

Geographies of Children and Young People 4

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Claire Dwyer *Editors*

Tracey Skelton *Editor-in-Chief*

# Identities and Subjectivities

 SpringerReference

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# Geographies of Children and Young People

**Volume 4**

**Editor-in-Chief**

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*Geographies of Children and Young People* is a Major Reference Work comprising 12 volumes that pulls together the best international reflective and innovative scholarship focusing on younger people. Volumes 1 and 2 establish and critically engage with the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological groundings of this geographical sub-discipline. Volumes 3–11 provide in depth thematic analysis of key topical areas pertinent to children's and young people's lives: space, place and environment; identities and subjectivities; families and peer groups; movement and mobilities; politics and citizenship; global issues and change; play and well-being; learning and labouring; conflict and peace. Volume 12 connects both academic, policy, and practitioner based work around protection and provision.

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# Identities and Subjectivities

With 40 Figures

 Springer Reference



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## Series Preface

Geographies of Children and Young People now constitutes a major subdiscipline within Geography. This is a very exciting and influential time in its development. Hence, it is important to capture the dynamism, depth, and breadth of the subdiscipline within a Major Reference Work (MRW). Springer Major Reference Works are produced in such a way that updating and editing of the online version can be done every few years. This means that the publication does not fix the data, debates, and delivery but rather moves and evolves with the subdiscipline itself. The intention and expectation of this MRW is that this substantive collection will be *the* go-to resource for scholars, educators, and practitioners working with children and young people.

While founding scholarship was published in the 1970s and 1980s, the dramatic expansion of research and publication in the field really began in the late 1990s and has continued exponentially. The last decade has witnessed a substantive increase in graduate student research projects and a surge in university-level teaching related to children's and young people's geographies. It is therefore extremely timely that this 12-volume major reference work has been produced. Together as Editor-in-Chief, Volume Editors, and Authors, we have developed the largest single collection of geographic work focusing on children and young people in the world. Intellectually, the work reaches beyond geography to the wider social and behavioral sciences; many of the authors in the series are not geographers, and so, the collection is healthily and engagingly transdisciplinary. Anyone working with children and young people will find chapters that connect very effectively with their own interests. Specialists as well as graduate and tertiary education students will find relevant work distributed throughout the MRW or locate everything they might need within one thematic volume.

This Series was founded on certain key intellectual and political principles. Working with young people and children within the academy has not always been easy nor a straightforward pathway for academics. It has taken time for scholars to convince their colleagues of the following: that children and young people really matter; that they should not be marginalized by the academy; that they have competency and agency and play important roles in society; and that they should be taken seriously as people regardless of age or size. This 12-volume collection is material evidence of the academic importance of children and young people in our

world. The MRW is determinedly international in approach, in authorship, and in content. The huge diversity of nations and territories explored in the collection as well as the geographic locations of author contributors is a real testament to the commitment of the Editor-in-Chief and Volume Editors to be genuinely international. Children and young people are everywhere on the planet, hence it is imperative that this Series reflects that ubiquity. Drawing from scholars and scholarship from within and about the majority world has been a key achievement for each volume. Another aspect of inclusivity relates to authorship. Foundational, well-established, and early career scholars are all well represented throughout the volumes.

The 12 volumes work collectively as a series and also stand alone as single books. The volumes are lengthy and contain between 25 and 35 full chapters; each volume is an excellent resource of expertise, content, and analysis. Volume 1, *Establishing Geographies of Children and Young People*, is designed to pull together some of the foundational work in the sub discipline; demonstrate the emergence and establishment of particular philosophical, theoretical, and conceptual themes; and capture the diversity of geographic work on children and young people as it connects with other sub- and disciplinary approaches. This volume presents the key founding elements of the sub discipline. Volume 2, *Methodological Approaches*, explores the grand array of methodological approaches and tools that children's and young people's geographers, and other social and behavioral scientists, have worked with, adapted, and invented. Chapters explore research practices, techniques, data analysis, and/or interpretation. Working with younger people in research demands different ways of doing research and hence addressing the complexities of power relations. Methodologically, innovation and experimentation have been very important. *Space, Place, and Environment* (Vol. 3) takes these three central geographic concepts and debates and extends them. The volume is structured around five subsections: Indigenous Youth – Space and Place; Children, Nature, and Environmental Education; Urban Spaces; Home Spaces and Homeless Spaces; and Border Spaces. Several of these themes are explored in fuller depth in subsequent specialized volumes. Volumes 1 and 3 will be particularly useful starting points for readers less familiar with geography as a discipline. Volume 4, *Identities and Subjectivities*, is designed to focus on the stuff of life and living for younger people. The chapters examine who young people and children are and what their social identities and subjectivities mean in the context of their spatial experiences. The volume explores identity formation and the spatial meaning of identities and subjectivities in relation to a broad range of social relations. The chapters explore how young people's senses of selfhood and belonging emerge through complex processes of inclusion, exclusion, and marginalization and the important role played by representation, discourse, and creativity. In Vol. 5, *Families, Intergenerationality, and Peer Group Relations*, the focus is on the ways in which children and young people are relationally connected with others. Section I demonstrates that familial relationships and the spatiality of the home are extremely important in all children's and young people's lives, even though the patterns and structures of families and the spaces/places of home vary geographically and temporally. Section II innovatively examines the

complexities and spatialities of extrafamilial intergenerational relationships and the complex meanings of age relationality. Section III emphasizes children's and young people's relationships with one another. This includes work on geographies of emotion and affect, bodies and embodiment.

