

Reading Reviews

Explanatory Note:

The original highlighted texts have been included with each review. Rather than reprinting them I believe this better shows my review techniques for each document and will guide you to where I identified each key point. It is also of more use to me if I want to subsequently refer to this now large body of information.

Reading Review

Music

MUSIC

Main Reading (Bibliographic Details):

Schalit, J., (1996), 'Just Say No to Rock and Roll', *Bad Subjects: Political Education for Everyday Life*, Issue 27 (online), available: <http://eserver.org/bs/27/joel.htm>, accessed 13 October 2003.

Summary of the Article:

This paper exemplifies a theme that will become evident throughout these reviews, that is, the conflict between the perception of being different or 'counter' or 'sub' to the norm, and the reality of being 'sucked in' by popular culture. Nirvana were 'selling' a dream that "there was something truly revolutionary about punk that would have more profound political ramifications than simply another cultural transformation that made teenagers look better and think more" (Schalit 1996). Schalit (1996) points out that the eighties taught people to "live with the temporary imposition of injustice in service of a greater good called the free market" (I suggest that this is still the case today). Punk music provided a panacea for this condition, in making "cultural alternatives possibilities for people who otherwise might never have known about them" (Schalit 1996). The negativity of punk and Nirvana struck a chord with a disenfranchised population, who could relate to its message. They felt empowered, or rather as if they were already part of an anti-establishment movement. Ultimately punk was merely another "cultural transformation that made teenagers look better and think more" (Schalit 1996).

Second Reading (Bibliographic Details):

AAP, (1996), 'Impact of Music Lyrics and Music Videos on Children and Youth', *Policy Statement*, American Academy of Paediatrics, Vol. 8, No. 96, pp. 1219-1221.

Five Main Points from the Reading

1. Increasingly music lyrics have become more explicit, in referring to sex, drugs and violence, and have communicated "potentially harmful health messages."
2. While music is important to teenagers' identity and helps them "define important social and sub-cultural boundaries," the causal link between lyrics and behaviour is yet to be proven.
3. A preference for heavy metal music may be a 'marker' for "alienation, substance abuse, psychiatric disorders, suicide risk, sex-role stereotyping, or risk taking behaviours"
4. Consumers, parents, the media and the music industry should be aware of the potential for the impact of music lyrics on the consumer.
5. Six recommendations are made: 1. Parents should actively monitor their children's music; 2. More discussion is needed into the effects of music lyrics on children; 3. Harmful content should be clearly identified on packaging; 4. Producers and

broadcasters should be sensitive to the content of music; 5. Performers should be encouraged to serve as positive role models; 6. Research is needed into the effects of music lyrics on children.

How do the two readings support, update, contradict each other?

The two papers highlight a difference of opinion as to cause and effect. While the American Academy of Paediatrics (1996) sees music as negatively tied up in negative social and health outcomes for youth (although not supporting any direct correlation), Schalit (1996) believes that it is this very negativity that draws youth to the alternative music genre. If it is the case that disenfranchised youth turn to punk and other music for empowerment or the community which surrounds it, then any attempt to 'turn kids away' from potentially negative music must do more than attempt to restrict their access to it, or to highlight that music which is 'dangerous'. Rather a real attempt would have to be made to engage these disenfranchised youth, to include them in mainstream society, to empower them, and to give them real alternatives.

The AAP approach, which is also a typical school approach to alternative youth lifestyle choices is archaic and does not reflect the positive and uplifting role that music may play in people's lives (although they do recognise the majority do listen to non-harmful music). Even the most ardent 'bible-bashers' would admit to the lifting of their spirits after singing a hymn. The potentially harmful health messages, as described in the AAP paper, appear to Schalit (1996) as being of more risk to the artists, for whom suicide is the ultimate but pointless end. Schalit (1996) sees music as having failed in providing a valid political vessel for the youth of today whereas the AAP (1996) believe that that vessel should be sunk. AAP (1996) is more concerned about the effect of music lyrics on the youth who listen to them whereas Schalit (1996) is more concerned about the failure of punk lyrics to have effected change in society.

Reading Review

Mass Media

MASS MEDIA

Main Reading (Bibliographic Details):

Tait, G., (1999), 'Youth Cultures, Style and Education', in Meadmore, D., Burnett, B. & O'Brien, P., (eds) *Understanding Education: Contexts and Agendas for the New Millennium*, Prentice Hall, Sydney.

Summary of the Article:

The "notion of youth self-styling" (Tait 1999) extends beyond the superficial aspects of the clothing they wear. Rather youthful identities are shaped through the construction of a "complex set of practices, attitudes, forms of conduct." Subcultures can be classified and it is important for the teacher to be able to identify the social categories into which the students fit. The lack of power experienced by youth is responsible for their subcultures being "located within the realm of resistance" (Tait 1999). Only since the 1950's have youth perceived themselves as being "intrinsically different from the parent generation" (Tait 1999). These subcultures do not exist in a vacuum, rather they are influenced by the world in which they exist. Each subculture has (and creates) "characteristic modes of behaviour, values, musical tastes and vocabulary" (Tait 1999). Through school, the media, family and peer groups, youth are "presented with a vocabulary of suitable ways of shaping themselves, both socially and physically, as young people," which are crystallised through "rituals of self-formation" (Tait 1999).

Second Reading (Bibliographic Details):

Heaven, C., & Trubridy, M., (2003), 'Global Youth Culture and Youth Identity', in Arvanitakis, J., (ed) *Highly Affected, rarely Considered: The International Youth Parliament Commission's Report on the Impacts of Globalisation on Young People* (online), available http://www.iyp.oxfam.org/campaign/documents/youth_commission_report/Global_Youth_Culture_and_Youth_Identity.pdf, accessed 13 October 2003.

