Children as 'being and becomings': Children, childhood and temporality

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Instead, theorising children as ‘being and becomings’ not only addresses the temporality of childhood that children themselves voice, but presents a conceptually realistic construction suitable to both childhood researchers and practitioners. The reason why agency/structure and micro/macro debates remain unresolved is the bad essentialist habit of treating such pairs as opposite natural kinds. Once variation is allowed, agency and structure, or micro and macro, are temporary poles bracketing a continuum, with social entities moving along this continuum over time. Explaining these transformations from agency into structure, or micro into macro, and vice versa is the challenge for explanatory theory. Notions of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ are intrinsic to childhood research. Whilst the ‘being’ child is seen as a social actor actively constructing ‘childhood’, the ‘becoming’ child is seen as an ‘adult in the making’, lacking competencies of the ‘adult’ that he or she will ‘become’. However, I argue that both approaches are in themselves problematic. Instead, theorising children as ‘being and becomings’ not only addresses the temporality of childhood that children themselves voice, but presents a conceptually realistic construction suitable to both childhood researchers and practitioners. How do children (and adults) experience the notion of barriers? What is a barrier? What are children barred from? Can barriers be enabling? What barriers should be removed?  

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