The mobility turn in geography has been highly influential in the social sciences. Children's and young people's geographers have been significant in the paradigmatic shift around mobilities and immobilities. In Vol. 6, *Movement, Mobilities, and Journeys*, contributors examine the role children and young people play in these "travels" in a range of diverse global contexts. The chapters collectively provide theoretical, empirical, and methodological insights and examples of actual movement combined with analysis of a range of complex contexts, spatialities, and temporalities that facilitate or hamper mobility. Volume 7 takes us into the realm of children and young people as political beings. *Politics, Citizenship and Rights* explores the political geographies of younger people in order to bring analytical attention to intricacies of the *policies* that specifically affect young people and children, alongside the *politics* at play in their everyday lives. Divided into four sections, the volume interrogates the spatialities of the rights of the child, children and young people's agency in politics, youthful practices and political resistance, and active youth citizenship. Volume 8, *Geographies of Global Issues: Change and Threat*, unites three broad research themes that are often examined separately: economic globalization and cultural change; international development; and children and young people's connections with climate change, natural hazards, and environmental issues. What pulls these themes together is the recognition that younger people are important actors and agents within these processes and that their engagement/disengagement is crucial for the planet's future. In Vol. 9, *Play and Recreation, Health and Wellbeing*, important, well-established, but often contentious foci of children's and young people's lives are examined conceptually, temporally, spatially, in practice, and through representation. Many of the debates about children's embodiment revolving around obesity, unfitness, wellness, and neglect are relatively new in the social sciences, and geographers have played important roles in their closer scrutiny. Volume 10, *Labouring and Learning*, provides an integrated and multidimensional approach to understanding what learning and laboring mean to children and young people. The two concepts are explored in depth and breadth in order to capture the variance of what work and education mean and how they are practiced in different places and at different times through childhood and youth. Key thematic areas for this volume include social reproduction, transitions, aspirations, and social and cultural capital. In *Conflict, Violence and Peace* (Vol. 11), the emphasis is on the ways in which children are impacted and affected by, and involved with, highly problematic and fragile conditions of war, violence, conflict, and peace. As more and more younger people experience a range of conflicts and social, economic, and political violence, it is essential to examine what happens to them and what roles they play in processes such as asylum, child soldiering, terrorism, counterterrorism, ending conflict, and building peace. Volume 12, *Risk, Protection, Provision and Policy*, serves to connect academic research and policy and planning that affects children and young people. Policy, planning, and provision

are often purportedly about reducing risk and offering protection but are also associated with the control and containment of younger people, particularly spatially. The chapters explore the ways in which policies at different scales affect children and young people in terms of their access to space and their life chances.

This Series is an extremely rich, varied, and vibrant collection of work centered on geographies of children and young people. Just as children and young people bring vibrancy, diversity, and complexity to our worlds, so this MRW is designed to showcase, deepen, and develop the geographic scholarship that captures, albeit partially, the fascinating social heterogeneity and diverse spatialities of children's and young people's lives.

National University of Singapore, Singapore  
May 20, 2015

Tracey Skelton  
MA Oxon, Ph.D.  
Editor-in-Chief

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# Editorial: Geographies of Children and Young Peoples' Identities and Subjectivities

Nancy Worth and Claire Dwyer

This volume on identities and subjectivities is designed to focus very much on the stuff of life and living for children and young people, a central area of interest in the subfield of children's geographies as well as the field of youth studies. It is about who children and young people are and what their social identities and subjectivities mean in the contexts of their spatial experiences. The volume allows authors to examine the geographies of children's and young people's lives, who they are, and what impact these elements have in spatial and institutional contexts, revealing the complexities of processes of identity formation and the spatial meaning of those identities and subjectivities.

This introduction sets out the organization of the volume into three sections: *Identities, Inclusion and Exclusion*, and *Representations*. These sections were chosen as a way of navigating this broad area of geographic inquiry, and should be seen as a way of exploring the volume rather than a way to categorize the writing within. Section I, *Identities*, includes chapters that explicitly examine social categories like gender, ethnicity, disability, faith, and age. The second section, *Inclusion and Exclusion*, comments on the importance of spatiality to concerns about identity and subjectivity. It includes chapters that explore how identity is often used as a marker for belonging in diverse places including city centers, suburbs, slums, refugee camps, and the countryside. The third section, *Representations*, considers how children and young people represent themselves and are represented by others, across different forms of media including literature, photography, radio, as well as through understandings of home and place.