Five Main Points from the Reading

These are the five main points relevant to the other reading (as much of the focus is on an unrelated topic).

1. The relationship between youth and their sense of identity is greatly effected by the globalisation of culture, as youth are seen as "the part of society most likely to engage in the process of cultural borrowing" (Heaven & Trubridy 2003, p.149).
2. The key players in the issue are the Youth Culture and the 'Culture Industry', namely the industry "concerned with the production, marketing and sale of cultural commodities (Heaven & Trubridy 2003, p.149).
3. Youth culture can be categorised as either dominant – "predominantly a part of the larger cultural tradition" – a subculture – which exists at the "cultural fringe" – or a

counter culture – which like subcultures are anti-establishment and confrontational, however, they also actively oppose the dominant culture (Heaven & Trubridy 2003, p.151).

4. Culture is an “ensemble of practices – linguistic, stylist, religious, etc – that together form a way of being for a given social community (Heaven & Trubridy 2003, p.152). It is a “collection of learned assumptions that we bring to the daily practice of interpreting the meaning of reality and ourselves” (Heaven & Trubridy 2003, p.152).

5. Globalisation has seen dominant cultures ‘subjugate’ and ‘eradicate’ marginal cultures, while the products and practices of global capitalism exclude non-western cultural practices, and “invite youth to seek happiness through the accumulation of wealth and commodities” (Heaven & Trubridy 2003, p.153-4).

How do the two readings support, update, contradict each other?

In these two papers, we see that the process of youth self-styling, or the development of youth identity, is strongly influenced by the world in which the youth inhabits. Both ‘local’ familial or social influences (Tait 1999) together with the trans-national influence of globalisation and global capitalism (Heaven & Trubridy 2003, p.149), all go to shaping youth culture. Both papers identify the multidimensional nature of the process of the formation of cultural identity, in that the world in which the person inhabits, and the types of interaction all contribute. The shift towards youth viewing themselves as being intrinsically different from the parent generation (Tait 1999) has gone hand-in-hand with the growth of capitalism. These two processes mutually reinforce the other. The youth, now freed to search for their own identity, are readily supplied with an endless, popular and easily digestible stream of alternatives by the media.

The process of the globalisation of youth culture (Heaven & Trubridy 2003, p.149) and the formation of sub-cultures (Tait 1999) seem at odds with one another. One cannot help but wonder whether a global industry marketing cultural commodities will not result in the homogenisation of youth culture on a local and global scale. Sub-cultures will be differentiated from mainstream society purely on the basis of youth or fashion. The alternatives to mainstream culture can be marketed as a valid and desirable (supposed alternative). It is the very process of youth culture falling victim to globalisation, that Heaven & Trubridy (2003) hold responsible for the loss of traditional cultural practices.

The alternative view, along the lines of what Tait (1999) is describing, is that sub-cultures and counter-cultures might become the last repositories of local or traditional culture. If they do not fall into the trap of accepting global cultural commodities, they may take up traditional cultural practices, as being different from the mainstream global culture. This process can already be seen occurring throughout Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, where youth culture is responsible for a resurgence of traditional cultural practices (as they are no longer mainstream).

Reading Review

Art

ART

Main Reading (Bibliographic Details):

ABC, (2000), *Old Skool: What's in a Name*, (online), available: <http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/arts/graff/oldskool/>, accessed 13 October 2003.

Summary of the Article:

This 'web-page' provides a brief insight into Graffiti, its origins and its instilment as an element of youth subculture. It highlights the fact that graffiti is more than just mere "drawings or inscriptions on a wall" (a formal definition), rather it possesses an "intricate style, sophisticated technique [and] and alluring vibrancy. Hence it is concluded that graffiti represents "a genuine form of artistic expression". But graffiti is more than just the art. It is also an "explosive global sub culture ... [that has begun] ... to filtrate throughout the world." Now, many forms for media, music, movies and books have encompassed graffiti art and the associated elements of 'break dancing', rap and DJing. The sub culture has extended to Australia, where there are networks of 'crews' operating at an interstate and international level, yet expressing a unique Australian style.

Second Reading (Bibliographic Details):

D'Amico, D., (2003), *Thou Shall not Paint: A Libertarian Understanding of the Problems Associated with Graffiti on Public v. Private Property*, (online), available: http://www.graffiti.org/faq/d_amico.html, accessed 13 October 2003.

Five Main Points from the Reading

1. Graffiti should "not be illegal in a Libertarian society because it is not a violation of private property rights, but rather it is akin to a liberation of stolen property from a coercive government."
 2. The graffiti artist is "a liberator" who "diminishes the benefit felt by the government from stealing the public's property" by "reclaiming his rightful property or at least a small share of it".
 3. The graffiti artist is described as a "homesteader" (or squatter in the old Australian terminology). Through the exercising ("mixing") of labour upon the 'unowned property, the graffiti artist is activating a legitimate legal claim.
 4. As a result of the homesteading argument, the subsequent removal of graffiti art by the government represents the illegal extinguishment of the graffiti artists legitimate claim over that piece of land (or building, or rock face etc). Hence the government is to be considered to be the true 'vandal'.
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5. Graffiti artists exercise an inherent need to 'exert' their personality through self-expression. They do so on public structures, that are seen as having been paid for with stolen money (taxes). This public space is deemed to belong to those who are on welfare, and hence provides justification for expression through graffiti art in this space.

How do the two readings support, update, contradict each other?

