

# Children and childhood studies

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Children and Childhood Studies Name: Course: Date: Children and Childhood Studies Question 1 Explain the quote: “ A hungry child knows no politics”.

The quote, “ A hungry child knows no politics”, by Ronald Reagan sought to emphasize Regan’s stand on the provision of food aid to Ethiopia during the Cold War. Despite the presence of the Communist dictatorship in the country, Reagan believed that sending food to the civilians, particularly the children and the women affected by famine resulting from the Cold War, was directly influential on the civilians despite the political differences between the communists and the capitalist America. Gaining victory over the communist regime in Ethiopia was fundamental for the national security of the country but it was not as important as feeding the civilians in Ethiopia who were suffering from hunger. Indeed, humanitarian relief to children, who are the victims greatly affected by a country’s internal strife such as war as well as national disasters, has greatly reduced attributed to the criminalization of the act based on the War on Terror. Hence, the use of the quote is not only limited to Reagan’s reaction at the time of the Cold War but also relates to the modern era where politics has occupied the center stage of all decisions to an extent of limiting and even prohibiting the provision of food aid to the people in need. Apparently, under Reagan, the United States delayed aid intentionally in order to demonstrate the collapse of communism in Africa, hence influence other countries from becoming communist, and induce social change in the communist government on the assertion that hunger does not know politics and hence lead to a revolt against the communist government.

The failure of the revolt against the communist government led to the stoppage of food aid to Ethiopia by the United Nations between 1981 and 1984 and the drastic reduction of food aid to the country leading to the death of one million people resulting from starvation. How does the iconography of disaster reinforce the hegemonic social construction of childhood? The iconography of disaster is defined in informal terms as disaster pornography. This is because the iconography of disaster refers to the utilization of children suffering from the effects of various social problems such as hunger for marketing purposes.

The social construction of childhood delves away from the biological uniformity of children. Socially, childhood is a collection of ideas and principles, values, standards, traditions and experiences. These social aspects of childhood are affected by political and economical influences and social institutions and patterned interaction. Thus, with the different influences in the societies, childhood varies across the demography, religion, culture, geography and history. Within the setting of a society, childhood also differs by social structures such as gender, race and class. Apparently, childhood is not formed once but continuously through institutions and interactions. Hegemonic social construction of childhood is the prevailing variation of childhood in modern Western society.

Hegemonic childhood concentrates on the pre sociological notions in different ways. For instance, the assumption that children are incompetent and require cultivation by adults is a fundamental aspect surrounding the utilization of disaster pornography. This is affirmed by the dramatic use of

aid iconography by humanitarian organizations to consolidate funds. Through disaster iconography, children captured in such degrading images are viewed as unreceptive and feeble and rely on the support of an adult. In this case, the donor is the supposed savior of the children from degradation. Additionally, the hegemony is reinforced when the children in the images are viewed as symbols of an ailing society that does not provide education, protection and other valid needs required for the children. Disaster iconography further reconstructs hegemony of social construction of childhood by projecting the blame on the suffrage on the children's people, government, parents, culture and society and thus advocates for the adaptation of Western aid which seeks to demoralize and defunct the developing countries' version of childhood by assimilating Third World children with Western norms .

In what ways does the hegemonic construction of childhood underpin the assumption that children are passive victims of politics rather than active participants in politics? Hegemonic construction of childhood indicates children as passive victims of politics through the iconography that presents children as inactive and passive towards the political crises in their respective countries. Usually, campaigns carried out by aid organizations regarding famine indicate that the children suffer based on political reasons. Additionally, the western construction of childhood represents children suffering in the Third World countries as political victims and hence passive rather than political activists. The pre-sociological comprehensions of childhood raise children as pre-political beings who have to be cultured into

political minions as adults. Apparently, the hegemonic formation of childhood presupposes that children are politically ineffectual.

This is attributed to the symbolism of the suffering children resulting from a country's political problems that affect the lives of the children especially in Third World countries. Moreover, hegemonic construction of social childhood underpins such an assumption through the globalization of the Western construction of childhood. Globalization in terms of the social construction of childhood refers to the exportation of contemporary notions of childhood.

