

The sociology of childhood essay examples

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



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Introduction

The sociology of childhood in the contemporary society focuses on the social construction of the child. The social construction of the child deals with how the child differs in terms of social, cultural, historical, and economic perspectives (Shanahan, 2007). Sociology of childhood deals with viewing the child from these different perspectives unlike in the traditional way. The traditional way failed to understand childhood in the socio-cultural, sexualized, and gendered context. The sociology of childhood identifies ways through which the interaction of children and adults: challenges; produces; reproduces; and transforms the society and childhood. This article discusses the sacralisation of childhood and how it affects our understanding of children and how the children view themselves. It highlights the implications of sacralisation of childhood for primary school pedagogy and curriculum and

includes the measures teachers can take to redress the consequences of the dual processes.

Sacralisation of childhood

Sacralisation refers to making sacred, pure or holy. Sacralisation of childhood is about the sacred nature of children and their innocence. Sacralisation of childhood focuses on the discourse of innocence (Meyer, 2007). Children are innocent beings that are vulnerable and thus, adults should learn to protect them from dangers that would affect them morally and socially. Children are often at a risk from various social phenomena including the internet, television, radio, and print media. Pedophilia is a serious risk to children, which has attracted concerns from the government, media and public. Many of these sex offenders violate the innocence of the child are liable for prosecution. The process of sacralisation views children as victims of circumstances with adults as the perpetrators of those vices.

The discourse of innocence constructs children as little angels, virtuous pure and innocent. “ This angelic nature of children makes them immature, vulnerable and weak thus, creating the need for protection” (Meyer, 2007, p. 96). Sacralization of childhood revolves around the issues of morality and sexuality. Sexuality is a social construct and different cultures have different meanings of sexuality at different times. However, many sexual practices are adult vices that children should be protected from because they tend to pollute the mind of the child. In fact, during the 19th century, children would cover themselves up with clothes and it was wrong for adults to have sexual activity or talk about them in the presence of children. The meaning of this practice was to protect the innocence of the child from dangerous people or

situations and to preserve their innocence.

Children have greater knowledge in the use of the internet especially in the modern world. Thus, parents should take the onus to protect them from dangerous internet exposure. It is the duty of adults to make the internet safer for children to protect their innocence. Currently, children appear to have more skills in using the internet compared to their parents and thus, may expose their naïve and innocent minds to harm. Children are vulnerable and thus their innocence is a key feature that requires protection.

Vulnerability of children can be in three different perspectives i. e. physical, social, and structural vulnerability. The physical and social vulnerability are inborn features of the individual child and symbolize a lack personal strength and competence for the child (Leonard, 2005). On the other hand, structural vulnerability is about the society. The child becomes vulnerable from the results of the society in which he or she exists. The three discourses of sacralisation that those of rights, evil, and innocence. The discourse of rights and evil may render the child structurally vulnerable while the discourse of innocence is about the innate characteristics of the child.

How sacralisation has affected our understanding of children

Sacralisation has affected the ways in which people understand children and the way children understand themselves. People view children as holy and helpless beings and therefore, aim at protecting this innocence. Adults view children as beings that are always at risk and thus need protection. Parents are also able to understand their children as part of the social capital. Social capital is about the family relations, which assist children in interacting with

adults (Holloway & Valentine, 2003). Social capital enables parents to be able to transfer their social assets to children, which will assist these children in their future lives. The process of sacralisation helps adults to be able to transfer these social assets to children. The social construct of the child enables this child to learn and understand virtues that can be useful to them in their later lives.

The process of sacralisation inclines adults to view children as beings that are constantly at risk because of their vulnerability. Thus, it becomes necessary to protect these children because of their incompetence. The greatest risk of children occurs with pedophiles that threaten children's efforts and this is the first kind of protection required for children. In case of any harm to the child, the process of sacralisation leaves the responsibility to agencies such as the government, parents or the school. The process of sacralization in the current society enables adults to understand children in emotional terms as opposed to economic terms. People tend to regard crimes against the child as severe compared to other types of crime. This severity is for the reason that children are innocent beings that demand protection.

In addition, sacralisation of the child has helped in understanding the effects of child labor in the contemporary world. It is not common any more to find children working in many societies because people attach an emotional price tag on children and not the economic value as it was before (Kerry & Cristyn, 2008). Children also regard themselves as innocents that should be protected from all forms of harms by the adults. The effects of child sexual abuse often extend into the future adult life of this child and therefore, it

becomes important to protect them from abuse to avoid such consequences. More often than not, sexual abuse destroys childhood because these crimes are worse than the physical abuse to a child. These effects enable adults to understand the sacred child in order to protect the innocence in this child.