It is an ironic use of words, that these papers describe graffiti 'artists' as being both part of a sub-culture (or **beneath** the normal culture) yet provide justification for them to be **above** the law. The links are clearly there, in both papers, between the feelings of dispossession and alienation from the 'state' and the need to 'reclaim personal territory from which they are otherwise being deprived. To some degree TripleJ, a mouthpiece for mainstream youth culture in Australia, in their paper (ABC 2000), plays down the sub or counter culture aspects of graffiti. The issue is looked at more from an artistic point of view, and highlights the fact that some 'artists' have crossed over to the commercial world. 'Teenagers of Australia, if you know this stuff about graffiti you too might be cool'. Sub culture in this instance is something that should be overcome, or commercialised for profit. In 'Thou Shalt not Paint' D'Amico (2003) embraces the sub-culture theory and portrays graffiti as a path to satisfaction outside of the constructs of our society, rather than as a path to better integration into it. In other words, 'If you can do graffiti you might feel better about being dispossessed in a consumer driven world'. In both cases the illegality of graffiti art is downplayed. Both papers represent an unbalanced view of the issue, portraying it as either a common, popular activity (ABC 2000) or as a justifiable act of defiance (D'Amico 2003). You are left wondering whether youth really do 'find a voice' through graffiti, or whether fashion, peer pressure and teenage rebelliousness are really at play.

Reading Review

Cultural Contexts of Education

CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF EDUCATION

Main Reading (Bibliographic Details):

Nieto, S., (1999), *The Light in their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities*, Teachers College Press, New York, pp.47-71.

Summary of the Article:

Nieto (1999) is attempting to define culture and discuss its relationship to education. Despite 'meaning different things to different people, she nonetheless attempts a definition, albeit very broad. Hence, culture is the "ever changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion" (Nieto, 1999, p.48). She identifies seven elements to culture. Hence, culture is dynamic; multifaceted; embedded in context; influenced by social, economic and political factors; created and socially constructed; learned; and is dialectical. Where a person's cultural background varies from the mainstream, educational issues may arise. Although cultural mismatch may affect a person's ability to learn, this should not necessarily be the case. Difference rather than assimilation can be healthy. Hence Nieto (1999, p.68) advocates culturally responsive education, where a student's cultural becomes an important source of their education. However, stereotyped view of that culture must not be taken. The teacher must act as a cultural mediator and accommodator in a culturally responsive whole-of-school environment.

Second Reading (Bibliographic Details):

Phillips, D., & Crowell, N., (1994), *Cultural Diversity and Early Education: Report of a Workshop*, Chapter 1, National Academy of Sciences, (online) available: <http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/earlyed/index.html>

Five Main Points from the Reading

1. Educational best-practice is based on demographics and cultural understandings based on the past, where classrooms were ethnically and linguistically homogenous and where students and teachers has similar cultural backgrounds. It does not fully recognise the link between home environment and educational performance.
2. Regardless of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, all children should be able to succeed at school, where they should be exposed to "high-quality instruction, challenging curricula, and high expectations for academic success" (Phillips & Crowell 1994).
3. The effect that a child's cultural and linguistic background has on their ability to adjust to and succeed at school cannot be "understood separately from the sociopolitical context within which discussions about culture and education are occurring" (Phillips & Crowell 1994).

4. Academic learning should include measures such as “including children’s participation in learning, their self-confidence as students, and their capacity to work effectively with other children and with adults” (Phillips & Crowell 1994).

5. As diversity in the classroom is not inherently problematic, all children can “benefit from exposure to multicultural and multilingual learning environments” (Phillips & Crowell 1994) as this prepares students to enter a similarly diverse society.

How do the two readings support, update, contradict each other?

The multitude of contributing or influencing factors on ‘culture’ that Nieto (1999) describes, can be seen as justification for the culturally inclusive strategies that Phillips and Crowell (1994) recommend. The contribution that a child’s home life makes to their ‘culture’ can in no way prepare them to properly interact with people in a diverse and ever changing local and global environment. Hence, the requirement for school to be agents of cultural appreciation and learning. In part, this culturally inclusive school environment fosters continual and life-long cultural appreciation within each student.

The cultural difference that Nieto (1999) describes as healthy is recognised as being of “benefit” to all children by Phillips and Crowell (1994), hence mutually supporting each other’s arguments. The recognition by Nieto that culture can be learned also provides justification for Phillips’ and Crowell’s (1994) claims that the teacher has an integral part to play in preparing their student for a multicultural environment.

Both see simply blaming cultural differences for poor educational performance as being incorrect, and that cultural difference is not inherently problematic, although wholesale changes at all levels of education would need to be implemented to most effectively include these differences for the benefit of all.

Reading Review

Popular Culture

POPULAR CULTURE

Main Reading (Bibliographic Details):

Dean, A., Ashton, J., & Elliott, A., (1994), 'Advice to Parents on Early Schooling: What Australian Women's Magazines Have to Say', *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, Vol. 19, No. 4, December 1994, pp.3-11.

Summary of the Article:

This paper investigated two issues. They were the nature of information on early learning and education as they appeared in three Australian women's magazines, and the "extent to which this information reflected contemporary educational and developmental issues" (Dean et al 1994, p.3). This style of magazine has been a continued source of information on these issue since their inception, although their focus has altered over time (both for reasons of fashion and for purely publication issues). Articles recognised issues such as the preparation of the child for school, child health and nutrition, cognitive development, social learning and home and parental support. The overall finding was that "articles seemed to have a sound basis in contemporary theory and research ... but were strongly tempered by cultural and pragmatic emphases" (Dean et al 1994, pp.9-10).

Second Reading (Bibliographic Details):

Buckingham, D., (1997), 'The Making of Citizens: Pedagogy and Address in Children's Television News', *Journal of Educational Media* (online), available: http://www.ccsonline.org.uk/mediacentre/Research_Projects/politics_kids_news.html, accessed 13 October 2003.