The globalization is carried out by the extension of the discourse of children's rights, which assert that the suffering children in developing countries have a right or a privilege to be like the Western children.

Apparently, childhoods which diverge or disagree with the hegemonic model of social construction are viewed as aberrant, detrimental, anomalous and more importantly, a denunciation of rights. Such childhoods are considered as pathological, deviant, and passive in terms of politics.

The perpetrators of the hegemonic ideal are the aid organizations who concentrate on the suffering of the children in the Global South. By doing this, the organizations exalt hegemony and discard the ideals of the children who are not in synchronization with such an ideal. Moreover, the children of the Global South are considered as at risk, vulnerable and helpless, which further accentuate the hegemonic ideal in asserting that children are passive players in politics.

Detail the ways in which children in the global South are agents of political change and resilient social actors despite the pathologisation of their

experiences. How are these pathologised experiences gendered? Despite the hegemonic ideal that children in the Global South are passive in politics, pathological and risky, the Global Southern children are agents of political change. Children are not passive victims concerning the political pathologisation evident in children from the Global South such as those in South Africa. The children in South Africa, especially at the time of Apartheid, are not passive victims of childhood because of the political violence they face attributed to the active participation portrayed by the children in the political struggles. For instance, the children in South Africa have become agents of political change by forming groups such as the Young Lions of South Africa.

The Young Lions of South Africa engaged in political violence through protest movements that commenced in 1976 whereby 25 youth were murdered by security forces despite protesting peacefully against the changes in education at the time. From then on, the movement acquired a considerable democratic faction. Additionally, the deaths of 300 children, the detainment of 11000 children, wounding of 1000 children and the arrest of 18000 children regarding protesting as well as the holding of 173000 children in prison indicated the widespread active participation of children in political affairs (Cairns, 1996).

Children have also been agents of political change by being involved in labor activism. This has been done through the formation of children organizations and movements that advocate for fair labor conditions. They have also been

active participants in the creation of resistance strategies to violence and victimization.

Since, many children in the Global South undergo forced recruitment in armed groups that expose them to brutal violence. For instance, child soldiers are perfect examples of children that undergo physical violence despite their age. Additionally, girl soldiers go through emotional and sexual victimization. However, girl soldiers have managed to refuse and protect themselves by developing solidarity networks, resisting violently against attacks, evasion and preventing violence against inhabitants.

They have also been actively involved in the resistance of coerced recruitment into armed factions such as guerillas and rebels. Children inclined to join armed groups due to poverty; revenge; social change and political subjugation have managed to effect political change by proactively refuting coerced recruitment. Explain the disjuncture between international law relating to children's rights and how both personal circumstances and larger social structures or forces may lead children to choose childhoods that differ from the hegemonic ideal.

Hegemonic childhood is the type of childhood advocated for in the rights of children. However, the hegemonic version might be incompatible with the experience of majority of the global children and the ideas appreciated within their local milieu. The dominant Western childhood is not attainable for most of the children around the world. This is because hegemonic childhood depends considerably on the sufficient affluence of the family and

society. The international law, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) failed to address the plight of poor countries.

The developing countries acknowledged that the type of childhood advocated by the CRC was economically unachievable. Additionally, the poor countries sought to necessitate the International Community to avail idealized childhood but such a proposal was futile. International law is bent on globalization of the discourse of children's rights. Hence, international law points out that the children's rights are universal. However, this is not the case because the main notion that the international laws seek to incorporate is the hegemonic ideal, which is considerably embedded, in the American society. Apparently, the CRC was a form of public exercise and government leaders, involved in the ratification of the law were largely westernized and thus could not understand the local populace, which they claim to represent.

Moreover, personal conditions and significant social structures further disunite children from adapting to the hegemonic ideals. For instance, the United Nations 1959 Declaration on Child Rights did not provide the rights of participation for children but advocated for child protection and provision. Such characteristics of the law only emphasized hegemonic ideals, which were based on the view of children as frail, passive and feeble. Children are deprived of such rights since they are believed to be incompetent. However, children have strayed from the ideals due to direct factors such as political instability, famine and poverty. These structures, which are characteristic of developing states, have forced children to engage in political activism and other types of activism and protests in order to initiate social change which



varies considerably with hegemonic idealism. This is in contrast with the statute of the 1959 UN Declaration, which does not support active participation.

