

Chair “Childhood, well-being, parenting”

4th seminar – June 26-27th 2019: “Child well-being, school and parental mediation”

The 4th seminar of the chair “Childhood, well-being and parenting” will take place on June 26th and 27th 2019 in Rennes. This fourth session will focus on children’s well-being at school and on parental mediation. Several of the best specialists in this field of research at the international level will participate to this session.

The seminar is only on invitation. Nevertheless, each session will be recorded by video and clips will be published on the website of the chair following the seminar.

Abstracts of the presentations of Wednesday 26th June:

Muriel Darmon

Children’s “attitudes toward school”: a brief review of sociological studies in France

What happens to the typical survey questions “are children happy at school?” or “do they like school?” when they are confronted to the fundamentally class-based relationship between students and school (as an institution) and its members? I will look at the way some sociological studies have answered to, but mainly disrupted, these interrogations in France since the 1970’s. To do so, I will focus on different school levels (kindergarten, primary and secondary schools mainly) and cross-cutting issues: children’s class-based attitudes towards school knowledge, the question of (still class-based) parental attitudes towards school, that of gender and class, and of the hierarchical nature of the school system. Nearly every word in the “do they like school?” question will be shown to be potentially problematic, and should be taken with a grain of sociological salt.

[Muriel Darmon](#) is a CNRS Director of Research at the CESSP (EHESS, Université Paris I-Sorbonne, CNRS), currently President of the French Sociological Association. She is a Visiting Scholar in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cambridge until July 2019. As a qualitative sociologist and an ethnographer, she studies socialization processes in various contexts (weight-loss groups, hospitals and schools). Her most recent publications include *Becoming anorexic: a sociological study* (Routledge, 2017), *La Socialisation*, 3rd edition (Armand Colin, 2016) and *Classes préparatoires: la fabrique d’une jeunesse dominante* (La Découverte, 2015).

Maia Cucchiara

Institutional Perspectives on School Climate, Student-Teacher Relationships, and Students’ Well-Being

There is a large body of evidence showing that positive school climate and supportive student-teacher relationships are associated with improved student learning, reduced discipline problems, and greater socio-emotional well-being. Yet research is also clear on the number of threats to school climate and positive student-teacher relationships rooted in contemporary educational policies and

practices—especially in schools serving low-income students—in the U.S. and internationally. While some work on student-teacher relationships focuses on individuals, the reality is that *schools as institutions* organize and shape individual actions, promoting some types of relationships and suppressing others. This paper will bring the literature on school climate and student-teacher relationships together with work on disciplinary practices, social capital, and trust, focusing particularly on the role of institutional structures, policies, and practices. It will cover key concepts in the literature, what we know about outcomes and how they vary across groups, structures and practices associated with improved school climate, and implications for policy and practice.

[Maia Cucchiara](#) is associate professor at the College of Education at Temple University (USA). She works on urban education policy as well as family-and school relations, with a focus on how classes shape parents' experiences with urban schools and their children's education more broadly. She also studies the impact of urban development and revitalization of public education and the implications for disadvantaged students. She is the author of *Marketing Schools, Marketing Cities: Who Wins and Who Loses When Schools Become Urban Amenities* (University of Chicago Press, 2013). ([CV](#)).

Edgar Cabanas and Jara Gonzalez-Lamas

Positive education and the rise of the happy student

Happiness has become a far-reaching epidemic phenomenon of tremendous impact in advanced capitalist societies. In the last two decades, the preoccupation with individual well-being, positive emotions, and personal development has increasingly dominated therapeutic goals, managerial strategies, technocratic policies, and educational interventions on a global scale.