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## Identities

The first section of the volume examines how childhood and youth intersect with other social categories of difference, including gender, race/ethnicity, disability, religion, and social class. The geographies of children and young people has had an interest in identities since its inception, working to understand how identity and space are mutually constructed. The first three chapters in this section, ► [Chap. 1](#), "Age Identity and the Geographies of Children and Young People" by Nancy Worth,

► [Chap. 2](#), “Geographies of Young Disabled People” by Louise Holt, and ► [Chap. 3](#), “Childhood, Youth and Religious Identity: Mapping the Terrain” by Peter Hemming offer reviews of how age, disability, and religious identity have been examined in children’s geographies and beyond. These three identity categories often receive less attention from geographers than the triumvirate of gender, class, and race, and so reviews are helpful to situate research in these areas. Importantly, the three chapters also suggest future avenues for research, with Worth suggesting that age become a more explicit category of analysis, Holt encouraging the development of “counter-topographies” to build on similar experiences of disableism across diverse locales, and Hemming calling for a broader engagement with religious identity to include more research beyond Christianity and Islam, as well as nonreligious or secular identities.

The six chapters that follow these opening reviews examine identity through particular concepts, places, and contexts. In ► [Chap. 4](#), “Neoliberal Subjectivity and Gendered Inequalities,” neoliberal subjectivity – or how neoliberal ideas and ways of thinking inform how young people understand themselves – is examined with a gendered lens. Through a study of the life plans of Swiss young adults, Karin Schwiter demonstrates how the neoliberal ideal of the individual masks wider social inequalities. Michael Richardson’s chapter, “Masculinities and Generational Change within the Irish Diaspora” continues the focus on gender, but moves to an examination of masculinities (► [Chap. 5](#)). Richardson examines how men in a diaspora context – Irish heritage growing up on Tyneside (UK) – are “socially recognizable” to each other and the wider community through particular practices of masculinity that echo across generations.

► [Chapter 6](#), by Rosa Mas Giralt, focuses on migrant identity and the (transnational) family as a source of identity and belonging. Her chapter argues that children and young people’s identities need to be understood relationally, within family and generation, echoing Schwiter’s critique about the overused framework of individualization. For children of migrant descent in particular, understanding how they “live embedded in transnational families and their social fields” leads to a rich analysis of their lifeworlds. Song’s chapter (► [Chap. 7](#)) examines experiences of “mixed race” young people in Britain who are seen as Black, seen as White, or seen as racially ambiguous – where being assigned one of these three options may or may not reflect how young people see themselves. The chapter highlights how identity is both ascribed by others and performed/felt by young people, as well as the importance of identity categories (like “mixed race”) that allow people to positively affirm who they are.

The final two chapters in the section examine how places and practices impact children and young people’s identities, beginning with Rosen’s chapter on play subjectivities (► [Chap. 8](#)). She argues that not only are play spaces a site where children’s identities are negotiated, play is also constitutive of identity. The chapter contrasts an emancipatory framing of play with an understanding that play is often constrained by unequal social relations, where the former sets children apart from adult relations and the latter looks at relations between children. Rosen offers a useful intersectional approach to move past this impasse in the literature. Finally,

Beazley investigates spaces of identity for Indonesian street children (► [Chap. 9](#)), where public space was a site of both domination and resistance for the *Tekyan*, a subculture of street youth. The chapter uses young people's mental maps to see the city of Yogyakarta from the perspective of young people, revealing how identifying as *Tekyan* was inherently connected to particular spaces in the city that were used creatively, from shopping areas repurposed as places to sleep to the local bus terminal as a site for busking – these spaces were critical to collective identity and solidarity.

Overall, the chapters in this opening section offer diverse perspectives on the identities research happening in children's geographies. Social categories of difference are either reviewed or examined empirically, drawing attention to how space and subjectivity are mutually constituted. This section was unable to commission a chapter on sexualities, despite important research beginning to appear in this area. To us, this is an indication that more research on sexual identity and the geographies of children and young people is warranted.

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## Inclusion and Exclusion

The second section of the book is focused around the complex processes of exclusion, inclusion, and marginalization. Building on the arguments of the first section of this volume, it examines how identities are markers of belonging in diverse contexts but also how such identities are constructed and contested. An important starting point for children's geographies has often been to emphasize the ways in which children and young people are represented as excluded and marginalized from adult worlds and spaces. The first chapter in this section, by Karen Wells (► [Chap. 10](#)), traces the processes by which children are constructed as vulnerable subjects. Drawing on case studies of violence against children, including female genital mutilation, she offers a provocative challenge to existing frameworks through a reworking of children's agency and the notion of liminality. While Wells offers a reframing of existing ontological framings of the child as a subject category, many of the other chapters in this section emphasize the ways in which children are constructed as *other*, as *minors*, and the ways in which this framing produces marginalization.

Processes of exclusion are multiple and complex and the chapters in this section illustrate the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, and space in both producing exclusion and marginalization and in shaping parameters of exclusion. This theme is captured in Sumi Hollingsworth's chapter on young people's subcultures, drawing on fieldwork in British schools, which illustrates the shifting meanings of "race" and "ethnicity" in different contexts and the complex processes by which belonging, and nonbelonging, are negotiated (► [Chap. 12](#)) and echoed in Chloe Patton's discussion of youth Muslim subjectivities in suburban Melbourne (► [Chap. 11](#)). Similarly, for the young people from deprived backgrounds in London traveling as volunteers to Africa in Ruth Judge's chapter, understandings of ethnic and classed identities and privilege are reconfigured through their encounters,



challenging “sedimental spatial inequalities.” In ► [Chap. 14](#) the focus moves from the UK to India, where Kabita Chakraborty traces the ways in which young urban women in slum areas navigate new socially mobile identities. Young peoples’ experiences are subject to normative values particularly in relation to appropriate feminine behavior, a theme echoed in ► [Chap. 15](#), David Marshall’s study of children in Balata Refugee Camp in Palestine. All four chapters emphasize the *dynamics* of identity formation.