Question 2 Describe the internationalization of children's rights discourse.

The internationalization of children's rights discourse refers to the globalization of children rights through the implementation of childhood advocated for by the International Community in all countries. The internationalization of the discourse involves integrating the hegemonic ideals of the social construction of childhood through the creation of international statutes. For instance, the Declaration of Geneva in 1924 led to the emergence and possibility of internationalization of hegemonic childhood throughout the whole globe from the colonial period up to date. Moreover, the internationalization of children's rights discourse seeks to advocate for the rights and privileges of children respective of the various circumstances such as war affecting children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the perfect illustration of an international law that advocates for the protection of children and children rights in times of peace and war.

CRC has functioned as a valid activist front regarding the issues of children's rights and the mobility of rights activism. Moreover, the internationalization of children's rights discourse encompasses various aspects that relate to the promotion and protection of children's rights. Such features border on labor rights, aid and sponsorship and governing international laws on child soldiers. For instance, the International Labor Organization (ILO) is one of the United Nations bodies concerned with the internationalization of children's

labor rights and issues. Through the ILO, rights of children regarding labor are globalized such that every state is required to follow the statutes by a body that considerably advocates for hegemonic ideals.

On the subject of child labor, law governors such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) among other jurisdictions are responsible for the governance and protection of children against recruitment into armed groups. Explain the debate between “ universalism” and “ cultural relativism” in relation to the globalization of children’s rights. Universalism refers to the viewpoint that human rights are not subjective to any human being regardless of where they live.

Universalism asserts that every human being is entitled to all human rights regardless of where the person lives. The standpoint is strengthened by the notion and conviction that human rights are normal and are therefore are intrinsic to every person. From this conviction, the individual is dominant. Such a view is deeply embedded in the Western liberal way of life that provides dominance to personal autonomy and impartiality. Cultural relativism, on the other hand, refers to the outlook that every culture is equally important and that all opinions that are entrenched in the difference between all cultures are equally legitimate as well. Peripheral principles should not be obligatory regarding local traditions, values, religions, customs and beliefs. For instance, cultures pertaining to the Western inhabitants acknowledge the person whereas other cultures acknowledge the group.

Regarding the globalization of children’s rights, it is asserted that children’s rights are viewed as universal due to the extensive endorsement of the CRC.

Additionally, the globalization of children's rights discourse is viewed as advocating for hegemony, which is firmly embedded in the Western culture at this precise moment. This only confirms that globalization of children's rights discourse is culturally relative. However, both universalism and cultural relativism are not evident in the discourse of the children's rights. Regarding universalism, children's rights concentrate on the internationalization of the dominant form of Western childhood in all societies despite the advocacy of the universalism perspective on the provision of human rights regardless of a person's domicile. Despite the nature of the universalism philosophy, the globalization of children's rights discourse rejects the principles of the societies of the Third World countries by using disaster iconography to implement the notion of hegemony regardless of the circumstances facing the children. Based on cultural relativism, the rights discourse only lingers on the hegemonic culture of the Western societies and as such disregards the cultures of the Global South.

This is evident whereby international laws only apply the hegemonic social construction of childhood to their regulations without considering the different cultures that are not in synchronization with the regulations. Why do critics of universalism claim that the globalization of children's rights discourses are " neo-colonial"? As aforementioned, universalism asserts that every person is entitled to all human rights regardless of where he or she lives. Children's rights have been there since the past. This is indicated by the implementation of 1959 United Nations Declaration. Since the UN Declaration surfaced prior to the child liberation movement, the Declaration focuses on the provision and protection of children's rights but does not

encourage the rights of participation to children. Additionally, the creation of the Geneva Declaration of Children's Rights in 1924 put the rights of children onto the global map.

The affliction of children in the First World War armored concerns regarding children leading to the consolidation of hegemonic childhood. At that time, hegemonic childhood brought about the acceptance of capitalism whereby the children were exempted from labor into education through law and technology. The economic value of children also lessened due to the increased sentimentalization. Furthermore, children were alienated from the spheres of men and women and became regarded as being in their own unique positions.

