

Misdirected Youth's Potential

Today, children and teenagers are perceived to be lazy and disrespectful. They are supposedly lacking a true childhood but are also not ready for life as an adult. This situation warrants the questioning of how involved children are in the stream of life, which is participation in decisions, activities and duties that manage and dictate our society. Some people, such as David Elkin, claim that “robo pets and battery-operated cars don’t leave much to the imagination,” (Cloud, 2007) advocating that the development of technology is the cause of the reduction of youth’s participation in the stream of life. However, it is argued that technology has always been progressing by John Cloud, who asks “Didn’t the toy truck seem outrageously modern to a Victorian?” (Cloud, 2007) In “My Neighbour’s Son” by Pearl Buck, the narrator reflects on the status of involvement of today’s youth, suggesting that today’s younger generation is lacking the means necessary to enter the stream of life. This is shown through their isolation in a world where they are pampered by guardians, a lack of duties that leave youth lost, and a shortage of inspiration which results in youth without passion.

To begin, children are overly sheltered by their parents who believe that they are doing their children a great service; however, parents are excluding them from the stream of life. Buck explains that everyone lives on the same Earth, stating that “adult and child share one world” (Buck, 1996) Although, children are treated as if they do not live in the same world as the adults, instead, they are isolated in a “fantasy world” where “they do not know how to believe” (Buck, 1996). In other words, they are not informed about the realities of the world that we live in. Additionally, the pampering from parents continues to further envelop children in this fantasy world. In an article entitled “Why Your Teenager can’t use a Hammer” by Cynthia Reynolds, he mentions that teachers are frustrated by the lack of abilities of the children. They “see 13 year-olds who cannot do up bottoms or tie laces [...] parents just avoid it by buying velcro and t-shirts” (Reynolds, 2001). Furthermore, in an article called “What Students Need, But Don’t Get,” T. Seal explains why children live in a separate reality by saying “they are young and need to be protected” (Seal, 2006). However, Seal teaches us that students need to live in this ‘adult world’ to truly understand and join the stream of life. Seal asserts that “everyone needs to realize that some things are only learned through experience” (Seal, 2006).

Even though we all live in the same world, and will all face the same adversities that plague society, adults choose to keep children in a separated, ignorant world. In doing so, parents believe that they are doing children a great service by protecting them and their innocence. However, this notion prevents youth from being informed on realities. By withholding the truth, pampering youth and avoiding difficulties, it prevents children from learning how to get along without the help from others or without special treatment. Furthermore, many adults complain that children of these days do are too pampered and do not know how to do simple tasks. But how can the youth of this generation be faulted for their parents giving them easier substitutes instead of teaching them the skills they need? The only way for youth to gain the skills they need it to experiment or partake. By keeping youth in the fantasy world, adults are keeping them from joining the stream of life. They are withholding the teaching tools which grant access to the abilities and independence one needs to be a functioning, participating and outspoken member of

society. Additionally, when adults keep children from society's truths, it does no one good. Isolating them and withholding knowledge of the world will only lead to their curiosity and discovery. Now with the technology, children can find out the realities of the world and far worse. Instead, parents can keep them informed on the events and truths of the world to build trust between the two generations, rather than constant avoidance or deception. Even without a curious child, youth's fantasy world will crumble when adults deem them ready to join the stream of life that they are underprepared for.

Moreover, with no responsibility, assigned duties, or scheduled activities, today's youth find no purpose and no obligation to join the stream of life. Buck explains this scenario by saying "little has been expected of him, and he has been limited in his development by that meager expectation" (Buck, 1996). This is supported by John Cloud, the author of "Busy is OK For Kids," who believes that scheduled timetables for children are good. He claims that "Most of the scheduling is beneficial: kids' well-being tends to improve when they participate in extracurriculars" (Cloud, 2007). However, today's youth does not experience the perks of assigned tasks, since "only 6% of adolescents spend 20 hours a week in organized activities" (Cloud, 2007). Children might not understand the benefits while they are young, but the benefits can more easily be seen once they are older. For example, in an article called "Making the Government a More Responsible Parent," Carlos, a high-school dropout who had a troubling childhood, notes that "he sees how the extracurricular activities he was enrolled in as a boy - sports teams, chess club, Boy Scouts - sustained him in his teen years. It was success he could fall back on when he faced obstacles." (Monsebraaten, 2011). In her argument, Buck says that she would "see to it that even first-graders know that they are citizens, and that, as citizens, they have duties" to address the issue.