While all the chapters in this section emphasize the complexity of processes of exclusion and marginalization – and the intersection of multiple identifications – they are linked too by a focus on the agency of young people themselves. For Sun Lim and Becky Pham, social media provides an outlet for young migrants to express themselves (► [Chap. 16](#)). In Balata, Marshall uses the artistic intervention of young women to illustrate their re-working of gendered and religious identifications while Jimenez Alvarez finds in rap music alternative narratives of belonging. Australian Muslims (Patton) and diverse urban Londoners (Judge) rework transnational connections to forge new identities. This critique of dominant conceptions of social exclusion in Judge’s chapter chimes with Herman Cuervo’s critique of the restrictive framing of young people in rural areas as socially excluded (► [Chap. 17](#)). Another example is the child-migrants in Tangiers discussed in ► [Chap. 18](#) by Mercedes Jiménez Alvarez who, she argues, are denied agency through state governmentalities which mark them as simultaneously “illegal” and “dependent.” Thus children are marginalized in discourses and practices marking them as marginal to adult worlds.

The chapters presented in this section offer diverse geographical accounts that are rich in ethnographic detail. What they capture is a critical engagement with the concept of exclusion, emphasizing that young people are subject to multiple scales, practices, and discourses of marginalization but also that young people themselves are complexly engaged and even implicated in these processes. At the same time these chapters offer creative examples of the agency of young people in confronting and reworking marginalization.

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## Representations

As the previous subsections have made clear, the geographies of children and young people can be understood to be framed within specific discourses, practices, and spaces which often provide parameters for the “appropriate” or “acceptable” performance of youthful identities or subject young people to specific processes of exclusion or marginalization. Thus this final section of the volume focuses particularly on the significance of representation. While geography has seen a turn recently to the nonrepresentational, there remains analytic value in understanding how representations are created about others, in this case children and young people, and what is revealed by children and young people’s representations of themselves. Chapters in this section can be subdivided into two distinct approaches. First, those which reflect on the ways in which young people are subject to particular representations, or how they might respond to normative or dominant representations.

The second set of chapters draw more explicitly on studies of the role of young people in seeking to define their own self-representation through art forms such as radio broadcasting, photography, and graffiti.

Kate Cairns' opening chapter in this section offers a fascinating account of morality and relationality in children's foodscapes. Arguing that discourses about children and food are shaped by "moral projects of the self," this chapter nicely encapsulates the ways in which specific (sometimes conflicting) representations of children and childhood shape experience, practices, and identities through an analysis of "family food," "school food," and "fast food." In ► [Chap. 20](#), Jared Wong writes about how state, educational, and parental expectations for young people's participation in Singapore society drown out the views of young people themselves. Tracing the discourse of adult actors regarding how youth should spend their time, Wong gives examples of (underused) spaces for youth participation and encourages youth consultation. These questions of representation are taken up through the rather different lens of nature and the environment in Laura Shillington's analysis of how media representations of nature, defined as reifying "dominant gendered, sexual and cultural human-nature relations," shape the emotional geographies of children and their interaction with urban nature, drawing on a case study which analyses two children's television programs and their gendered depictions of human-nature relations. While both Cairns and Shillington focus primarily on younger children, in Erin's Spring's chapter on young adult fiction she probes how young peoples' subjectivities are constructed through place using an interactive methodology to engage with their understandings of their localities.

If a strong thread running through all the chapters in this volume is the agency of young people, this is made most explicit in the final four chapters in this section, which investigate the work of young people in seeking to represent themselves. These papers vary in how much autonomy young people have. Thus Cameron McAuliffe (► [Chap. 23](#)) explores the history of graffiti as a spatial practice of writing in the city whereby graffiti artists seek to "map" urban space and mark their use of space. McAuliffe traces the contradictions of the criminalization of graffiti as "out of space," with attendant processes of exclusion, alongside the commodification of street art in the context of urban regeneration. Catherine Wilkinson presents a case study of youth community radio from Liverpool (UK), emphasizing the limitations of approaches that celebrate the "authenticity" of youth voices and illustrating the mediation of representation which takes place within such institutions even if they do enable young people to "represent" themselves. In ► [Chap. 25](#), Elizabeth Peacock examines the meanings that Ukrainian teens derive from "Ukraine" and "Europe" to represent who they are and where they come from. Expanding on place identity, Peacock offers the "spatiotemporal ambivalence of identity" as a way to articulate how the multiple identities of young people, which are linked to various scales of space and time, can be fraught with tension. The final chapter in this section, by Amy Donovan Blondell, turns the spotlight onto academics themselves asking how young people are represented in an account of the Youth Trek project, which invited homeless young people in the USA to produce their own photographic narratives. The chapter explores the use of smartphones as a means for participants

to collaborate in the production and analysis of data about their own experiences and critically reflects on the challenges of representing youth homelessness.

