childhood tend toward an abstract, singular, and—in discourses about Canadian childhood—white settler child. This child often sits at the centre of work on the politics of childhood (Stirling, 2020). I have felt a tension

between the desire to decolonize and unsettle and the danger of appropriation and recolonization through taking Indigenous childhoods as our own. This tension has led me to a kind of avoidance of talking about the problem of settler childhood, conscious of the risk of colonial knowledge production as a means of extraction (Smith, 2012). I am additionally conscious of the difficulties raised by Sara Ahmed (2004) regarding the nonperformativity of antiracism in whiteness studies, and of how similar problems emerge when settler scholars take up anticolonialism as a move to settler innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012). This has left me feeling frequently caught in a conflict between colonial extractivism and colonial unknowing—the double tangle.

I turn, then, to Gaudry's (2015) call to insurgent research and, in particular, for settler scholars to reflect on Indigenous worldviews and recognize colonial processes while turning their research lens on settler colonialism through settler problems. Following on the Common Worlds colloquium's focus on staying with the difficulty, in this writing, I stay in the difficulty of settler relations with childhood without trying to patch the gaps over with stolen knowledge—I do not think it is right to take up Indigenous childhoods to fill the broken spaces in settlers' own. Those teachings and those childhoods are not mine, and it is for Indigenous people to choose to share—or not—their knowledges of childhood. However, it is for me to take up the critique of settler colonial childhood, following on Ahmed's (2004) call to a double turn in which white subjects stay implicated in what they critique. As Shotwell (2020) concluded in her keynote talk to the colloquium,

we can shape aspirational solidarities from our various positions, orienting together in such a way that we build a world that currently exists only unevenly and in patches, where to live in such a world would permanently undo some of the ontologies and selves that currently trap us.

Staying in the difficulty requires a careful walk between the risk of epistemic violence through colonial representations of Indigenous ontologies (Hunt, 2014, p. 29) and the dislocation of specific Indigenous place-thought (Watts, 2013, p. 33) and the danger of perpetuating the practice of “discovering” ontologies based in Indigenous thought by drawing on European intellectual heritages (Todd, 2016, p. 8)—a form of colonial violence that reifies the white supremacy of the academy (Todd, 2016, p. 18). As Zoe Todd notes, this is a particular failing within posthumanist discourses of relationality and the more-than-human in which I am engaged; however, she also proposes taking up Dwayne Donald's concept of ethical relationality as a way to negotiate our sameness and difference through a reciprocity of thinking (Todd, 2016, p. 19). Donald (2016) describes ethical relationality as an ecological understanding that

does not deny difference nor does it promote assimilation of it. Rather, ethical relationality supports the conceptualization of difference in ecological terms as necessary for life and living to continue. It guides us to seek deeper understandings of how our different histories, memories, and experiences position us in relationship to one another.... It is an ethical imperative to remember that we as human beings live in the world together and also alongside our more-than-human relatives; we are called to constantly think and act with reference to those relationships. (p. 11)

Ethical relationality, then, offers a way to think in relationship with Indigenous ontologies without presuming to take them up as one's own. It is fitting, given the need to engage with Indigenous place-thought with specificity, that Todd (Métis/otipemisiw) and Donald (Papaschase) are Indigenous people from amiskwaciwâskahikan. Reflective of the reciprocity intended in treaty relations, I shape my work through their guidance as I work to think along with Indigenous ontologies without recolonizing. At the same time I recognize the trouble of incommensurability at the heart of the decolonial project (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