Five Main Points from the Reading

The analysis of the specific UK Television news shos will not be commented upon)

1. Research into children's relationships with non-fictional forms of television has been neglected, especially as children are not viewed to as a significant audience for this genre (resulting from the children's belief that news is boring, irrelevant or in the domain of adults)
2. Children are "novices" when it comes to news, and they lack the expertise with the genre and the necessary background information to make sense of it or view it critically. They also do not possess the sense of civic duty that motivates adults to keep up with the news.
3. The child-centred approach and the concept of providing a voice or acting on behalf of children is determined to be largely an illusion. Where children are directly involved in the production of children's news programs they are under strict guidance.
4. Similarly the belief that through the watching of television, and especially news programs targeted towards children, they may become empowered is also determined to be false.

5. Ultimately the author concludes that while there are some valid attempts to make complex information accessible to children through children's news programs, "much of the address to young people here amounts to little more than a form of window dressing" (Buckingham 1997).

How do the two readings support, update, contradict each other?

These two papers look at two diverse yet related issues. While Dean (et al 1994) looks at how children's developmental issues are discussed in the women's magazines, Buckingham (1997) discusses how the media, through children's news programs, can be responsible for the development of children (or at least some aspects of it). I believe Buckingham's approach is of far more significance. Already in these reviews we have seen how there is much differing of opinion as to the causative relationship between popular culture and the development of youth. Although a discussion of the links between the education of women through articles and the subsequent application of that information to their children, does address this issue, Dean's paper made no attempt to determine how or even if this developmental instruction was being applied. Buckingham on the other hand is investigating directly the interface between the media and the child; a far more useful approach. In either case, the significant role that a variety of media may play in the developmental path a child takes is undeniable, even if the links are tenuous. There are also links between the Buckingham paper and Schalit's investigation of Punk and Nirvana. Like Schalit, Buckingham questions whether the apparent inclusion of children in the production and presentation of news programs, is merely giving a false sense of hope, or is "engaging in a form of empty optimism" (Buckingham 1997). This compares to the false hope that punk offered, in providing a mouthpiece for disenfranchised youth.

Snapshots

Snapshot 2: ART

School Dress Codes:

Self Expression

VS.

‘The Effective Functioning’ of the School?

The construction of a student manifesto for changes to a school dress code with supporting explanation and discussion.

Introduction

Although traditional conceptions of art have people thinking of painting and sculpture, primarily the everyday expression of artistic beliefs, as “youth self-styling” is done through fashion and make-up. However, this “notion of youth self-styling” (Tait 1999) extends beyond the superficial aspects of the clothing that youth wear. Rather youthful identities are shaped through the construction of a “complex set of practices, attitudes, forms of conduct.” It is the clothing though, that provides a ‘ticket’ in to social groups, especially in a non-uniformed school environment. Clothing can be seen as conduit through which young people especially can ‘find a voice’ or express that voice, though we can be left asking the question of whether fashion, peer pressure and teenage rebelliousness are really at play.

Much controversy has arisen, especially in the United States, as to the role the school has in limiting youth self-styling and self expression, through the control of the type and style of clothing that is to be worn. Often these restrictions are on the grounds of stopping potential disruption to “the effective functioning of the school” (SUHSD 2002). In Queensland, a similar basis is found for the restriction of self-expression through clothing. Section 1 of Article 9 of the Education Queensland SC policy defines what constitutes inappropriate dress:

1.1 Inappropriate dress refers to clothing or apparel that the student wears that is, or could be deemed to be:

- a) offensive;
- b) likely to disrupt, or negatively influence, the normal operation of the school;
- c) unsafe for the student or others; or
- d) likely to result in a risk to the health of the student or others.

These guidelines can be applied appropriately if they are not based on a restrictive view of modern society, or merely reflect a traditional cultural background of teachers. Nieto (1999) describes cultural difference as healthy and Phillips and Crowell (1994)

recognises it as being of “benefit” to all. Although they were primarily discussing ethnic differences, these conclusions are transferable to other cultural differences or expressions, such as fashion. On the basis that culture can be learned (Nieto 1999) the teacher and the school has an integral part to play in preparing their student for a multicultural environment. Again, a restrictive view of fashion and clothing does not prepare a student for the ‘real-world’.

The following student manifesto includes a statement of claims, as to the types of restrictive practices being upheld by the school and the types of changes that students would like to see. While a copy of the supposed existing school dress code will not be created, the item by item claims made by the students will highlight the existing code. The existing code is based on an extrapolation from a number of existing codes taken from around the world (where conflict has arisen), and based on existing Queensland Education Dress Code guidelines. The in question does not have a uniform, but rather guidelines for casual clothing. True to the genre and the group publishing the manifesto, some justifications for the stance taken will not be acknowledged (referenced), however, they will be referred to in the subsequent concluding remarks and in the bibliography.

The construction of this manifesto has required the synthesis of issues of popular culture, art and youth. This preliminary discussion and subsequent conclusion will discuss many of the issues. However, the manifesto does ‘stand alone’ as a commentary on, and analysis of, the genre of art (as fashion) in schooling.

[Out of interest, please refer to the journal entries related to art, for further discussion of the place of fashion in popular culture and education].

Toowoomba Conservative High School

Student Manifesto

for

Changes to the Draconian, Sexist and
Archaic Dress Code

Our Demands

We, the students of Toowoomba Conservative High School, are no longer willing to accept the restrictions on our civil liberties and upon our freedom of expression, that are being imposed upon us by the administration of this school. We demand greater control over the contents of the school dress code, and the freedom to express ourselves in ways that are acceptable and normal within our own youth culture.

