



CHC EPISODE 4: DEVELOPMENTAL THINKING

January 5, 2015 - [Society for the History of Children and Youth](#)

Interview with André Turmel is available [online](#)

CHILDHOOD: History and Critique (CHC) is a series of interviews, commentary, and happenings in historical studies of childhood presented by Dr. Patrick J. Ryan, Kings University College at Western University, Canada.

This episode of CHC offers an extended two-part conversation with André Turmel, professor emeritus at Laval University in Quebec City and author of the 2008 book [A Historical Sociology of Childhood](#).

Turmel begins by summarizing how he came to the historical sociology of childhood. He gained his commitment to history while studying at the University of Provence Aix Marseille I, where Annalistes historians such as Georges Duby and Paul Veyne were linked to the sociologists who trained him. He saw childhood has an area that needed sociological attention, noting that for most of the twentieth-century sociologists focused upon the family, leaving childhood to the psychologists. Citing the examples of Talcot Parsons and Pierre Bourdieu, Turmel claims that until quite recently, leading sociologists have uncritically imported developmental psychology into sociological theory.

In response, Turmel developed an historical sociology of childhood by drawing upon some of the ideas of Bruno Latour, and building on the insights of the physician and historical philosopher Georges Canguilhem's post-WWII work on the normal and the pathological.

His research utilizes precise analytic concepts, but these are fashioned through detailed archival efforts. Most of our conversation focused upon Turmel's key concepts for investigating modern childhood: "graphic visualization," "the normal child," and "developmental thinking as a cognitive form."

Select Works by André Turmel:

A Historical Sociology of Childhood. Developmental Thinking, Categorization and Graphic Visualization (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

"Das normale Kind: Zwischen Kategorisierung, Statistik und Entwicklung," in *Ganz normale Kinder: Heterogenität und Standardisierung kindlicher Entwicklung* edited by Helga Helle and Anja Tervooren (Juventa, 2008): 17-40.

"La catégorie d'orphelin en milieu institutionnel. Quelques paramètres pour la région de Québec (1850-1950)," in *Québec-Wallonie. Dynamiques des espaces et expériences francophones* edited by Brigitte Caulier and Luc Courtois (Laval University Press, 2006): 113-134.

"De la fatalité de penser la maturation au terme de développement. Esquisse d'une alternative," in *Questions pour une sociologie de l'enfance* edited by Régine Sirota (University of Rennes Press, 2006): 63-73.

"Towards a Historical Sociology of Developmental Thinking: the Case of Generation," *Paedagogica Historica* vol. 40, issue 4 (August 2004): 419-433

"Historiography of Children in Canada," in *Histories of Canadian Children and Youth* edited by Nancy Janovicek and Joy Parr (Oxford University Press, 2003): 10-18.



André Turmel is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Laval University in Quebec City. He has published on education and child labour, the history of developmental psychology, and it currently examining the concept of "orphan children" in the history of Quebec.



Patrick J. Ryan is Associate Professor at Kings University College at Western University – Canada with appointments in the Childhood and Social Institutions Program and the Department of History. He is a co-founder of H-Childhood (est. 1998) and author of

Master-Servant Childhood: a history of the idea of childhood in Medieval English Culture (Palgrave, 2013).