## Childhood as structure

From here, I turn to what I mean by settler childhood within the context of this critique. I choose here to work from a structural rather than a developmental definition of childhood. As Burman (2008) highlights, developmental psychology and economic development discourses are deeply entangled with one another and in neoliberal and colonial discourses. Developmental psychology, then, presents one prospective avenue through which to critique settler colonial childhoods through the use of an ecological approach (Tatlow-Golden & Montgomery, 2021) that recognizes the context of settler colonialism and how it shapes settler children as well as Indigenous children. However, I choose to frame my analysis within a structural understanding of childhood as a way into thinking about the social structure of settler colonialism as it emerges through settler temporality and settler childhood. Jens Qvortrup (2009) notes that “childhood as a structural form is defined in terms of economic, social, political, technological, cultural, and other parameters at the social level” (p. 645). Understanding childhood as a structure rather than a developmental life stage allows us to view childhood as socially produced, with childhood as the other against which adulthood can be understood (Burman & Stacey, 2010; Castañeda, 2001). A structural approach allows for the disambiguation of the biological and psychological development of individual children from the figuration of the child as a category of person onto which social meaning can be inscribed. While developmental psychology is also culturally mediated, a structural approach enables an analysis of children as a class and childhood as a symbolic space.

As Laura Rosenbury (2015) notes, “childhood is not simply a social construction; it is the construction that makes the category of adult possible” (p. 10). This figuration of the child as adulthood’s other is rooted in colonialism (Castañeda, 2002), much as other forms of hierarchy have been superimposed through processes of colonialism and capitalism.

## Settler futurity

Settler childhood as grounded in the linear fixedness of settler temporality can be understood through the lens of displacement. In the case of childhood, this becomes a temporal displacement, shifting children’s well-being from the present to the future by viewing their interests only “in the light of their becoming” (Qvortrup, 2009, p. 639). Children’s interests are shifted into their adult futures rather than viewed in their childhood present. Within the linear structure of settler time, this places children into the category of not-yet-human, closer to the category of nonhuman other, within the settler colonial division of the human and nonhuman worlds. It is only by growing up that children cross the divide to the fully human world of adulthood.

Through this displacement, childhood becomes a signifier of futurity, with children seen as a form of human becoming rather than human being. As Qvortrup (2009) describes, children are not-yet-adults who are imagined always as the *next* generation, not the present one. This becomes particularly problematic when childhood is framed as a site of investment, depriving children of their subjectivity. By shifting the interests of children from the present to the future, children’s present interests become unintelligible through discourses that view childhood as a site of investment in the future, rather than understanding children as present persons deserving of present care and concern (Stirling, 2020).

Peter Krafl (2009) suggests that children are often figured in relation to futurity as the future of an imagined and frequently simplified utopian society. He refers to

the broader assumption that children somehow represent “the future,” and that therefore our hopeful intentions for them should be geared in terms of a vague, medium-to-long-term, large-scale temporality and spatiality. Generationally, then, children represent a rather widespread hope that the next stage of

social development might—usually in some unspecified way—be better than the last. (p. 76)

This figuration leads to two questions: whose next stage of development do we hope for, and what do we mean by better? Hope is central to adult narratives about childhood, something that can be given to children by the (adult) world, and vice versa, often without explanation or justification (Kraftl, 2009). Additionally, children are the site of anxiety about the future of society, with the failure to produce the idealized future entangled with the failure to produce the idealized adult. This hoped-for future for children within neoliberalism imagines their adult futures as individualized producers and consumers, with education systems and parenting models directed primarily toward producing this idealized future citizen by developing the child's imagined "full potential." Adults' hoped-for futures are inscribed overtop of children's present interests, rendering children's interests unintelligible.

Children's futurity is intimately tied to neoliberal modernity; however, in late modernity this has become a kind of nostalgic futurity that connects childhood with a hoped-for future that returns to a more innocent time. Chris Jenks (2005) writes: "As children, and by way of children, we have, through modernity, dreamt of futures, and in doing so we have both justified and sought justification for modernity's expansionist urges in the post-Darwinian conflation of growth and progress" (p. 106). Adults understand and relate to children as a form of nostalgic vision of the child as a metanarrative of society itself; children become the guardians of our future, as well as those whose futures require guarding (Jenks, 2005).