The school will notice that we are not making unreasonable claims, and that young people are just as able to determine what is safe, what is healthy and what is appropriate attire for school. However, stereotypes relating to what certain types of clothing imply about a person or the belief that such attire will be disruptive must be forgotten. The way we wear our hair, our use of make-up and the type of underwear we wear do not make us any more than images of ourselves. We are only asking to wear, in the safe protective environment of the school, what our parents allow us to wear in the unprotected real world.

Let the students become part of the school community and stop shutting us out of decisions about our lives. We are not treated like this at home and we should not be treated like this at school. We are individuals and we should have the freedom to determine how to dress appropriately for a given situation.

As such, we think the following must be addressed:

1. That teachers do not label us with, or apply stereotypical images of youth, that have been grabbed from sensationalised media programs. They must recognise that no particular style of dress inherently implies something about the wearer.
2. Bullying and victimisation of students by other students will occur regardless of whether we wear a uniform, or whether we have complete freedom to wear what we want. Restricting our choice of clothing will not reduce these incidents, rather the focus of bullying will simply change to something more personal and more harmful.
3. Exposed skin, whether that means shoulders, backs, legs or feet, does not restrict our ability to think or learn. It does not distract other students, and even if it did, this style of dress is a reality of life. School provides the perfect environment for people to overcome their feelings that cause this distraction. After all, school is there to equip students to succeed in the real world.
4. An ear, a nose and a belly button are all attached to the same body. Whether one or the other or all three are pierced, it makes no difference. If people choose to label people with piercings in a certain way that is their choice. If we choose to subject ourselves to their opinions that is their choice. If the school is still achieving good outcomes for their students, then it is not relevant.
5. The school administration should pay attention to our minds and not "our panties". Rules relating to our underwear should be abolished. There is

no justification for restricting those who want to wear 'bike-shorts' under netball skirts from doing so. There is no justification for stopping girls that want to wear g-strings from doing so. If our underwear is poking out, do you really think that we want it to? You cannot expect us to reveal our underwear under short skirts when we play sport, but not let us be more revealing under our clothes (where you cannot even see, and where you should not be looking). Keep your conservative attitudes out of our underwear drawers!

6. Cleanliness and neatness are not issues of dress. They truly are matters of public health and self-responsibility. As such we endorse policy to maintain these standards. However these standards must be measured against those of the student population, and valid self-expression (which can sometimes look messy) should still be permitted.
7. Jewellery and make-up are also matters for personal choice and self-expression.

We are asking for freedom to make the important decisions about how we dress, the jewellery and make-up we wear and whether or not we get pierced. You must have faith that the schoolyard 'court of public opinion' and our free choice to be at school will moderate our choices to the extent that they will be tolerable and safe for all.

Remember, if public schools "inevitably reflect public values, and if we buy and sell clothing that we are ashamed to see on our children, then we have nobody to blame but ourselves" (Conval 2003).

Conclusion

It will have become evident that much of the basis for the student's claim to have control over their clothing is based on supposed rights of freedom of expression and civil liberties. While these rights are not specifically upheld within the constitution of Australia, they have been implied through the common law system. These student beliefs were included deliberately as they reflect real Australian opinion that has been observed by myself, but also they highlight the influence of American popular culture on the younger population of Australia (and more broadly). The extent to which this debate has been influenced by what has occurred in the US has not been formally determined, although such an investigation, in a more restricted dress-code environment such as Australia would be valuable.

Education Queensland does take into consideration issues such as health, safety, harassment, climate, body shape, activity, however this flexibility is converted in policy on the basis of stereotypical images of youth culture and sub-culture, and are applied in a way that is not wholly in the interests of education. A teacher can only comply with the rules that they are given to operate under, and a beginning teacher is further restricted by teacher opinion. Similar expectations, as to dress, are also placed upon teachers, which further continues the restrictive dress code policy. School, as a body responsible for the development of the adults of tomorrow, and life long learners, are compromising the student's ability to make determinations of fashionable and appropriate attire for themselves. Where teacher opinions as to fashion can be as deviant as beliefs about creationism, it is surprising not to see greater dress code flexibility.

Popular culture representations of youth fashion (and its implications) have created (or exacerbated) a divergence between teacher and student dress code opinions. Although the newer ranks of teachers appear less divergent from their students when it comes to fashion, the hierarchy of administration is still populated with more traditional views. Essentially, learning and teaching must be made paramount to issues of dress.

Snapshot 3: Music

You're Not Going to Listen to that Young Lady!

A Scared Parent's Guide to Evil Music

A (satirical?) guide for parents in determining what their children should be listening to (with accompanying discussion).

Introduction

I could not help but entitle this snapshot “A Scared Parents Guide to Evil Music.” It exemplifies everything that is wrong with the debate over the cause and effect relationship between music and music videos, and deviant youth behaviour. As we will later see, although there is a link between “lyrical message and purported genre of music” and the expectations of the impact of the lyrics on behaviour (Ballard et al 1999, p.485), there is no established causative link between music lyrics and negative behaviour. The lyrical content is often not taken very seriously (Herlinger 1992, p.20). While music labelled as heavy metal or rap are “perceived as less likely to inspire prosocial behaviour” they were not “more likely to inspire antisocial behaviour” (Ballard et al 1999, p.476).

Although musical lyrics from any genre can be ‘objectionable’ lyrics with themes of “alienation, retribution ... angst” and powerlessness which contain references to “sex, drug use, suicide, Satanism ... violence” and misogyny and commonly associated with heavy metal and rap music (Ballard et al 1999, p.476; AACAP 2000; and AAP 1994, p.1219). It is this very music that is “important to teenagers identity” and it is this music which “helps them define important social and subcultural boundaries” (AAP 1994, p.1219; & NIMF 2002). While this type of music may not cause harm, it is indicative of “alienation, substance abuse, psychiatric disorders, suicide risk, sex-role stereotyping, or risk taking behaviours” (AAP 1994, p.1219; & AACAP 2000).

