

Free essay on learning to labor

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This paper will evaluate the 1977 study by Paul Willis, titled ‘ Learning to Labor’. It will begin by examining the role pegged with the influence the peer group causes among the Lads. The significant features of the study coupled with possible explanations why the ‘ Lads’ overruled schooling will also be dealt into. In conclusion, different roles of teachers, influences caused by parents among others will be shown in how they swayed the ideologies of their respective countries. The significance of the study will then be considered in terms of its implication for contemporary day education. During this piece, numerous articles will be christened to support the ideas offered.

In a West Midlands comprehensive school, fictionally called Hammertown Boys, in the mid-1970s, Paul Willis initiated an educational research, this research proved to be radical at the time. It is worth noting that Paul Willis work, even in current times, is still seen as a significant study into the educational knowledge of working class children. Moreover, the study exists described as one of the unsurpassed books on male working class youth and is still viewed as ‘ the expert in ethnographical studies.’ The underachievement of 12 non-academic, working class boys (‘ Lads’ as they are called in the text) was Willis’ point of focus in the study. He used numerous research methods to collect data for his ethnographic study. He pooled observations with deliberations, case study work pegged with discussions. These were used to collate an in-depth, evocative and often viciously honest understanding of the Lad’s incentives and opinions. It is worth noting that the Lads expressed to Willis their happiness to settle for a rudimentary career, employed in industry. They were content to get

average results, nothing remarkable, and then move on to expert manual work or inferior level white collar jobs, which were equally stable and sensibly paid. Furthermore, by setting themselves up for working class jobs, the Lads were duplicating capitalist, communal and economic organizations. Several sociological authors such as Bowles and Gintis (1976) trust the inadvertent purpose of education and schooling is to find your place in society. As a result, by rebuffing their schooling, the boys consider themselves to be in the working class bracket. Therefore, the education structures a technique of ‘working class reproduction’. This is intended for students who, on the exterior appear to be reconciled to their fate.

The vital emphasis of Willis’ work is the Lads tendency to oppose. Due to the Lads holding low aspirations in regards to their future, they molded an oppositional philosophy to their education, concentrating on ‘having a laff’ (Willis, 1977, p. 14). This was in relation to gaining qualifications they trust were irrelevant. This counter-school culture of confrontation and antagonism of academia and authority has a robust resemblance to the culture one may discover in the industrial workplaces. Ironically, this stood as the very same setting the Lads stood head for. One motive the Lads used for this anti-school culture was to gain status. This is seen when Willis suggests: ‘Opposition to the school is predominantly manifested in the fight to win figurative and physical space from the institution and its rules’ (1977, p. 26). This translates to the fact that the boys are rebelling against the school itself and the idea that the school ‘make you work.’

The Lads in the book all share a severe disliking of a certain portion of their pupil community. As a result, it forms one of their key motivations for

rebuffing their education. These children are referred to as ‘ ear’oles’.

Ear’oles, as described by Willis, are ‘ school conformists’ who seem to be the children who observe school rules, commit to their education and respect the teachers. It is worth noting that this is the exact opposite of the Lads.

Prominently, the Lads don’t just distaste the ‘ ear’oles’; they feel they have a superiority complex over them (ear’oles). By not being independent and limiting their fun in schools, the Lads consider the ‘ ear’oles’ to be wasting their time. This is proven by Spanksy, one of the Lads, when he suggests:

“ I mean what will they [the ear’oles] remember of their school life? What will they look back on? Sitting in a classroom, sweating their bollocks off, you know, while we’ve been I mean look at the things we [the Lads] can look back on” (‘ Spanksy’ in Willis, 1977, p14).

Furthermore, there is the difficulty of ‘ low aspirations’ coupled with poor examination results, particularly in boys, is regularly tinted within the media and academic publications. As a result, this suggests that some of the snags experienced by the Lads in their schooling pegged with the mentality they possessed which is still distressing modern male teenagers. This is notwithstanding a whole host of educational news and the outline of the national curriculum. Another illustration of the relevance of Willis’ study is proposed by Le Gallais in her article: There’s more to brickies and chippies than bricks and chisels. In this illustration, Le Gallais highlights how workers from similar backgrounds to the Hammertown Lads went on to turn into construction lecturers. The contributors felt they were directed towards industrial occupations by their teachers grounded on their background, and not their aptitude.

It can be contended that Willis' study is not mainly relevant today. This is because of a variety of changes in society. Since the 1970s when the study took place, a drastic change the labor market has taken place. This is a clear sign that Willis' work no longer relates to the teenagers of today. The institution of the minimum wage, for example, safeguards people from being exploited in a work environment. It is worth mentioning that these safeguards most defiantly occurred in the industrial culture that existed in the north and the Midlands in the past. Moreover, Willis' study has less implication today than it did when it was first put out because of the large number of young people moving into higher education. In contemporary times, the number of teenagers exiting school with no or very few credentials has rapidly plummeted when linked to the 1970s, as has the number of students who drop out of school at sixteen to find employment. Presently, 74 percent of students aged 16 remain in education or continue to accept training. With the governments planned move to increase the legitimate leaving age of schools to 18, additional young people will be capable of gaining better qualifications.

In the years between 1960s and 1970s, upper social groups stood six times more probable to enter higher education when compared to the lower groups. It is worth noting that this has now reformed. By 2000, this figure had condensed to under three times, display that more minor class people are moving into advanced education, decreasing the class divide in these establishments.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that Willis' ethnographic study still has some application to modern education. Even though the study was done in the

1970s and numerous things have changed ever since, this essay has aided in the highlighting of some of Willis' findings which can still be of applicability. Therefore, it is important to state that Willis' study can be of some use in current education.

This is because in modern education research, very few studies, if any, have emanated close to achieve such useful and dependable data as Willis' ethnographic project. As a result, Willis's study could be put into use to alter the present curriculum. It is vital to consider that since the 1970s, a nationwide curriculum and numerous other schemes have been applied yet the badly behaved truants, classroom wreckers coupled with bullies, to name just a few, still occur in modern day schools. As a result, many schools are overwhelmed by indiscipline. This highlights the necessity for the issue to be addressed. Willis' study, which displays examples of disorderliness, could be used to adjust the way educational institutions are run and the way learners are taught.