The chapters in this final section consider identity and subjectivity beyond one's interior sense of self. Thinking through how children and young people represent themselves as well as how they are represented by others reveals the intricacies of power relations as well as what things, practices, and beliefs are valued by actors. Considering *representations* through the wide range of spatial contexts presented above allows us to examine identities and subjectivities in the making.

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# Contents

<b>Part I Identities</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Age Identity and the Geographies of Children and Young People</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Nancy Worth	
<b>2 Geographies of Young Disabled People</b> .....	<b>23</b>
Louise Holt	
<b>3 Childhood, Youth, and Religious Identity: Mapping the Terrain</b> .....	<b>51</b>
Peter J. Hemming	
<b>4 Neoliberal Subjectivity and Gendered Inequalities</b> .....	<b>69</b>
Karin Schwiter	
<b>5 Masculinities and Generational Change Within the Irish Diaspora</b> .....	<b>87</b>
Michael J. Richardson	
<b>6 Transnational Processes of Identification and Belonging Among Children and Young People of Migrant Descent</b> .....	<b>103</b>
Rosa Mas Giralt	
<b>7 Ethnic Options of Mixed Race Young People in Britain</b> .....	<b>123</b>
Miri Song	
<b>8 Early Childhood Subjectivities, Inequities, and Imaginative Play</b> .....	<b>141</b>
Rachel Rosen	
<b>9 Bus Stops and Toilets: identifying Spaces and Spaces of Identity for Indonesian Street Children</b> .....	<b>163</b>
Harriot Beazley	

<b>Part II Inclusion and Exclusion</b> .....	<b>191</b>
<b>10 Faith, Space, and Negotiated Subjectivities: Young Muslims in Suburban Australia</b> .....	193
Chloe Patton	
<b>11 Making Young Subjects: Liminality and Violence</b> .....	215
Karen Wells	
<b>12 Classed, Raced, and Gendered Processes of Exclusion in Urban Young People's Subcultures</b> .....	231
Sumi Hollingworth	
<b>13 Volunteer Tourism and Nonelite Young Subjects: Local, Global, and Situated</b> .....	249
Ruth Cheung Judge	
<b>14 Eye-Teasing and Education Mobility: Young Women's Experiences in the Urban Slums of India</b> .....	269
Kabita Chakraborty	
<b>15 Islam, Soap Operas, and Girls' Access to Space in Balata Refugee Camp</b> .....	293
David J. Marshall	
<b>16 Digital Connections and Disjunctures of Migrant Students</b> .....	315
Sun Sun Lim and Becky Pham	
<b>17 Rethinking Social Exclusion and Young People in Rural Places: Toward a Spatial and Relational Approach in Youth and Education Studies</b> .....	333
Hernán Cuervo	
<b>18 Subjectivities on the Edge</b> .....	351
Mercedes G. Jiménez Alvarez	
<b>Part III Representations</b> .....	<b>369</b>
<b>19 Morality and Relationality in Children's Foodscapes</b> .....	371
Kate Cairns	
<b>20 Youth Participation in Singapore: The Limits of Approaches Created <i>for</i> Youth Rather Than <i>by</i> Youth</b> .....	389
Jared Wong	
<b>21 Children's Media Landscapes and the Emotional Geographies of Urban Natures</b> .....	409
Laura Shillington	

---

<b>22</b>	<b>Place and Identity in Young Adult Fiction</b> . . . . .	429
	Erin Spring	
<b>23</b>	<b>Young People and the Spatial Politics of Graffiti Writing</b> . . . . .	451
	Cameron McAuliffe	
<b>24</b>	<b>Youth Voices on the Airwaves: Representations of Young People</b> . . . . .	475
	Catherine Wilkinson	
<b>25</b>	<b>Spatiotemporal Ambivalences of Youth Identities: Striving to Be Authentic, yet Worldly</b> . . . . .	493
	Elizabeth A. Peacock	
<b>26</b>	<b>Trekking, Navigating, and Travelogueing in the Youth Trek Project: The Documentary Photography and Photo Essays of a Young Research Collaborator Traveling in the United States</b> . . . .	511
	Amy Donovan Blondell	
	<b>Index</b> . . . . .	539



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## About the Editors



**Nancy Worth** is affiliated with the Department of Geography at York University in Toronto, Canada. Her work has focused on young people's transitions to adulthood, gendered precarious work, and young people's coresidence with parents. She is interested in how social categories of difference are bound up with the age and lifecourse, especially around concepts of generation and intergenerationality. Her work has recently been funded by a Banting Fellowship and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. More about

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Nancy's publications include the coedited collections *Intergenerational Space* and *Researching the Lifecourse: Critical Reflections from the Social Sciences*. Journal articles include "Who we are at work: millennial women, everyday inequalities and insecure work" *Gender, Place & Culture*; "Feeling precarious: millennial women and work" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*; "Student-focused assessment criteria: thinking through best practice" *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*; "Experimenting with student-led seminars" *PLANET (Journal of the Higher Education Academy)*; "Visual impairment in the city: young people's social strategies for independent mobility" *Urban Studies*; "Making friends and fitting in: a social-relational understanding of disability at school" *Social & Cultural Geography*; "Evaluating lifemaps as a versatile method for lifecourse geographies" *Area*; "Understanding youth transition as becoming: identity, time and futurity" *Geoforum*; "Making use of audio diaries in research with young people: examining narrative, participation and audience" *Sociological Research Online*; and "The significance of the personal within disability geography" *Area*. Book chapters include "Youth, relationality, and space: conceptual resources for youth studies from critical human geography" for Springer's *Handbook of Youth Studies* and "Age identity and the geographies of children and young people" (this volume). She sits on the editorial board for *Children's Geographies* and is on the American Association of Geographers' Enhancing Diversity Committee.