The following ‘guide’ therefore represents a stereotype of a stereotype. Through the ridiculous, the opinions of those who fear what music can do to ‘our’ youth will become evident. This will also highlight the types of opinion and the sort of responses that teachers have to deal with when addressing issues such as music within their classrooms. This reflection on the issue, as such, will improve my response to concerns over music lyrics.

At the conclusion of this Parents’ Guide, the few remaining components of the snapshot analysis will be addressed.

Mothers and Fathers of the World Unite

Save Your Children for the Major Peril of
the World

Protect your Children's Future

Protect them from Inappropriate Music

Mothers and Fathers

The music your daughter or son is listening to at the moment is leading them astray.

- If they are not already, they will soon be taking drugs
- If they are not already they will soon be 'working the streets'
- If they are not already, they will soon be dropping out of school
- If they are not already they will soon be dead.

If you doubt me, listen to what they are listening to, watch the pornographic music videos they play to children on weekend mornings.

Drugs, violence, sex - do you really want your children exposed to this?

You must contact your local Member of Parliament, you must write to the record companies and insist they withdraw this filth. Parental Advisory stickers are a ploy by the record companies to direct children to this inappropriate music.

We want pleasant entertainment for our children. We want music that we can share with them, not music that we must protect them from.

Look at what this music has done to the world

Despite these opinions, or more accurately, because of these opinions it is necessary not to ban explicit music. In the interests of holistic civility, rather than coercing, these lyrics must be tolerated. Instead we (as society, but more importantly here, as teachers) must persuade. As Senator Sam Brownbank (1998, p.456) put it, we “should aim to change the hearts and minds, rather than the laws. Analysing, evaluating and sometimes criticising lyrics is not only compatible with, but is essential to, liberty.” This view comes from a man that agrees with the opinions expressed above. The view that “music is powerful” that it “ changes our mood, shapes our experience, affects our thoughts, alters our pulse, touches our lives” (Brownbank 1998, p.454). For him, music has a powerful public impact. It “affects us, not only privately, but publicly. It helps shape our attitudes and assumptions, and thus, our decisions and behaviour.”

So even if you do support the idea of a causative relationship between music lyrics and the behaviour of youth, this is not necessarily grounds for banning such lyrics. In fact it is the very popularity and controversiality of the genre that makes it the ideal teaching tool, or subject matter for the classroom. After all, a “citizenry that evaluates ideas, that discerns the true from the false, that values reason over reaction, that affirms that which is edifying, and that refutes that which is wrong – is exactly the society most likely to value, to have, and to keep free speech” (Brownbank 1998, p.455).

Rap music is not making up the “conditions of frustration and rage felt by many black teenagers,” it is merely reflecting the deeply seated grievances among young blacks (Herlinger 1992, p.20). Or as Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan put it, the “youth is manifested of the wickedness of their parents, their teachers, the judges, the politicians” (Chappell 2001, p.114). Hence it is “impossible to view pop culture apart from the society that produces it” (Herlinger 1992, p.20). This implicates everyone; those whose opinions are reflected above and teachers. And remember, pop culture is responsible for the acclaimed as well as the criticised.

Through globalisation and the ‘westernisation’ of the airwaves, and access to music and other potentially inappropriate material over the internet, the significance role of teachers in moderating and explaining this information will only increase.

Snapshot 4: Mass Media

The Daily News

“New Report Finds Teachers are Responsible for EVERYTHING That’s Wrong in Society”

A review of recent newspaper articles relating to the issue of Teacher Performance.

The Study

As a 'victim' of a supposed popular culture bias towards negative stereotypes of teachers, (as the title would suggest) I embarked upon this investigation looking for (and expecting to find) the continuance of these negative images through the discussion on the issue of teachers performance. 'Invariably these newspaper reports were going to paint an image of greedy and undeserving teachers, holding the country to ransom, in order to extract more pay'. Surely the teachers' demands would be rejected by the mass media, who would rather strongly advocate greater accountability and the exposure of 'teacher frauds' as an alternative to, or as a necessary component of a grudging minimal pay increase.

However, as will be seen in the following analysis of both the issue of teacher performance and of how this issue has been represented in the mass media (national and capital city newspapers), it has been dealt with in an equitable and balanced manner, with none of the typical bias espoused by the 'courts of public opinion'. Although comments that are negative to the teachers' cause are included, they are balanced equally by incorporating comment from the other side of the argument.

The Analysis

In order to better view the balance of this argument, I will attempt to classify the types of responses to the debate and quantify their occurrence within a table. This inherently will result in a 'loss of resolution' in that the subtle differences between the individual comments will not be evident (and will not be discussed at length), which is acceptable given that this snapshot does not aim to be a complete discursive analysis. However, subsequent to this, and something that will not necessarily become evident through the table, will be an assessment of the authors voice. Through the language used and the points being made, it will be possible to determine if any article is 'siding' with a particular view.

Also under discussion will be the issue of 'why was the topic of teacher performance determined to be newsworthy at all?'. What is it about the topic of teacher performance that makes it a relevant and popular topic?

Due to the restrictions of time and space, the issue of whose views were chosen by the author to represent the differing sides of the debate, will not be fully addressed.

Although it did become immediately obvious that neither the opinion of teachers, students, nor parents were canvassed. However, either their representative bodies, or researchers who had directly canvassed these groups opinions were consulted. Only eight articles were referred to, covering debate covering only a couple of major policy announcements. Further analysis of more reports in more papers would be required to fully validate this study. Although the table takes up only one page, it's construction was a considerable undertaking and it summarises a large body of information.

Table 1: Number of Occurrences of Statements relating to teacher Performance, by Article.

