Teaching in New Times
Online Tutorial

Childhood and Youth

Dr Peter O’Brien & Elizabeth Briant
3: Childhood and Youth

Inquiry questions:
1. How can we understand childhood and youth sociologically?
2. How can teaching practice be informed by a sociological understanding of childhood and youth?

By the end of this week you will:
• Develop a sociological understanding of childhood and youth.
• Understand how schools contribute to the construction of versions of childhood and youth.
Tait – Chapter 6 Pre-Adulthood

Myth #1
'Childhood and youth' are facts of nature

Myth #3
‘Childhood’ is characterised by its innocence, and ‘youth’ by its natural resistance to authority
Conditions of possibility of childhood

The Printing Press

CHILDHOOD
Conditions of possibility of childhood

The Printing Press  Paediatrics
Fairy tales  Toys and the Toy Industry
Rousseau  Christianity  ‘The Wiggles’
Child Labour Laws  CHILDHOOD  A ‘Children’s Commission’
Child psychology  Child Labour Laws
‘Blue Card’  UN ‘Rights of the Child’
An ‘Age of Consent’  Mass, compulsory schooling
Tait – Chapter 6 Pre-Adulthood

Myth #1
'Childhood and youth' are facts of nature

Myth #2
The categories of childhood and youth are not governed
See Tait (2019, p. 119)

Myth #3
‘Childhood’ is characterised by its innocence, and ‘youth’ by its natural resistance to authority
Problematising categorisations: The ‘good’ student

“Schools could be freer places for young people, but much of what in constructed as ‘good’ in the good student is best thought of as a set of discourses that, perversely, limit the possibilities for students to be creative and experimental of their selves.”

(Thompson, 2010, p.413).

What behaviours and dispositions do ‘good’ students display (and do schools seek)?
What strategies do schools use to endorse the behaviours of ‘good’ students?

The ‘hegemonic good’

The ‘student who is good at doing what examinations require; who applies him or herself to the necessary study to succeed; and who does in fact succeed’ (McLeod & Yates, 2006, p.52).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Docile and disciplined</td>
<td>Well behaved, respect for authority figures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pastoral</td>
<td>Accepts the guidance and wisdom of the ‘shepherd’ (teacher) and conducts themselves as a member of the ‘flock.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bureaucratic</td>
<td>Organised, neat and avoids the spotlight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered</td>
<td>Performs according to dominant gender values.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflictual</td>
<td>Valorised because they challenge authorities, demonstrate risk-taking behaviours and appear ‘cool’ to their peers (but may receive negative attention from staff).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affiliated individual</td>
<td>Allegiance to their school; contribute to co-curricular life.</td>
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Thompson, 2010, p.428
So what?
Don’t we want students to be good?

While students experience schools in more dynamic ways, the vision they see deployed through their interactions with teachers, curriculum and assessment continually values narrow, limiting dispositions, behaviours and comportments. Students have opportunities to ‘act’, but their performances are also limited because they have been trained to see themselves in certain prescriptive ways. The challenge is to assist students in finding new performativities, to recast their subjectivities beyond that of the six rationales of the good student. This may be the best way to prepare people to respond to the imperatives of the twenty-first century, because it is highly doubtful that the maintaining of a disciplined citizenry will enable individuals to respond. (Thompson, 2010, p.427)
Assessment Task 1: Unpacking & Progress Reports

Due date: Friday 12 April 2019 (Week 7) 11:59pm
Concluding discussion

• A sociological understanding of childhood and youth.
• Understanding of how schools contribute to the construction of versions of childhood and youth.

Next week – policy identities via the Week 4 Plenary. No workshops.