In this latter regard, the so-called movement of positive education is of particular importance. Promoted by positive psychologists and other happiness scientists, an increasing number of education scholars and professionals have joined around the aim of establishing student happiness as a top educational priority worldwide. The objective of the talk is twofold. First, to analyse the educational and political consequences that stem from the introduction of positive education as a main goal in formal education. Psychology has progressively moved from being a scientific tool for guiding pedagogic strategies to becoming a major agent to decide on educational policies, and the strong introduction of positive psychology in the educational field entails another turn of the screw towards the progressive psychologisation of education. Second, the talk provides a preliminary analysis of the impact of positive education in Spain in the last five years, making special emphasis on how the movement has been received, adapted, and implemented in primary and secondary schools. Whereas Spain has been one of the latest countries to adhere to the movement, the impact of positive education has been significant.

[Edgar Cabanas](#), PhD in psychology at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain), is a research fellow at Universidad Camilo José Cela. He has been Postdoctoral Researcher (2014-2016) and Adjunct Researcher (2016-2018) at the Centre for the History of Emotions (Max Planck Institute for Human Development), in Berlin. He has also been a visiting scholar in the Centre for the Study of Rationality at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in 2011 and 2013. He is the author of several scientific papers (Theory & Psychology, Culture & Psychology) and book chapters (Oxford University Press, Suhrkamp), co-editor of Routledge's series on Therapeutic Culture since 2018, and researcher in several R&D International Projects. He recently published with Eva Illouz *Happycratie. Comment l'industrie du bonheur a pris le contrôle de nos vies* (éd. Premier parallèle) and contributed to the recent collective book edited by Eva Illouz, *Les marchandises émotionnelles* (2019, éd. Premier parallèle) ([CV](#)).

Grant Duncan

New-Zealand: Educational inequality in a high-performing system

New Zealand devotes a greater share of GDP to educational institutions (primary to tertiary) than the OECD average (6.3% compared to 5% average); it gets higher-than-average PISA results in

science, mathematics and reading. New Zealand rates poorly, however, on PISA's performance gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students and was ranked 33 out of 38 developed countries in UNICEF's 2018 educational inequality study. Educational attainment rates are lower for lower socio-economic groups, for indigenous Māori and for the Pacific-Islands communities (nearly two thirds of whom are NZ-born). The effect of socio-economic background on PISA scores is greater in New Zealand than the OECD average. This cannot be explained by immigration, as immigrant children on the whole are faring better than the average in New Zealand, due to a skills-based immigration policy. Educational inequality in New Zealand is related to its unique history and ethno-cultural composition, the tendency of schools to assume a mono-cultural and mono-lingual model, the causes of economic inequality in general, and the socio-economic disparities that affect Māori and Pasifika communities in particular.

The family/home environment, parental involvement and the cultural capital passed on to the young are significant factors in educational achievement, but are harder for schools and policy-makers to influence directly. There is a political risk that policies based on parental and familial support could lead to further stigmatization of (already disadvantaged) Māori and Pasifika families, contrasting them, for example, with another stereotypical image of immigrant or second-generation Chinese students whose highly-skilled parents value education. Parents' engagement with the education of their children may be limited when the institutional "culture" of the school is alien to the family's. Arguably, PISA itself contributes to a mono-cultural model of individual achievement and system performance. The more appropriate policy is to improve the responsiveness of the school environment and the teaching profession to the learning needs and the cultural backgrounds of children from disadvantaged minority groups. Before explaining how New Zealand is addressing educational inequality, this paper will give an introduction to the unique character of New Zealand society and its socio-economic disparities.

[Grant Duncan](#) is associate professor at Massey University (New-Zealand). He teaches political sciences, mainly in the fields of public policy and political theory. His research focuses on political issues and he is an active commentator on public affairs in New Zealand. He has published in numerous journals, in particular concerning Happiness ("Politics, Paradoxes and Pragmatics of Happiness", Culture, Theory and Critique, 2014) and his latest book is *The Problem of Political Trust A Conceptual Reformulation* (Routledge, 2018)

Patrick Nigel Thomas

Wellbeing, recognition and participation: the challenge for schools

What is the role of schools in promoting wellbeing? What do we actually mean by wellbeing? How do students and teachers understand the concept? Are concepts from recognition theory relevant or helpful? These were the questions asked in a large-scale study of approaches to wellbeing in schools in Australia. In this presentation I will report some of the findings from this research, particularly in relation to how wellbeing is understood on the ground – principally in terms of human relations – and how this contrasts with conceptualisations in official policy which tend to focus on pathology and marginalisation. Drawing also on a second large study, I look specifically at how pupil 'voice' and participation relate to wellbeing, suggesting that participation is more complex and multi-faceted than is often understood, and that both participation and wellbeing are fundamentally relational and can usefully be understood in terms of Honneth's theory of recognition.