Schedules, tasks, and responsibilities all teach children the business of the world. By enrolling youth in clubs, sports, and activities it teaches a multitude of things. It teaches youth to manage their time between activities, how to be a reliable person, and general social and communication skills gained from group activities. The allocation of small duties and responsibilities to children and teenagers teaches them that they have a place in a working society. It demonstrates that with their efforts more can be achieved, helping them understand the weight of their actions, which is important when participating in the stream of life. By accomplishing their small duties at young ages, children can see the tangible outcome of their labor. Similarly, when choosing not to attend to their duties, they are able to see the negative results. In this way, children learn through experience. A sense of obligation can also be instilled into children through scheduled lives or duties. Duties and responsibilities also act as a net when confused or lost. If all else is chaotic, you can always know what you are required to do. Duties act as a grounding feature. When constantly participating in something, it instills a positive obligation to go in order to fulfill your duties. As well, this concept applies to citizenship. By introducing the importance of doing your duties as a citizen, it prepares children to enter the stream of life. They can understand how their choices can affect others through their responsibilities as a citizen. Additionally, it aids in the involvement in the stream of life because it is as if they were always involved, rather than finally joining sometime in their teenage years.

Finally, today's youth get submerged by tasks, desires and activities that are not of their own choosing, leaving them with barely any enthusiasm; this prevents them from passionately participating in the stream of life. Buck illustrates this when saying that "real suffering is the universal human yearning to belong to something bigger than himself, to be indispensable to his fellow men and valued as an individual" (Buck, 1996). She goes on to say that her neighbor's son "has been fed on poor fare, mentally and spiritually, and this while his body has been stuffed with good food and vitamins" (Buck, 1996). This showcases that there is an absence of spiritual and mental substance that intrigues youth's minds. Seal's article sympathizes with teenagers in school. He says, "I am a very passionate person. I care about a lot of things, and I care about them deeply. But saddle me with requirements that are not of my own choosing in any way and I'm pretty apathetic about doing them" (Seal, 2006). Thus, this demonstrates that there is a lack of passion because of the minimal motivating activities, or activities that are not of our choosing. Once youth find what they are passionate about and are not forced to act, they will not relent.

For today's younger generations, it is very challenging to find passion. With parents planning their futures, telling them which jobs are ideal, and pressuring youth to pursue dreams that are not theirs, children find themselves with no interests. When children have no interests, it creates a lost mind that is not working towards anything, losing any motivation to involve themselves in further developing society. As well, youth are lacking in passion because of the limitation of school. Limited number of classes, finite class options, and government requirements all make it nearly impossible for youth to truly know what they want to pursue as a career. Moreover, some classes are required, which further contributes to the lack of passion children have. Forcing children to do something that they do not want to do will end in two ways: it can lead to the discovery of a new interest, or cause boredom, a lack of motivation, and dread its presence. The latter is much more common and is why children are not as involved in the stream of life. By giving kids choices and aiding their progression in finding what they are passionate about, children can much easier find what is important to them, what is worth fighting for, and how they want to be involved. All three of these factors are essential to the involvement of children in the stream of life. Additionally, when children can find their way by themselves, they are able to feel like they are important and that they belong there. This feeling is key to people continuing in their field in a passionate manner.

In conclusion, today's youth are working with what has been provided; however, it is not enough for them to join the stream of life knowledgeably and passionately. For youth to join the stream of life, they need to understand it. They must understand how to be involved, use their voices, take care of their responsibilities and what they are passionate about. Without this basis, youth attempting to join the stream of life will swiftly become lost within the new, challenging world that adults participate in. To prevent children from being unprepared, adults, such as parents or teachers, need to begin to introduce small aspects of the stream of life to children at young ages, such as decision making and the impacts of decisions. When youth are able to seamlessly join the stream of life and participate, it advances all of society because new ideas, visions and passions are all being made known to people who have been circulating the same ideas since they joined the stream of life.

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