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Claire has longstanding research interests in the geographies of young people and particularly the intersections of gender, generation, faith, and ethnicity. Her PhD research, completed in 1997, focused on the identity formations of young Muslim women with pioneering research on the politics of veiling. This research was published in journals such as *Gender, Place and Culture*, *Women's Studies International Forum*, *Environment and Planning A*, and the coauthored volume *Geographies of New Femininities* (1999, New York Longman). Subsequent research focused on the contested identities of young Muslim men in Britain in the context of changing politics of terrorism and security, published in *Gender, Place and Culture* and *Sociological Review*. She is also interested in qualitative methods and coedited *Qualitative Methodologies for Geographies: Issues and Debates* (2001, Arnold) and reports on methods for *Progress in Human Geography* (2007, 2008, 2009).

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Claire served on the committee of the Women and Geography Study Group (now Gender and Feminist Geography Research Group) of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) from 1997 to 2011 and the Commission on Gender for the International Geographical Union from 2009 to 2016. She was a member of the collective which cowrote *Feminist Geographies* (1997, Longman).



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## Editor-in-Chief



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A/P Skelton is a recognized international leader in the subdiscipline of children's and young people's geographies. In particular, her work has served to challenge the invisibility and marginalization of young people from geographic academic research at the same time as it has demonstrated the rich and varied ways in which young people live their lives both spatially and temporally alongside, but differently from, adults. Her research work has been funded by key research institutions such as the Economic and Social Research Council and the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the UK; the Faculty of Arts and Social Science Academic Research Fund and the Global Asia Institute, both of the National University of Singapore; the Australian Research Council; and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

A/P Skelton was a founding editorial board member of the international journal *Children's Geographies* and has been the Viewpoints Editor since 2005 and became the Commissioning Editor for Asia in 2010. She is on the editorial boards of the following journals: *Geoforum*, the *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*,

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*Geography Compass*, and *ACME: International Journal of Critical Geographies* (open access). She has coauthored 2 books, edited 3 collections, guest-edited 2 special journal issues, and published more than 70 journal articles and chapters. She is a passionate teacher and graduate supervisor. She is committed to the politics of research dissemination in accessible formats, in particular to enable the participants in her research projects to understand and recognize their coproduction of knowledge whether through specialized small-scale workshops, translation of reports into local languages, or production of audiovisual materials.

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**Part I**  
**Identities**



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# Age Identity and the Geographies of Children and Young People

# 1

Nancy Worth

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	4
2	Children, Young People, and Age Identity .....	5
2.1	The Influence of Developmental Psychology .....	5
2.2	Life Course, Age, and Identity .....	6
2.3	Age Norms: The Social Construction of Age Expectations .....	7
3	Challenging Age Expectations: Disrupting Age, Being Older .....	8
3.1	Care Work .....	9
3.2	Child Labor .....	11
3.3	Protest, Politics, and Governance .....	12
4	Challenging Age Expectations: Disrupting Age, Being Younger .....	13
4.1	Young Adulthoods, Kiddults, and Delayed Adulthood .....	13
5	Case Study: Thinking Through Adulthood with Visually Impaired Young People .....	14
5.1	Feeling Autonomous Adulthood, Delaying Settled Adulthood .....	14
6	Conclusion .....	18
	References .....	19

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## Abstract

This chapter examines research on age identity in the geographies of children and young people. Research on age is inherent to the subfield but has had little explicit attention. The aim here is to think through “age” as a marker of identity. The chapter first takes a concepts approach, looking at how the subfield reacted against developmental psychology, before thinking through the more popular framing of age as a social construction. The conceptual section then considers age as part of the life course, as a way of broadening the discussion to include concepts like linked lives, the timing of lives, and the importance of space. The central portion of the chapter builds on the conceptual section and the social

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construction of age identities by examining age expectations, where children and young people are “older” by taking on typically “adult” roles, like caring responsibilities, (un)paid work, and political positions – as well as when young people take on “younger” roles, delaying transitions to adulthood. The idea of age expectations is examined further in the case study that concludes the chapter, where young people discuss their own definitions of “adulthood,” problematizing key age boundaries (like turning 18) and developing complex understandings of adulthood based on feeling autonomous while not wanting to be a “grown-up.”

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**Keywords**

Age • Ageism • life course • Care • Labor • Adulthood • Identity • Developmental psychology • Youth culture

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## 1 Introduction

This chapter is part of a multivolume reference work, centered around the geographies of children and young people. Implicit across the collection is the concept of age identity; it is the common denominator as “childhood” and “youth” were selection criteria for involvement in the project. It’s important to consider what age identities are considered in this volume and in the wider subfield of the geographies of children and young people (Weller 2006). As Holt and Costello (2011) set out in a recent editorial, the subfield of children and young people in geography is a form of “strategic essentialism” – developed around a set of age boundaries. For example, the journal *Children’s Geographies* welcomes research that focus on subjects under age 25.