This forward-looking nostalgia for childhood is connected to settler conceptions of childhood as entangled with unspoiled nature. As Affrica Taylor (2011) notes, "loss, danger, purity, contamination, protection and recovery are all recurring tropes that are reiterated within and across the parallel discourses of wilderness and childhood innocence" (p. 429), creating a form of mutually supporting essentialist assumptions about both nature and childhood that shape both as others in opposition with the fully human adult.

The tendency to examine children's relationship with the environment through adult memories should be viewed critically, because "adult perceptions of childhood relationships with natural environments may, in part, be saturated with socially constructed concepts of children and nature that have evolved over centuries." (Gurevitz, 2000). This tendency reflects Jenks's (2005) claim that, in late modernity, adult hopes for children's futures are caught up in nostalgia as well as futurity. Essentialist and generalizing assumptions about children as more intimately connected to the natural world than adults echo discourses that place women as uniquely connected to nature within masculinist discourses that place (adult) men as rational rulers over the natural world (Stephens, 1994; Taylor, 2019). Children's experiences of the environment cannot be generalized; seeing children as generic beings in generic environments loses the specificity of children's lives in social and local contexts (Stephens, 1994). This consideration of social context must also include the specific time in which children live, rather than a generalized, speculated future. The sheltering effect of futurity acts to benefit childhood but not the complex and intersectional lives of everyday children, particularly those who are "unbecoming" (Nolte-Odhiambo, 2016) within the normative structures of the settler colonial nation state, in which racialized, queer, and otherwise other children are denied futurity's shelter (Muñoz, 2019, p. 95). Within settler colonialism, only some children are figured as those who will cross the line into fully human adulthood—that is, an adulthood shaped by whiteness and settler norms. Carmen Nolte-Odhiambo (2016) explains:

Whereas the Child as a figure of futurity is sheltered from the present-day violence of class, race, gender, sexuality, capitalism, and neoliberalism, real children and their presents as well as futures do not enjoy this shelter, even as a symbolic war is waged presumably on their behalf and to protect their innocence. (p. 148)

Through our severing of children's relationships from their specific and present worlds, we also remove their

temporal subjectivities, turning children into objects on whom time and social forces act to produce adult subjects in the neoliberal state.

## Temporal objects

Adam's (1996) principle of temporal democracy describes citizenship as grounded in our relationships over time, as well as with our social and natural worlds. She later expanded this notion beyond the voter/nonvoter language of her initial work on temporal democracy to describe social relations of care as interconnected, not only across ecological and social systems but also across an individual's temporal reach (that is, both during and beyond the lifespan), and therefore relating to those who share *common fates* (Adam & Groves, 2007). This principle of common fates is similar to the principle of common worlds, in which we are entangled with our more-than-human kin (Taylor, 2019; Tsing, 2015). Common worlds, as described by Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2019), are an active process of "worlding" in which the collective relations of human and nonhuman beings, entities, and forces shape and reshape one another in a permanently evolving relationality (p. 2).

I here build on Adam's common fates and Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw's common worlds to consider what it means to structure relations of care temporally through the idea of temporal relationality—that is, that our relations with one another are conducted not only in time but also across time, with past, present, and future selves and others entangled across temporal as well as social and spatial landscapes.

Temporal relationality runs counter to settler colonial constructions of futurity. Andrew Baldwin (2012) notes that whitenesses are made and maintained in relation to futures; Eve Tuck and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) further highlight that settler colonialism is configured in relation to the future, in particular through the project of replacement—that is, settler futurity is predicated on the "continued and complete eradication of the inhabitants of contested land" (p. 80), a process enacted through both physical and epistemological replacement. Both of these constructions of futurity depend on settlers' linear understanding of time in which future proceeds from past in a narrative of progress that lays claim to the future as structured by whiteness. Through this future-oriented narrative, temporal relationships can only be understood as forces working forward through linear time, not as reciprocal across temporal landscapes.