Implications of sacralisation

Sacralisation has implications for both primary school pedagogy and curriculum. Teachers at schools often view children as innocent beings even at the school setting. The curriculum embraces the virtues of children and contains programs for children and the need to protect these children. Children at the primary school level are young and they need protection from all forms of child abuse. Teachers at this level of education should aim at protecting children from these types of abuse. It is the responsibility of teachers to instruct children to resist all forms of abuse. The curriculum should consist of measures that children can take to report cases where their innocence is violated.

The discourse of innocence is aimed at protecting children from these abuses. The innocence of children affects the primary school pedagogy because teachers use different methods of teaching while dealing with children. The reason for different teaching methods while dealing with children is their weak nature and vulnerability.

The curriculum of primary school is different because of the influences of sacralisation. The process of sacralisation is about shifting the thoughts from the historical context of attaching an economic value to children to an emotional worth (Leonard, 2005). Thus, when constructing the curriculum,

educators focus on the needs of children and their value. It ensures that there is bonding between the children and their teachers in the school setting. Since childhood is about a social construct, the curriculum incorporates teachings that ensure relations develop among children in school and their teachers. This relationship ensures protection of the innocence in the child as required by sacralisation.

Furthermore, the curriculum should incorporate subjects that aim at teaching children their rights. The children should know their rights so that they are able to report those that violate them. The teachers at school should remind children of their rights in their teaching methodology. With this knowledge instilled in children, it becomes possible to protect the vulnerable children from harm. The most common form of harm affecting school going children is sexual abuse. Teachers should encourage children to report this form of abuse including the pedophiles responsible for the actions. This will ensure prosecution of the perpetrators of the crimes according to the rules in the curriculum. The objective of reporting these crimes is to protect the innocence of children and their vulnerability (Holloway & Valentine, 2003). Therefore, sacralisation of childhood aims at ensuring that the primary school pedagogy and curriculum are geared towards protecting the discourse of innocence in children.

What teachers can do

Teachers are the people that stay in contact with children at most times. They should take measures to redress the consequences of sacralisation and sexualization of children, which is common especially in the contemporary Western societies. Most children in the Western societies mature early

because of development in those societies and exposure to the internet. Thus, these children become sexualized early in their life. This sexualization could have adverse consequences because malicious people may hack systems and expose children to content that corrupts their mind. Thus, teachers have the responsibility of limiting the amount of time children spend on the internet (Holloway & Valentine, 2003). They should also regulate the content on the sites that children visit to ensure minimal exposure to dangerous information. This regulation will aim at protecting the innocence of children and their emotional worth.

Teachers should instill ethical principles in children to ensure that these children grow to be morally upright adults. Ethical principles enable children to learn between right and wrong and be in a position people that violate their rights. Teachers encourage children to report cases of pedophilia because they are confident from the knowledge attained. Teachers can also ask parents to ensure control of the content that children watch on televisions or access from the internet. This control will go a long way in rectifying the consequences of sacralisation. Sexual abuse is a severe form of child abuse because it violates the sacred status of the child. Therefore, teachers should ensure that pedophile crimes are punished. These crimes violate the sexual innocence of the child teachers should aim at protecting this innocence always.

There is a perceived risk of compromising the innocence of the child in most Western societies. Teachers should aim at readjusting this process by involving all members of the society in the development of the child. As a social construct, all members of society should aim at protecting the child's

innocence by reporting cases where this innocence is compromised (Shanahan, 2007). Living in an inclusive society enables teachers to reach out to children and encourage all members of the society on the importance of education.

Conclusion

Sacralisation of childhood focuses on the discourse of innocence. The process of sacralization of childhood shifts attention from viewing children in economic terms to emotional terms. Children have undergone a major transformation and become sacred with emotional worth attached to them. The objective of this attention is because children are vulnerable and face risks in their growth. The sacralization of childhood has helped in understanding that children are innocent and it is crucial to protect this innocence. Crimes against children are also more severe and they attract heavy penalties compared to other crimes. Moreover, crimes of sexual abuse to children are worse than other physical abuse crimes because these crimes interfere with the innocent nature of the child. Sacralisation of childhood affects the primary school pedagogy and curriculum because it has to protect the sacred nature of children. Teachers should monitor the progress of children at all times to ensure protection of the child's innocence.

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