Synthesised Summary Statement	Articles (by publication and date)							
	<i>Australian Financial Review</i> , 30 May 2003	<i>The Australian</i> , 18 September 2003	<i>The Australian</i> , 26 May 2003	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 19 May 2003	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 15 May 2003	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 7 March 2003	<i>The Australian</i> , 5 December 2001	<i>The Age</i> , 7 February 2001
								TOTAL
Performance reviews create difficulty in recruiting and keeping teachers.	2		1				2	5
Student outcomes and teaching performance are linked hence performance reviews are necessary	2	1		1		1		5
Pay must be linked to performance	1	4			1	1		8
Performance reviews are necessary to improve a low standard of teaching	1	1			1			3
There must be penalties for under performing teachers	1		1		1			3
There must be rewards for good performance	1	1	1		1	2	2	8
There must be a consistent standard of teaching			1	2	3			7
Anyone can teach, therefore performance reviews are not necessary	1			1				2
Union involvement in teaching		1				1	1	4
Teachers should have the opportunity to enhance their skills	1	2				4	1	8
Performance is difficult to assess		2	2			2	1	8

Conclusions

As I suggest before, and as is confirmed in the table, the issue of teacher performance has indeed been dealt with in a balanced manner. Each element of the argument, as are listed in the first column, have been given fairly even attention throughout the various articles. In fact, it is really only the aberrant comment relating to the ability of anyone to teach, that stands out.

From this it cannot be concluded that the issue is being dealt with in an equitable manner, nor that the concept of the assessment of teacher performance is a good or acceptable thing. All that it does reveal is that when the issue has been reported in the print media, it has been dealt with in a balanced way. As a teacher, this is of significance. It reveals that the way the profession is being portrayed to the public is fair, and that any comments received by the public on this issue are more likely to be constructed from a balanced point of view, given that their source of information on the topic (the newspapers) has initially also dealt with the topic in a balanced way.

Snapshot References

Art

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Journal

This journal will be arranged by topic heading rather than on a week to week basis, as this is more representative of the deeper understanding that has developed over the duration of this course.

Art

What is art? Before conducting the article reviews as part of my snapshot, my answer would not have been much different from the majority - arts is painting, sculpture, performance art and photography perhaps. Although, I had always assumed I had been utilising my own artistic abilities when it came to me teaching. As my mentor teacher at Dalby State High school would say, "teaching is just acting".

Through my investigations of art from a 'popular culture' perspective, I have discover two very important and related facts:

1. Art, as popular culture, is primarily expressed by youth (and in fact everyone else to differing degrees) in the way that they dress, the clothes that they wear, the makeup they have on, and the way in which they are pierced.
2. This realisation is an important factor to be considered by teachers as the value given to these aspects by students can be disproportionately or unexpectedly high, compared to the weight given to it by schools.

You just need to look at my related snapshot to see how important 'fashion' can be to school students.

Teachers are too often viewed as 'fashion police', as faithful and unyielding upholders of the dress code. To some degree this dichotomy puts teachers at odds with popular culture and their student population. I have already

witnessed students ask a particularly smartly dressed 'beginning teacher', "why do you dress like that miss".

Through the enforcement of both the dress code and at times a strictly enforced teacher dress code, teachers are forced out beyond the scope of 'popular'. From this previous student comment, it can already be seen that an inability of either party to relate to the others 'artistic' choices, hampers the student/teacher relationship. Thus the connection that otherwise may have been made at this level is lost.

The youth/fashion relationship is to some degree, similar to that which Schalit (1996) discusses in relation to the punk movement. Not only do youth express themselves through fashion, fashion it is an imperative. It becomes an empowering and enfranchising act, creating a sense of identity and a feeling of belonging. Even sub-culture fashion becomes an expression of 'other', which identifies the wearer as a member of the younger generation.

So much for art as 'high-culture'. To school students, except in the classroom, it is definitely an individual thing. This can be an important consideration when applying or engaging the various multiple intelligences. Artist ability need not be engaged just through the paintbrush. Art can be a political tool, a subversive act, someone's everyday job. Art is a thing and a medium through which students can express themselves. And, as we have seen, they can express themselves in a popular way.

Mass Media

The 'mass' of mass media is getting ever bigger, and I believe exerting a greater influence. More people have more access to more information. It is possible now to live a wholly 'virtual life' online. When we want groceries we can go to our fridges to get them, but if that is empty, we can now go to our fridge to order more online. The relationship between youth and their sense of identity is greatly effected by the globalisation of culture, as youth are seen as "the part of society most likely to engage in the process of cultural borrowing" (Heaven & Trubridy 2003, p.149).

If I want to I can go to Iraq and fight the war against terror. Not literally, but through the eyes of one of the many imbedded journalists that are waging their own media war over there. More importantly, if students want to 'fight' that war they can also, unless they are not distracted by the web of pornography, violence, satire, political messages and other endless information the mass media can serve up to us.

As a teacher, and as a result of the influence of the mass media, I see our role as more of a moderator, than a true teacher. Everything now must be, or at least should be contextualised. The mass media provides a 'taster' or a basic introduction to much of what may be taught in class. The student will bring to class their perceptions and misperceptions of the world as they have developed through their interface with the mass media. But it goes further. The students are in part, a construction made of the images available to them. They are now freed to search for their own identity and

are readily supplied with an endless, popular and easily digestible stream of alternatives by the media.

Like fashion, the teacher must be continually aware of the trends in popular culture as expressed through the mass media. It may soon be more appropriate to talk about pollution in 'Summer Bay' than to discuss agricultural run-off into the Condamine river, as more students are probably better acquainted with the fictitious environment.