This narrative, then, shapes the disjuncture created through the temporal displacement of childhood. As children's interests are displaced into their future selves, so too are their temporal relationships shifted from the present child to the future adult. Relationships with children become relationships with the imagined future person, with children becoming temporal objects rather than subjects.

Within settler temporalities, children therefore are child-objects who become adult-subjects through the action of time. The function of child development and educational processes becomes that of transforming the child-object into the neoliberal subject to whom is ascribed full personhood. This shifting also represents the shifting of the child away from connection with nonhuman relations into a techno-rational adult human subject distinct from the natural world. The transition to adulthood can be understood, then, as one of moving from nonhuman to human, object to subject.

This shifting not only displaces adults' relationship with children into the child's future adult self; it also displaces settler children's own temporal relationalities into their future selves. The structures of neoliberal education are oriented toward the production of the adult subject, influencing not only adults' view of children but children's understanding of themselves and their worlds through an adultcentric lens. Growing up becomes a process not only of moving toward adulthood and therefore subjectivity but also moving away from relationship to the child-

self and the more-than-human world. To become adult and therefore human is to sever relations with nonhuman worlds and view oneself as no longer entangled in common fates.

### Temporal subjects, temporal heterogeneity

To return children to their own temporal subjectivity and restore their temporal relationships, I turn back again to Adam (1996), who asserts, “Once we recognize our world as inextricably interconnected, and once we understand nature as an extension of self and cultural activity, such time-politics becomes rational” (p. 335). This idea relates to feminist and childist discourses on care and relationality and children, which attempt to reinterpret childhood, not as adulthood’s other, but rather as a particular type of social position within a network of interdependence and relationship. Considering childhood within a network of human relations and responsibility “replaces the implicitly adult-centred ethics of rational individuality in modernity with a child-inclusive ethics of other-responsive interdependency” (Wall, 2008, p. 539).

It becomes tempting, then, to take up Indigenous principles of relationality to repair this disjuncture in settler childhoods—to indigenize our children as a way to restore them to a common world and common fate with the more-than-human. In the Indigenous ontology—the place-thought—of the land on which I live, the concept of *wahkohtowin* is often attractive to settlers seeking a pathway out of colonialism by way of Indigenous knowledge. *Wahkohtowin* translates to English simply as kinship or relatedness to each other; however, Matthew Wildcat (2018) describes the wider meaning of *wahkohtowin* for *nehiyawak* (Cree people):

First, it references the act of being related—to your human and other than human relatives. Second, it is a worldview based on the idea that all of existence is animate and full of spirit. Since everything has spirit it means we are connected to the rest of existence and live in a universe defined by relatedness. Third, there are proper ways to conduct and uphold your relationships with your relatives and other aspects of existence. Thus, *wahkohtowin* also includes the obligations and responsibilities people have to maintain good relationships. (p. 14)

To settler ears, this can feel like a solution to the problem of settler childhood and finding our way back into those common worlds in which we can live in relation with more-than-humans. But it is here that settlers risk repeating engrained practices of extraction and erasure (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013) to restore the broken relationships of childhood and take up Indigenous ontologies as a move to settler innocence.

Instead, I turn back to Anna Tsing’s (2015) suggestion of a third nature—that which survives despite capitalism—and along with that, I believe we can consider that which survives the structure of settler colonialism, which is inextricably entangled with capitalism. To consider this third nature, we have to ask not only about Indigenous survival but also about the survival of that within non-Indigenous lives that is resistant to settler colonialism and might offer something to follow the foreclosure of settler epistemologies: What can we turn to that is resistant to the damage and allows us to think of a third “something else”? It is here that we might head off into left field with the minor players (Taylor, 2019).