[Patrick Nigel Thomas](#) is professor emeritus at University of Central Lancashire (UK). He studies child welfare, children's rights and theories of childhood, with a particular focus on children and young people's participation. He has worked with children in care, young carers, school pupils and youth councils, using a range of innovative methods. He is Associate Director and co-founder of The Children's Centre and Young People's Participation. For seven years, he co-edited the journal *Children & Society*, which editorial board he now chairs. He is a Visiting Professor at the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross

University, New South Wales, and an Honorary Professor in the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at Aberystwyth University (Wales).

Emmanuelle Godeau

How are French students feeling in their schools? Findings from the 2014 HBSC international study.

As known, French students are among those who spend the longest days in school, whose schooling costs the most, and whose country gives school a very central place in its culture. In this context, our presentation will rely on findings from the last waves of the international HBSC study. The HBSC study is an international study that collects data every four years since 1984 from children and adolescents in over 40 countries in Europe and North America. Overall, the HBSC study aims to gain new insight into, and increase our understanding of adolescents' health, well-being, and health behaviour in social context. France participates since 1994, with a national sample since 2000, and the specificity to be directly coordinated from the Ministry of Education. Our presentation will focus on the school perception of French students, with 2 perspectives: one international and one inclusive, mainly using data collected in 2014 (7023 French junior high school students; 700 French junior high school students in special units). In the first hand, international comparisons will help us discuss the specificity of the French school system through data on liking school, school achievement, school demands, stress related to school-work, peer and parental support related to school as well as bullying, given its strong links with well-being. While in the second hand, we will compare school perception and well-being between students who do not report a disability or a chronic disease, those who report one but without a reduction of their participation at school, and those who report a disability and a chronic condition that impacts this participation. Last we will compare these figures to those collected among students schooled in special units because of their cognitive disorders, who were surveyed in 2014 through an adapted version of the HBSC questionnaire in France. We will see that figures are contrasted between France and other countries, between boys and girls, between 11 and 15 year-olds, between those who repeated a class and the others, and those with a chronic condition and the others.

[Emmanuelle Godeau](#) is a professor at the French School of Public Health (EHESP), in charge of the training program for medical practitioners involved in the National Education system. She holds a medical thesis on the attitudes and behaviours of young people's health in the face of AIDS, as well as a PhD of anthropology on the training of interns in medicine. She is responsible, for France, of the international [Health Behaviour in School-aged Children \(HBSC\)](#) survey on health, health behaviours and school experiences of 11, 13 and 15 year olds. [Access to publications.](#)

Abstracts of the presentations of Thursday 27th June:

Dimitra Hartas

The social context of adolescent wellbeing: parents, friends and social media

Mental health problems negatively affect young people's wellbeing and capacity to learn and make sense of the world and their place in it. Mental health and wellbeing are difficult constructs to define and measure. Mental health is not just the absence of problems but also young people's agency in constructing a coherent self and identity and contributing to their communities creatively and productively. Concerns about mental health difficulties in young people, mid-adolescent girls in particular, are on the rise. Many explanations ranging from peer pressure and bullying, to social media and social inequality have been offered for the rise in mental health problems. The aim of this study was to examine 14 year olds' emotional wellbeing, life satisfaction and self-harm. Associations between these measures and family background, parenting, peer interactions and screen time were examined. With the exception of a study by Shensa and colleagues (2017), very few studies have examined associations between social media use and young people's wellbeing by using a large national study while controlling for family background and familial and peer relationships. The overarching research question that guided this study was: What was the cumulative and unique contribution of family background, parenting, peer interactions and screen time to 14 year olds' wellbeing, life satisfaction and self-harm? This study utilized data from the Millennium Cohort Study (Wave 6) which surveyed the cohort members and their families in 2015 when the young people were aged around 14. Interviews were conducted with 11,726 families. A survey response rate of 76.3% was achieved (of the eligible sample). There were five sets of measures included in this study: socioeconomic background (ie, parent education, family income), gender, parenting (ie, parent control, discipline, parent-child emotional closeness, homework support), peer interactions (bullying, time spent with friends), screen time (time spent on watching TV / computer videos; playing electronic games and visiting social networking sites) and wellbeing (ie, moods and feelings; self-concept; life satisfaction, self-harm). Across measures of wellbeing, the findings showed that girls fared much worse than boys, particularly in experiencing negative feelings and self-harm. Teenage girls appeared to have become the new 'high risk' group. The findings from this study have implications for young people's wellbeing especially as seen through the lens of income, parenting and gender inequality. Given the current political concern about young people's mental health, this study is hoped to contribute to an informed debate about individual wellbeing within a broader social milieu.

[Dimitra Hartas](#) is associate professor in Special educational needs and Disability at the Centre for Education Studies at Warwick University. Her research and teaching interests focus on disability issues, children's language development and children's rights. Her research focuses also on child development and wellbeing from an ecological perspective to examine young children's language, literacy and social competence by accounting for factors that are proximal and distal to their life. She published many papers on these issues and is the author of *Language and Communication Difficulties* (Continuum, 2005); *The Right to Childhoods* (Continuum, 2010); *Parenting, Family Policy and Children's Well-Being in an Unequal Society. A New Culture War for Parents* (Palgrave, 2014) ([publications](#)).

Cecilia Von Otter

Schooling, well-being and agency among Swedish children

In this paper, I describe the situation of children in Sweden from three perspectives; the situation of children within the educational system and how children and their parents engage in the competitive process of gaining (formal) cultural capital, the situation of children with regard to social contacts with parents, friends and other networks, and, lastly, the situation of children who grow up under the most precarious conditions. Although children in Sweden are generally well off in a comparative

perspective, they are affected by the current trends of growing economic inequality and on-going urbanization and social segregation. In this descriptive paper, I draw mainly on information regarding schooling, educational aspirations and outcomes, well-being, housing and criminality from national statistics and survey data. The theoretical conclusions focus on children's agency within the social structures of family, school and neighbourhood.

[Cecilia Von Otter](#) is a researcher at the Swedish Institute for Social Research (SOFI), Stockholm University (Sweden). She has worked for a long time in the field of public policy. She is currently doing quantitative social research, Social Stratification and Educational Psychology. Her current project is 'Gendered careers: career expectations in adolescence and career trajectories in mid-life' ([publications](#)).

Kathryn Ecclestone

Changing the subject of education: the impact of a 'crisis' of wellbeing in Britain

Since the late 1990s, numerous policy reports, mainstream and social media have proffered an enduring and apocalyptic 'sense of crisis about the declining emotional and psychological states of British children and young people. As a result, well-being has become a key goal at all levels of the education system. A series of policy initiatives reflect vague understandings of 'well-being', which has been framed, variously, as 'social and emotional aspects of learning' and 'emotional well-being' (2003-2011), 'character education' (with associated notions of 'resilience' and 'mental toughness') (2011 – 2015) and, currently, 'mental health.' Promoted by a thriving commercial industry and lobbying groups, these fluctuating discourses have institutionalised psychological claims, vocabularies and activities as a means to both prevent and ameliorate poor well-being/mental health in all educational settings. This paper summarises the main rationales for these developments, identifies some typical interventions and highlights problems with the evidence base. It relates contemporary approaches to well-being in education to the wider cultural privileging of human subjects as inherently psychologically vulnerable. The paper argues that this 'diminished' subject encourages assumptions about the negative impact of curriculum knowledge, teaching and assessment on well-being. One outcome is the risk of a self-fulfilling prophecy that makes students, educators and parents increasingly cautious - even fearful - about the psycho-emotional impact of education. The paper concludes with the proposition that a holistic approach to well-being is rooted in rich curriculum knowledge, meaningful activities that take young people into a world outside themselves, strong social relationships and positive expectations. It ends by outlining some areas where empirical research needs to be done.