It goes beyond the students also. I must look to how my own views about the world, about teaching and about myself have been shaped by mass media. As a 'soapy' junky, 'Summer Bay' probably would serve as a useful teaching tool, however, my analysis would be shaped by its own influence upon me. I am in no way a mass media automaton, but I am not critical enough of the images of the world it presents me. However, this new found awareness, and reflection is something that should be passed on to students. In addition to being life-long learners, we should all be life-long mass media critics.

Music

As I said within my music snapshot, I could not help but entitle it "A Scared Parents Guide to Evil Music," as it exemplifies everything that is wrong with the debate over the cause and effect relationship between music and music videos, and deviant youth behaviour.

Why is it that music is almost always talked of in negative terms, when it comes to discussions of its role in young people's lives? Why is it that private schools seem so intent on trying to transcend the stigma of popular music, by spending so much time and resources on their choirs? Why do they then look down their noses on those schools involved in the 'Rock Eisteddfod'? Why is it so easy to ask these questions, yet so hard to answer them?

As we have seen elsewhere the construction of the youth-identity is contributed to from a number of different areas, family, socially, from the mass media and also from music. While most children will listen to 'nice music' and will not even take very seriously objectionable lyrical content (Herlinger 1992, p.20), the media paint a picture of the masses being corrupted.

Music can be a positive and uplifting experience for anyone. You just need to look at how music is utilised in religious ceremony to see its positive effects. Or, just look at young children when 'High Five' or 'The Wiggles' come on television. Here, popular culture through music, is having a positive effect. The children's physical fitness, coordination, and language skills are

all being developed. There is some criticism of the way some of these performers dress and inevitable criticism of the use of the television as a baby sitter.

When young adults freely choose to listen to the music of their choosing, then the trouble begins. Teenage girls will 'inevitably' copy the Aguilera's and Spear's and in some way be sexually corrupted. If they look like them, then they must think like them also. This is greatly underestimating the individuality of everyone. These performers seem to provide a template, by which teenage girls can comply, and hence better fit in amongst their peer group. It is like a global school uniform. If you listen to Britney Spears and look like her too, then you will fit in anywhere. Of course this is a western cultural view, and I would not recommend walking down a street in a Muslim country dressed in that manner.

However, as teachers, parents and friends, music can guide us as to the moods of others. Sad or supposedly 'objectionable' music can hint at underlying problems, but is probably not their cause.

Cultural Contexts of Education

As we have seen in my review for this topic, culture is the "ever changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion".

Culture has become a popular consideration in the classroom, particularly on the topic on multiculturalism and aboriginality. This is especially the case when it comes to the topic of inclusive teaching strategies. However, it is too easy to fall into the trap of being too reductionist, as to the definition of culture that we adopt and implement.

With the issue of the education of Indigenous Australians, instead of making a real attempt to ascertain the cultural foundations for each individual student (those cultural elements that effect their being) an oversimplified and stereotypical imagining of what it is to be an Indigenous Australian is applied.

While culture is usually applied to define similar groups, it is actually a far more useful concept when it is applied to an individual. Too often it is culture that is 'blamed' for deficiency, especially in educational performance. It is very easy to find statistics comparing aboriginal to non-aboriginal academic attainment. When really we should be asking what cultural influences have caused these individuals not to succeed.

Culture ultimately starts in the home. For the child this is where they are initially 'exposed'. However, as I stated in the review, the contribution that a child's home life makes to their 'culture' can in no way prepare them to properly interact with people in a diverse and ever changing local and global environment. Therefore it is for the school, as a major component of the child's life, to be agents of cultural appreciation and learning. The school can also foster continual and life-long cultural appreciation within each student by establishing a culturally inclusive school environment.

Too often, the material that is taught within school, has been sterilised of all cultural influence (of course it has not, but little explicit cultural influences are acknowledged). Culture, and popular culture can both be utilised for everyone's benefit.

As an individual I find it hard to differentiate between what part of me is responsible for how I am, and what part has been created or influenced by external factors. In part, this conception of how culture works is wrong, but it also highlights the problems of identifying and utilising culture. It is so completely interwoven to the overall individual that the varying influence cannot be individually addressed. Each person must be taken as a whole.

Popular Culture

Popular culture supposedly must:

- Contrast with official culture
- Have democratic possibilities
- Be subversive
- Be Reinforcing

Popular culture is culture, or at least is the majority of us. No longer are there the strict boundaries between work and pleasure, between the home, the church, the workplace. At least for myself, I am the same person, responding to the same sort of people and responding to the same internal influences in all of these scenarios. It is the very nature of popular culture and the media through which it is disseminated that facilitates this cultural homogenisation of the populus.

There seems to be an interest, though, from those who are 'victims' of, or subscribers to a subset of popular culture to identify themselves as different. Youth want to be different from their parents. As such there is now a noticeable gap between these two groups from a cultural perspective. However these gaps are closing. And it is not that the young are again being more compliant with strict expectations of their seniors (as has been the case in the past).

In fact it is the complete opposite. Popular culture and the mass media have been an empowering force that has given minority groups the voice to

be heard and the power to be in control of their own destinies. So instead of a re-establishment of the establishment it has been the removal of the 'establishment'. All of us have equal access to the various cultural elements from which we can be constituted.

What a dilemma. The very popular culture that gives youth its identity, is slowly becoming a truly popular culture. Are to see a complete polarity change. And I am not talking superficially. Not teenagers in parliament or geriatrics on skateboards. Popular culture now will ensure that we will all have to have a better understand of 'what it means to be me' rather than being able to get that felling of identity by subscribing to the beliefs of a sub-culture group.

On the classroom front, this points towards the adoption of inclusive strategies. However, they will be applied not to include those who are different, but rather to include every 'individual person'. A critical view of popular culture in the classroom will also help children navigate through the variety of popular influences, and not to take them on face value.