Taylor’s (2019) stories of children’s encounters with settler-introduced rabbits offers a way to think about a third way of encountering settler colonial childhoods, one in which children’s relationships with their worlds offers a space before settler binaries take hold. Much as their relationships to nonhuman kin do not yet play by the rules of settler colonial adult worlds, children’s relationships to and across time are not yet fixed: Their imagination of different futures and different pasts opens space to think about multiple temporalities and relationships across time. I think here of a child who asks her pregnant mother if it is possible for the baby to be an older sibling, a child’s curiosity about future and past selves and others, and the way in which children can easily imagine many



possible futures. While settler languages in themselves structure time in particular, linear ways, children are not yet tied to those structures. The left field of childhood's temporalities offers a space of reconciliation<sup>2</sup> for settler time.

Rifkin (2017) describes this reconciliation as “the presence of discrepant temporalities that can be understood as affecting each other, as all open to change, and yet not as equivalent or mergeable into a neutral, common frame” (p. 3). This flexibility suggests that a decolonial approach by settlers, rather than taking up Indigenous temporalities, might understand that settler time is harmful both in its imposition upon Indigenous temporalities and in the harms inherent to settlers themselves, through the neoliberal regulation of time, and, specific to childhood, the ways in which this regime severs children's temporal relationalities. In this way, understanding the critique of settler time in opposition to Indigenous temporalities also opens space to question settler time in opposition to the temporalities of childhood. That is, through recognizing other ways of knowing time, we can interrogate the structures of time that also render children as others.

Rifkin (2017) calls for a recognition of temporal multiplicities—the prospect that varied ways of living time can be copresent, with the implication that the coexistence of multiple temporal formations provides a means of resisting the presumptively modern present. Within this principle, then, is the possibility of opening a third way of living in a temporally heterogenous world in which relationality does not require sameness.

Taylor (2011) suggests a direction toward that heterogeneity:

For if we can resist the nostalgic longing to recapture that Peter Pan in Neverland childhood, if we can refuse its seductive promise to absent all imperfections and impurities, we might be better able to focus on the rich tapestries of children's real lives as an abundance of heterogenous presences: human and more-than-human. Ironically, it would seem that such a move to re-presence might at the same time reintegrate that “lost child” back into the imperfect, real and messy world of fascinating “socioatures” that we all embody and coinhabit. (p. 431)

Taylor, then, offers us a way to move past the imagined connection of childhood and unspoiled nature into the reality of children's present lives and a relationality that includes children, adults, and the natural world across temporal as well as spatial landscapes.

## Temporality and care

This recognition of heterogeneity moves us back into the space of relationality and how to find an ethical foundation through which to live in ethical relationality with Indigenous ontologies. Donald's concept of ethical relationality is grounded in two concepts from nehiyawak (Cree) teachings: *wahkohtowin*, as described above, and *wicihitowin*, the “life-giving energy that is generated when people face each other as relatives and build trusting relationships by connecting with each other in respectful ways” (Donald, 2016, p. 10). Within ethical relationality, rather than seeking to erase or assimilate difference, difference can be understood as necessary for life and living to continue when we are in relation to one another (Donald, 2016, p. 11). Through this relational space, we can position our ways of knowing as part of futures that are entangled with each other and with more-than-human relatives. Rather than seeking to take up Indigenous ontologies, I turn now to feminist ethics of care and relationality, which offer one possible way to begin thinking about how to structure our relationships with one another through relations of care rather than through settler colonial logics of capitalism and neoliberal individualism. Much as we cannot patch over the problems of settler time by taking up Indigenous temporalities, we cannot patch over settler individuality by simply taking up Indigenous kinship relations. Instead, we must find a path to ethical relationality. However, again, there is room for a third way of recognition in which settlers take up the critique of capitalist social

relations and seek ways of building new relationalities that, in their copresence, can offer a shared resistance to a politics that structures social relations through the logic of markets.

Feminist theories of care offer one possible avenue to think through temporal relationality while also thinking in new ways about a “something else” after settler societies. Political theorists of care have noted that under the neoliberal order, care and relationality are privatized and not of concern to the state (Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Tronto, 2013); these structures are inherent to settler colonial states. Relationality, therefore, is not a requisite aspect of citizenship in the neoliberal society, which is structured through frameworks of rights, law, property, and markets. A feminist politics of care instead calls for democratic citizenships that are structured through relationality.

