
Kid President: Children’s Status in the Age of Trump

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Abstract

The notion of Donald Trump provokes a range of gestures, images, and smear words. Mainstream liberal media outlets position him as an idiot (Adams, 2017), a slob (Shephard, 2017) and interestingly, a *child* (Brooks, 2017). So provocative is the last identification that Comedy Central’s *Daily Show* (2017) created a browser extension that converts Trump’s tweets into “their rightful state: a child’s scribble”. His words, transformed into writing which reflects both whimsy and immaturity, remind us of children’s status and position in Western society: as adults-in-the-making, in need of adults to tame them, and unworthy of respect. After all, children, like Trump, “are leaky: they do not respect established boundaries. They wet the bed, spew up their food, have no respect for tidy kitchens or hoovered carpet” (Holland, 2004, p. 6). While Trump’s policies have undermined the status of women, immigrants, LGBTQ individuals, undocumented youth, Muslims, etc., our responses to his office have simultaneously reified children’s lower social status. Our outrage at the oppression of others in turn works to oppress our youngest. In this work, I examine the child-adult dichotomy through archival research of images, cartoons, drawings, and multimodal texts produced during Trump’s presidency as well as in other instances in which politics has infringed unwittingly on the rights of children to be seen as capable and intelligible. The boundaries between children and adults are continually constituted and re-constituted in images through our social media and sociopolitical spaces, and this warrants serious consideration.

Keywords: young children, images, media portrayals, Donald Trump, children’s rights

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