Although we can think about age in a biological or chronological sense, geographers have been interested in investigating age as a social construction that changes over time and space (Worth and Hardill 2015). This socio-spatial understanding of age identity is also a reaction against developmental approaches, with much of the work in *Children’s Geographies* positioning itself against developmental markers in favor of a fluid, situated, and performative understanding of age. Yet despite this turn away from developmental stages for the geographical subfield, they remain popular in society, where children and young people are divided by chronological age for school, and attain different rights and responsibilities as they get older. Geographers interested in children and young people have often focused research on areas where age expectations are challenged, in areas as diverse as care, labor, politics, migration, and activism, arguing that children and young people deserve recognition as active agents. This stance has been influenced by the “children as competent social actors” framework from the sociology of childhood (James and Prout 1997) (see Vol. 1, “Establishing Geographies of Children and Young People”). A growing set of research is also investigating when (young) adults challenge age expectations by embracing aspects of childhood and youth. Research on the

emergence of “young adulthood” as a part of the life course between youth and adulthood and the growing prominence and influence of youth culture are two examples.

This chapter aims to pull apart the importance of age identity in the geographies of children and young people. This chapter first briefly traces the emergence of contemporary age identities of children and young people in the global north, from the “invention” of childhood in Victorian times, to the rise of teenagerhood and youth in the mid twentieth century. The section also traces foundational work about age in psychology that has had a lasting impact on geography before examining *Children’s Geographies’* current analytical focus on the social construction of age identity, detailing ageism as well as the formation of age norms. The following sections highlight research that investigates how age expectations are challenged in society, first considering research where children and young people take on “adult” roles, and second, where adults act “younger.” The chapter then shifts to a case study examination of what “adulthood” means to visually impaired (VI) young people. The case study sets the concepts of the chapter – age as a sociospatial category and the changing meaning of age expectations across time and space – against the views of young people making sense of what adulthood means to them. The chapter closes by offering a brief conclusion.

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## 2 Children, Young People, and Age Identity

Age as a marker of identity often feels underexplored, in favor of other categories of social difference like gender and ethnicity. Yet age identity is critical to our understanding of the concepts of “childhood” and “youth.” *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (Ariès 1962) is often cited as a key text for the subfield, setting out the changing meaning of childhood, from a time of work and mini-adulthood in feudal times, the “feral child” of the Victorian era where children were in need of education and moral guidance, and modern forms of childhood as vulnerability, where children are in need of protection by adults. While definitions of childhood in the West can be linked to capitalism, specifically moving production out of the home, the emergence of the teenager in the middle of the twentieth century is linked to postwar prosperity, where consumerism developed around youth cultures (Raby 2012). Modern understandings of childhood and youth are influenced by the enduring popularity of developmental psychology, the rise of identities approaches and a growing recognition of the value of a holistic concept of the life course.

### 2.1 The Influence of Developmental Psychology

Influential research from the mid-twentieth century by developmental psychologists such as Erikson (1950) and Inhelder and Piaget (1958) proposed normative stages of cognitive development for children and young people. Erikson’s eight-stage model

uses five stages for birth through adolescence, with three stages of adulthood. Piaget focused on childhood, proposing four stages of development covering birth to 11+ years, culminating in the ability to reason abstractly. At each stage, which is linear, culturally universal, and nonreversible, a child gains new skills and capabilities that correspond with biological age. While these models have been critiqued by many, they still have a powerful influence in education, government policy, and many academic fields.

Disciplinary subfields and areas of research can define themselves in various ways, but one effective strategy is to say what they are not. In “*Why Children, Why Now*” in *Children’s Geographies*, Aitken et al. (2007, p. 13) argue against development approaches, instead claiming:

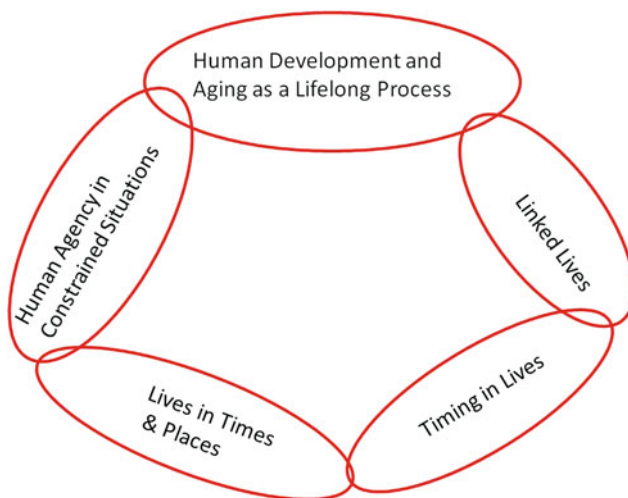
(i) that we understand children as the product of interrelations constituted through spatial interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimacy of the embodied, and that relations are necessarily embedded material practices, (ii) that we understand space as the sphere of possible multiple stories of becoming-other. That a post-developmental future is a multiplicity of children’s stories-so-far in a plurality of spaces and across all scales, and (iii) that we understand that space and children are always already under co-construction, and that there is never closure. There are multiple possible futures that are not presaged by current neoliberal, academic or policy projects.

