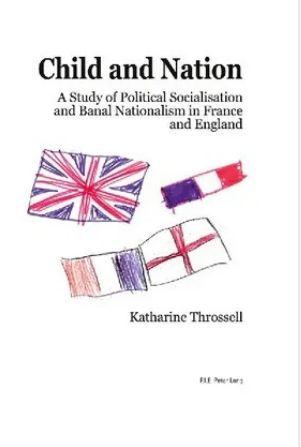
Throssell

Child and Nation

A Study of Political Socialisation and Banal Nationalism in France and England



Where do feelings of national belonging come from? Why is it that this belonging often seems both fundamental and banal, both intangible and omnipresent? This book argues that the answers to these questions lie in childhood and the socialisation to the nation that we experience as children. It suggests that the banality of our own everyday nationalism is due to the fact that we have spent our lives learning to take it for granted. Just as our first understandings of reality are learned during childhood socialisation, so nationhood and national belonging are internalised as natural and necessary from the very beginning of our lives. The specific nature of this early socialisation is what confers upon banal nationalism its characteristic combination of omnipresence, inscrutability and self-evidence. To try and get around this self-evidence and explore this socialisation and its results, this study has adopted an innovative methodology involving semi-directive projective interviews with young children in France and England. This book presents an analysis of how this early socialisation to the nation plays out on young children's visions of national belonging and its justifications and implications. It also looks at what this transmission in childhood means for nationalism as an ideology and the power and pertinence of the nation today.

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