

CALL FOR PAPERS

Childhood and Public Memory

Editor: J. Marshall Beier (McMaster University)

Proposals are invited for chapter-length contributions to an edited volume exploring the complexities of childhood's intersections with public memory as something both navigated and negotiated by child and adult alike. Emma Waterton (2019) points to the constitutive role of the subject in encounter with material cultures of remembrance, positioned to "grapple with both the anticipated meanings and narratives that places of war absorb and accumulate." Children are subjects in this sense of participation in knowledge practices, grappling with public memory within and beyond circuits of programmatic and curricular pedagogies. This includes curricula delivered in formalized (schools) or semi-structured (museum leisure programming, for example) settings as well as, more incidentally, across all manner of public spaces where material cultures and performative practices of remembrance are reposed in everyday life. Bringing all of this into relief are encounters with both spectacular and mundane forms of remembrance by dint of which key ontologies may be affirmed, habits of thought formed, and intelligibilities interpellated. Interrogating the 'everyday pedagogies' operant across all these encounters with the aid of nuanced critical theorizations of childhood promises new ways of understanding public stories of remembrance.

Recognizing that public memory is not something that just 'happens to' children opens other possibilities and insights into how we read intertextualities of remembrance. Acknowledging children as overlooked social actors, and therefore understanding places of public memory as also children's spaces, recommends reading places of encounter with war remembrance as one might read and assess curricula. Children, like all people, simultaneously act as subjects and recipient-objects of pedagogy in all its forms – not merely passive targets for the transfer of knowledge produced by other subjects but participants in knowledge practices as both bearers and producers of knowledge, variously perceiving, internalizing, reproducing, engaging, assessing, interpreting, assimilating, subverting, and resisting.

At the same time, childhood as a social imaginary (what we might term 'imagined childhood') has been approached conceptually as an indeterminate category of identity and difference operating as a 'social technology' to produce meaning in ways analogous to race or gender and thus giving rise to distinct (childhood-informed) ways of theorizing political life more generally. Bringing these insights to analysis of meaning-making in places of public memory (from leisure attractions to sites of casual encounter such as with monuments, memorials, cenotaphs, etc.) reveals how dominant ideas about childhood are both incorporated in and anticipate children in remembrance. Among other things, imagined childhood is an important meaning-making device in narrative, performance, and visual economies of public memory.

Contributions accepted for inclusion in this edited volume will address how childhood as an idea and/or children as political subjects figure in rituals and practices of public memory or bear on the ways we theorize it.

Following receipt of proposals, invitations to submit full chapter drafts for review will be made on the basis of building a coherent collection of high-quality contributions across varied points of intervention. Contributions are welcome from all disciplines and specialties, including Critical Childhood Studies, Memory Studies, Sociology, Political Science, Global Studies, Political Geography, Legal Studies, Social Work, Gender Studies, Critical Race Studies, Indigenous Studies, or any other fields from which relevant insights are developed.

Possible topics may include but are not limited to:

- Children as both a target audience of and meaningful contributors to remembrance
- Childhood as a rhetorical device in remembrance
- Representations of children and/or childhood in war commemoration
- Commemoration and/or remembrance in/as leisure activity
- Children and online remembrance
- Children/childhood and pedagogies of remembrance
- War remembrance in school curricula
- Children/childhood and curatorial practice
- Remembrance as recruitment practice
- Children's casual/mundane encounters with war remembrance
- Childhood and remembrance of atrocity
- Imagined childhood as a social technology of governance in remembrance
- Children/childhood, remembrance, and resistance
- Children as makers of public memory

Timetable:

Deadline for submission of chapter proposals: 30 April 2026

Notification of acceptances: 1 June 2026

Draft chapters due: 1 December 2026 (6500 to 7000 words, inclusive of notes and references)

Review and revisions: January-March 2027

Final drafts due: 1 June 2027

Chapter proposals:

To propose a chapter, please provide a title, 250-300 word abstract, a brief (200 word) biographical note, and full contact information to mbeier@mcmaster.ca no later than 30 April 2026 (proposals are welcome at any time prior to this deadline).