Apparently, various efforts were made to save children in Western settings through the creation of philanthropist groups that were characterized by the upper class. The children who needed help were described as wayward or street urchins hence leading to the creation of institutions designed to discipline the characters of these children in order to extinguish the threats posed by these children. Some of these children were stripped from their working-class families and put into fair Christian households. Through the implementation of these laws, which sought to implement universalism, the international decrees were bent on treating children as passive rather than active actors.

Moreover, the hegemonic ideals present in these laws only focused on shaping the children's characters rather than comprehending as individuals or citizens. Critics assert that such globalization relates to neo-colonialism

due to the relation between the emergence of hegemony and European colonialism. Colonization was the epitome for the creation of social inequalities. The development of hegemonic childhood was simultaneous to the development of bigotry discourse regarding colonized people.

Children were seen as empty slates, innocent, savage and in need of European parentage as well as objects that required civilization. Hence, due to the assumption that colonized people and children were less evolved, the globalization of children rights discourse sought to implement a hegemonic system that would see the colonized become more like the modern colonialists: the Westerners. How would critics see the contemporary pathologisation of global Southern childhoods as a reflection of the historically parallel discourses of children and the colonized. The advent of child-saving societies and movements such as the Child Aid Society sought to pathologise global Southern children by removing from their uncivilized, poor and colonized families and implement hegemonic ideals into the characters of these children.

Critics assert that colonialism and child saving did not have the same objectives and were therefore signified as parallel responsibilities that sought to colonize children and the people in order to initiate civilization. Through the consolidation of hegemonic childhood through international guidelines such as the 1924 Geneva Declaration, the ascent of hegemonic idealism in childhood epitomized colonial extension by the Europeans. This expansion by the European colonialists of children and the child saving movements epitomized hegemony in the parallel pathologisation of global

Southern childhoods. The assertion of neo-colonialism by the critics of the global discourse of children's rights resulted from the incoherence of the children's rights in the mainstream world through economic impediments and cultural disparity. Modern pathologisation considered global Southern childhoods as precarious, at risk, vulnerable and subject to predation. Furthermore, the modern pathologisation of these childhoods relates to the creation of pathological spaces considered ideal for these children. For instance, pathologisation of these childhoods asserted hegemony in childhood construction by identifying home or school as the ideal and accepted place for children.

The aberrant places for children were streets, factory plants or refugee camps. This corresponds with the colonialism perspectives, which sought to alleviate children and the colonized peoples from savagery, barbarism and lead them to civilization. Since, modern pathologisation of childhood views children as risky and at risk, it is correct to surmise that both colonialism and children's rights global discourse are epitomized in the sense that both seek to civilize the children of the Global South by implementing hegemonic ideals of childhood irrespective of the children's experience.

Explain how neo liberal globalization in terms of how they impact global Southern children. The globalization of neo-liberalism leads to lessened rights and foundations for the developing nations and hence the children of the Global South. This indicates that the less developed states possess decreased advantaged access to global markets than the developed nations. The wide gap between the less developed countries and the developed

countries leads to the dependency of the less developed nations on the developed nations.

Neo-liberalism glorifies the private sector and hence leads to the creation of organizations such as humanitarian groups, which focus on the provision of aid to the children in the Global South. The dependency of the less developed nations on the developed nations leads to the economic and social exploitation of the developing countries by the developed countries. This in turn leaves the developing countries at a disadvantage as shown in instances where less developed countries incur huge financial debts from developed countries and as a result, the less developed countries are controlled by the developed countries in a form of colonial paternalism. This is indicated by the use of images that depict children's suffering in campaigns by aid and sponsorship organizations to show that the developed countries, also known as the Westernized nations, are saviors of global Southern children. Since neo-liberalism pictures the developing countries as ailing and unable to fend for their children, it negatively influences global Southern children. For instance, sponsorship and aid organizations lead to the materialization of conflict among families and children by distinguishing out children for aid.

They also alienate children from their families and discard and undermine the authority of adults and parents. Moreover, neo-liberalism, which initiates economic reconstruction of the developing countries, leads to the elimination of social services and food subventions. This in turn affects the children since the costs of living become expensive and increasing unemployment leading

to the engagement of children in strenuous labor that is harmful to their development.