

Alexandra Klein

Department II – Social Pedagogy
Institute of Educational Science
Münster University

alexandra.klein@uni-muenster.de

SEX AND THE UNDERCLASS - OLD WINE IN NEW SKINS?

The paper aims to contextualize the current but also historically well-known problematization of youth (or more concretely: girls) sexuality in terms of “sexual negligence and deviance” with the discourse about the “underclass”.

The analysis of the core arguments of the discourse on (sexual) negligence (e.g. early sexual intercourse, promiscuity, and teenage-pregnancy) highlights its empirical weakness. Analytical shortenings of both discourses are pointed out. Referring to the work of Stanley Cohen the conception of “moral panics” is revitalized.

Both discourses are identified as specific moralized and individualized approaches to social inequalities which have to be related to the current transformation of welfare regimes as a transformation from the “war on poverty” to the “war on welfare”. The implications of these findings for Social Policy and Social Work as well as alternative perspectives will be discussed.