

A ‘fish in water’: The formation of a single student’s class habitus in the enactment of student voice practice

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Pre-recorded presentation link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyY7w7BJo0>

In student voice research there has been a focus on the ways that enactment can unintentionally generate conditions that entrench existing inequitable power relations in education. Studies have largely focused on conditions of practice in secondary schools, often in low socio-economic contexts. This means that there has been a dearth of investigations undertaken into the rationales and processes of student voice in primary schools located in communities with high socio-economic backgrounds, leaving little known about the conditions of practice that work to privilege some voices over others in these contexts. In this paper I explore the particular ways of *doing* and *being* that are valued for student voice practice at a single case study primary school located in an affluent suburb in Melbourne. I add to a body of research which draws on a feminist critical engagement with Bourdieu, to examine the particular ways the shared habitus of a primary school community shaped the individual classed habitus of a student during the processes of student voice practice. My analysis draws on data generated over three terms in 2019, through participant observation, focus groups with students, and interviews with teachers. Using participant observation as a method allowed for the exploration of the ways that a student who was not a focus group participant voiced their individual learning needs. I present a *moment*, as a unit of analysis, which allows for a nuanced understanding of how social advantage was (re)produced through the practice of student voice. The moment - an artefact photographed during participant observation - is an email sent from a Year 5 boy named Nick to a Member of Parliament. The email was the first of a chain of emails which ultimately resulted in the MP visiting the school to answer questions Nick posed to him on the topic of Nick’s individual research project which was on the workings of government. The moment demonstrates the particular ways in which the value of the social use of student voice is coproduced by the social actors at the case study school. The moment is a trace of time marking the track of a social trajectory which occurred during the enactment of student voice. My analysis offers a deep, complex, and situated understanding of the conditions under which student voice is enacted in particular ways to effect or maintain positions of advantage.