Joan Tronto (2013) describes the idea of *caring with* in opposition to *caring for*: caring must not only involve caretaking but must also be grounded in principles of justice, equality, and freedom. While Virginia Held (2006) moves care for children to the centre of the responsibilities of a caring society, Tronto moves children into the space of who can be conceived as an equal citizen with equal rights by thinking of equality as grounded in the idea of citizens as care receivers who all, in varying ways and at varying times, rely on one another. If all persons are in need of care, they all become equally needy. Equal neediness does not mean that all people have the same needs, but rather that we should understand citizenship as bound up in interdependent relationships of need that form a society. A child’s need for specific forms of care, then, is not a determining factor in whether they are a full member of society but rather that which makes them equal to all members of that society.

Still, it is necessary to interrogate what the word citizenship means. If citizen in this context is defined by the settler colonial construction of citizens as legal members of a state entitled to particular rights, privileges, and duties, then it must be rejected as useful to a decolonial critique. However, if the broader definition of a citizen is a member of a society with obligations to other members of that society, then there is space to take up the politics of care to build a something else that resists settler colonialism and settler temporality.

However, to move toward a third nature that offers a means of resistance to settler temporalities, feminist care ethics must also move beyond a politics that is only centered on human relations with one another. Marti Kheel (2008) offers an expansion of feminist ethics of care into relationships with other-than-human animals. Rather than thinking about caring for the environment, Kheel’s work resists the critique that a feminist ethics of care must be inherently limited to one’s own circle of acquaintance while also proposing an environmental ethic that is grounded in care and empathy for individual beings across the whole of the environment, rather than viewing some beings as more morally considerable than others. Care, then, becomes a relationship with more-than-human kin, moving beyond the social into common worlds and common fates.

Children’s own caring practices toward the environment can be used to understand an environmental politics of childhood through reading children’s values and concerns for their environment through their caring practices—that is, the ways that children maintain, continue, and repair their own worlds (Bartos, 2012). The political and environmental concerns of children can be understood, not only through what they say in adult spaces of political discourse, but also in children’s lived relationships to the world around them (Taylor, 2019).

Thinking through childhood using the ethics of care thus offers a way into thinking about children in their present beings and present relationalities, resisting the transition of child-object to adult-subject by restoring children to their temporal subjectivity. This does not mean an end to children’s temporal relationship to their future selves and future worlds but rather returns children to the full web of deep connection to present, past, and future common worlds. If we think of children as citizens within societies of care while also opening the space of caring-with to our more-than-human relations, children are restored to entanglement within common fates.

## Conclusion

I am mindful here of the dangers inherent in third spaces. While they offer an avenue to a future beyond settler colonialism, third ways can also be appropriated by settler colonialism and capitalism (Mitchell, 1997) to further their own survival in a performance of decolonization that in reality stays in the realm of harm reduction (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 21), allowing settler colonialism to continue with a gentler face. The shaping of this third way is not decolonization but rather a way into disassembling the structures of settler futurity and confronting the problems of settler childhood through ethical relations that do not steal from others to heal settler wounds. I am aware of the shortcomings of articulating a critique of settler colonialism: It does not give back land or disassemble the structures of settler sovereignty. Living in relationship does not resolve incommensurability. A decolonial critique does not, in itself, decolonize.

Thinking through the temporality of settler childhoods through a decolonial critique of settler time enables us to imagine a third nature in which our common worlds include our common fates. Rifkin's call to temporal multiplicities opens a space in which to imagine temporal relationalities that offer a way to begin to dismantle settler time and settler childhood without replicating the harms of colonization through epistemic extractivism. I do not pretend to be an expert in pedagogical practice as a sociologist of education; however, Donald's (2012) ethical relationality, which seeks to tear down "fort pedagogy" of incorporation and exclusion, is both ethical orientation and pedagogical imperative (p. 45) and offers a path for teachers and teacher educators to further the work of moving past settler temporality into a something else in the unfixed space of childhood (Taylor, 2019).