[Kathryn Ecclestone](#), Visiting Professor of education at the University of Sheffield (UK). Her research explores the ways in which preoccupation with 'emotional well-being', 'resilience' and 'vulnerability' encourages the spread of ideas and practices from therapy, counselling and psychology throughout the education system, changing teacher/student relationships, the curriculum and support systems. She is the author among others of *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education* (co-authored with Dennis Hayes) and *Emotional Well-Being in Policy and Practice*. She is working on a forthcoming book, *Governing Vulnerable Subjects in a Therapeutic Age*, and a research project on the rise of 'vulnerable' students and its effects on university life. [Access to publications](#).

Michel Vandenbroek

Is ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) part of the solution of inequalities, or is it part of the problem?

Over the last decades, equality policies have shifted from equality of outcomes to equality of opportunities and, in so doing, early childhood is increasingly framed as equalizer. It seems that nation-States count on preschool and parent support to fulfil their social ambitions. We critically analyse how this discourse may dematerialize issues of poverty and how it – through the individualization of inequality - , pedagogicalizes and culpabilizes parents. In addition, in many

European countries, there is a significant gap between discourse and practice. A first problem is the persistent inequality in access to high quality provision. A second problem is the increasing marketization in many EU countries and the empirical evidence that marketization goes hand in hand with growing inequalities. A third problem is that the focus on the preschool as the place for early learning may have counterproductive effects on the learning opportunities for children as is demonstrated in countries with a focus on preschool entry at an early age (e.g. France and Belgium). We therefore plead to go beyond too simplistic two-dimensional analyses of ECEC and shallow interpretations of country comparisons, such as PISA. Inequalities are complex and therefore need complex engagements with social reality that embrace unpredictability, democracy and social cohesion.

[Michel Vandenbroeck](#) is associate professor in family pedagogy and head of department in the department of social work and social pedagogy at Ghent University (Belgium). His research concerns policy and practices in early childhood care and education and parenting support. He studies processes of in- and exclusion in child care, preschool and parenting support in contexts of increasing diversity. He has published extensively on these issues and is the author of the book *The State of the Child, the child of the state: towards a pedagogy of preschool structures (De Staat Van Het Kind, Het Kind Van De Staat : Naar Een Pedagogiek Van De Voorschoolse Voorzieningen, 2018)*. [Access to publications](#).

Cath Larkins

Reimagining schooling from the perspectives of marginalised children and young people: balancing the rights of children with the expectations of parents and governments

At European and national levels, governments and parents place expectations of educational achievement on children. Children also have their own hopes, dreams and expectations. This paper draws on data from participatory research conducted over the past 10 years with marginalised children and young people (aged 3-18 years) to explore children's experiences and aspirations for their present and their future. Using insights from childhood sociology and capability approaches to wellbeing I outline some of the key tensions between dominant expectations and children's own goals, highlighting the significance of competing conceptions of children's citizenship.

[Cath Larkins](#) is Reader in Children's Citizenship at University of Central Lancashire. She has teaching responsibilities in the fields of childhood theories, participation and social pedagogy. She specialises in theories and practices of participatory research and children's lived and social citizenship. Her career as a researcher, participation consultant, advocate and children's rights activist has spanned 20 years, mostly taking place in Wales. She has worked for Save the Children, The Children's Society, Action for Children, Forest School Wales, Local Authorities and the Welsh government. [Access to publications](#).