Settlers cannot heal the gaps in settler childhoods through the appropriation of Indigenous epistemologies. Instead, we must seek to live with and beyond the damage through a third way of establishing relationships of care that allow for the copresence of all our multiplicities in more-than-human worlds. By staying with the critique of settler time, we can begin to dismantle settler constructions of childhood and move out into that left field of childhood where we may find our common fates.

- 
- 1 The more-than-human world can be understood as a complex web of interdependencies between all those that share Earth, including human societies and all other beings.
  - 2 The use of reconciliation in this article is not intended to be synonymous with reconciliation as part of the process of truth and reconciliation in the Canadian context but rather in the more conventional sense of harmonizing or making compatible.

## References

- Adam, B. (1996). Beyond the present: Nature, technology, and the democratic ideal. *Time and Society*, 5(3), 319–338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X96005003003>
- Adam, B., & Groves, C. (2007). *Future matters: Action, knowledge, ethics*. Brill.
- Ahmed, S. (2004). Declarations of whiteness: The non-performativity of antiracism. *Borderlands*, 3(2).
- Baldwin, A. (2012). Whiteness and futurity: Towards a research agenda. *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(2), 172–187. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132511414603>
- Bartos, A. E. (2012). Children caring for their worlds: The politics of care and childhood. *Political Geography*, 31, 157–166. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2011.12.003>
- Buhre, F., & Bjork, C. (2021). Braiding time: Sami temporalities for Indigenous justice. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 51(3), 227–236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02773945.2021.1918515>
- Burman, E. (2008). *Developments: Child, image, nation*. Routledge.
- Burman, E., & Stacey, J. (2010). The child and childhood in feminist theory. *Feminist Theory*, 11(3), 227–240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700110376288>
- Castañeda, C. (2001). The child as feminist figuration: Toward a politics of privilege. *Feminist Theory*, 2(1), 29–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14647000122229361>
- Castañeda, C. (2002). *Figurations: Child, bodies, world*. Duke University Press.
- Donald, D. (2012). Forts, curriculum, and ethical relationality. In N. Ng-A-Fook & J. Rottmann (Eds.), *Reconsidering Canadian curriculum studies* (pp. 39–46). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Donald, D. (2016). From what does ethical relationality flow? An “Indian” act in three artifacts. *Counterpoints*, 478, 10–16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45157205>
- Gaudry, A. (2015). Researching the resurgence: Insurgent research and community-engaged methodologies in twenty-first century academic inquiry. In S. Strega & L. Brown (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; pp. 243–265). Canadian Scholars Press.
- Gurevitz, R. (2000). Affective approaches to environmental education: Going beyond the imagined worlds of childhood? *Ethics, Place, and Environment*, 3(3), 253–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713665905>
- Held, V. (2006). *The ethics of care: Personal, political, and global*. Oxford University Press.
- Hunt, S. (2014). Ontologies of Indigeneity: The politics of embodying a concept. *Cultural Geographies*, 21(1), 27–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474013500226>
- Jenks, C. C. (2015). *Childhood*. Routledge.
- Kheel, M. (2008). *Nature ethics: An ecofeminist perspective*. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Kidman, J., MacDonald, L., Funaki, H., Ormond, A., Southon, P., & Tomlins-Jahnkne, H. (2021). “Native time” in the white city: Indigenous youth temporalities in settler-colonial space. *Children’s Geographies*, 19(1), 24–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2020.1722312>
- Krafl, P. (2009). Utopia, childhood, and intention. *Journal for Cultural Research*, 13(1), 69–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14797580802674860>
- Mitchell, K. (1997). Different diasporas and the hype of hybridity. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 15(5), 533–553. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d150533>
- Muñoz, J. E. (2019). *Cruising utopia: The there and then of queer futurity* (10<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed.). NYU Press. (Original work published 2009)

- Nolte-Odhiambo, C. (2016). Disidentifying with futurity: The unbecoming child and its discontents. In M. Bohlmann (Ed.), *An inquiry into childhood belongings* (pp. 143–158). Lexington Books.
- Qvortrup, J. (2009). Are children human beings or human becomings? A critical assessment of outcome thinking. *Rivista Internazionale Di Scienze Sociali*, 117(3/4), 631–653. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41625246>
- Rifkin, M. (2017). *Beyond settler time: Temporal sovereignty and Indigenous self-determination*. Duke University Press.
- Rosenbury, L. A. (2015) A feminist perspective on children and law: From objectification to relational subjectivities. In T. Gal & B. Duramy (Eds.), *International perspectives and empirical findings on child participation: From social exclusion to child-inclusive policies*. Oxford University Press.
- Sevenhuijsen, S. (1998). *Citizenship and ethics of care*. Routledge.
- Shotwell, A. (2016). *Against purity: Living ethically in compromised times*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Shotwell, A. (2020). *Education without extractivism: Settler practices for respecting Indigenous sovereignties in entangled worlds*. Keynote talk presented at Responding to Ecological Challenges with/in Contemporary Childhoods: An Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Climate Pedagogies, London, ON, January 31.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies* (2nd ed.). Zed Books.
- Stephens, S. (1994). Children and environment: Local worlds and global connections. *Childhood*, 2, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/090756829400200101>
- Stirling, B. (2020). Childhood, ecological feminism, and the environmental justice frame. *Études Canadiennes/Canadian Studies*, 88, 221–238. <https://doi.org/10.4000/eccs.3632>
- Sze, J., & London, J. K. (2008). Environmental justice at the crossroads. *Sociology Compass*, 2(4), 1331–1354. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00131.x>
- Tatlow-Golden, M., & Montgomery, H. (2021). Childhood studies and child psychology: Disciplines in dialogue? *Children & Society*, 35(1), 3–17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12384>
- Taylor, A. (2011). Reconceptualizing the “nature” of childhood. *Childhood*, 18(4), 420–433. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568211404951>
- Taylor, A. (2019). Countering the conceits of the Anthropos: Scaling down and researching with minor players. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2019.1583822>
- Taylor, A., & Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2019). *The common worlds of children and animals: Relational ethics for entangled lives*. Routledge.
- Todd, Z. (2016). An Indigenous feminist’s take on the ontological turn: “Ontology” is just another word for colonialism. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 29(1), 4–22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12124>
- Tronto, J. (2013). *Caring democracy: Markets, equality, and justice*. NYU Press.
- Tsing, A. L. (2015). *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton University Press.
- Tuck, E., & Gaztambide-Fernández, R. A. (2013). Curriculum, replacement, and settler futurity. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 29(1), 72–89. <https://journal.jctonline.org/index.php/jct/article/viewFile/411/pdf>
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society*, 1(1), 1–40. <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630>
- Voinot-Baron, W. (2020). A bitter taste of fish: The temporality of salmon, settler colonialism, and the work of well-being in a Yupiaq fishing village. *Ecology & Society*, 25(2), 417–424. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-11408-250204>
- Wall, J. (2008). Human rights in light of childhood. *International Journal of Children’s Rights*, 16, 523–543. <https://johnwall.camden.rutgers.edu/files/2012/08/Wall-Human-Rights-in-Light-of-Childhood.pdf>

- Watts, V. (2013). Indigenous place-thought and agency amongst humans and non humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!). *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 2(1), Article 1. <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/19145>
- Wildcat, M. (2018). Wahkohtowin in action. *Constitutional Forum*, 27(1), 13–24. <https://www.ualberta.ca/wahkohtowin/media-library/data-lists-pdfs/wahkotowin-in-action.pdf>