This framing is a direct reaction to development perspectives, where instead of thinking of children and young people as “becomings” – as future adults, children and young people are understood as “beings,” or important social actors in their own right. Yet the “beings” versus “becomings” framing is never so neat in practice, and combining both perspectives can be revealing (Uprichard 2008). In a recently published keynote, Sarah Holloway (2014) highlights that while development perspectives feel like an “erased tradition” in *Children’s Geographies*, the binary opposition between the developmental and the social perspectives emerges more from our writings about past research than that the research itself, which is arguably more nuanced. Moreover, a contemporary focus on the body and the biological is emerging in new conceptual forms in the subfield, offering complex accounts of lived experience rather than normative models.

## 2.2 Life Course, Age, and Identity

Social geographers have drawn attention to age as a social category of difference and positioned age within larger concepts like life course and generation (Vanderbeck 2007; Hopkins and Pain 2007). The life course is a helpful concept to understand age as a social construction, as it provides multiple way of looking at age (Worth and Hardill 2015). In Fig. 1, five components of life-course theory are sketched out by Glen Elder. In his schematic of life-course theory, age identity is implicit in each linked concept – life course depends on age but critically aims to take a perspective that is both relational and longitudinal (Fincher 2009).

In geographic research on age, specifically childhood and youth, research has highlighted how identity is linked to place. At the scale of an individual’s daily life,



**Fig. 1** Life course theory (Source: Glen H. Elder, Jr., “Social Psychology and the Life Course: Research Design and Theory,” *Social Psychology Centennial Celebration*. University of Wisconsin-Madison, September 26, 2008)

the same young person may understand themselves and relate to others differently in different space, from a serious, older work identity at a summer job to a playful, carefree identity at home as a youngest sibling (Worth 2009b). Age identity, through an intersectional lens that also encompasses gender, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, and other lenses of social difference, can be experienced very differently throughout the day, as people engage with institutions like school, work, the family, within places with specific social expectations. According to Maxey (2009, p. 45), “Geographers have begun to demonstrate how norms and expectations associated with age are played out spatially, demonstrating how homes, streets, neighborhoods, parks, and shopping centers acquire meanings of age and become sites at which ageism may be reproduced and challenged.” He goes on to claim that unlike inquiries around race or gender, geographers have had relatively little to say about age-based segregation. This is slowly changing, with the recent edited collection *Intergenerational Space* (Vanderbeck and Worth 2014) offering nuanced accounts of age separation and age integration between generations within and beyond the family. After thinking through the influence of developmentalism and the contemporary framing of age as a social category and as part of the life course, the next section applies an understanding of age as a social construction by examining age norms, as a particular way that researchers have used to reveal the temporal and spatial diversity of what being a certain age means.

### 2.3 Age Norms: The Social Construction of Age Expectations

A useful way of getting at different (but sometimes overlapping) understandings of age identity is to consider age norms, social expectations, and legislation around

rights and responsibilities. Think about what age you're allowed to drive, or leave school, or join the military, or vote, or drink. At what age can you be criminally charged as an adult or get married or give consent to sex? These rights and responsibilities happen at a range of ages, from the age of 10 or 11 into the twenties, and have changed over time and vary from country to country. This temporal and spatial change highlights that these rules about age are socially constructed and change with social mores about childhood and youth. For example, Curtis and Hunt (2007) write about adolescent sexuality and the legal age of consent in Canada, where the criminal code has multiple legislative rules about sexual activity. They take a discursive approach, examining how sexual activity between an 18-year-old boy and two girls under 14 was reported in the press. Although the girls testified that they willingly participated, the boy was portrayed as an abuser, in part because he was over the age boundary of 18. And yet, they argue that if the same incident had taken place decades earlier, the "blame" would be with the girls, for a supposed lack of morality. The conception of children as innocent or "angels" is examined by Valentine (1996), who also examines the framing of children as "devils" using the example of the murder of a toddler by two 10 year olds. The two were held criminally responsible for the crime, and the incident has had a lasting impact on British society, where it was unthinkable that children could be capable of such violence. A final example concerns age norms for children's play, with several studies investigating why children's spatial range has shrunk from the neighborhood to the street to the front yard as age norms for independent play get older and older as parents' perception of "risk" increases (Karsten 2005; Spilsbury 2005). These three examples, among many others, are remarkable because they highlight cases where our expectations of what it means to be a child or young person are challenged. The following two sections examine age expectations in more detail, first by looking at literature that considers how children and young people disrupt norms by being "older" or "younger" and second, through a case study, where young people reflect on their expectations of adulthood.

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### **3 Challenging Age Expectations: Disrupting Age, Being Older**

Age is an interesting category of social difference, as many of us will hopefully have direct experience of a full spectrum of age identities across the life course, from infancy, childhood, youth, young adulthood, adulthood, and older age. In the geographies of children and young people, a subfield of geography defined by age boundaries, age is critically important but can often remain a selection criterion for participation rather than a rigorous category of analysis. Yet age identities imbue work in the subfield in various ways, especially when age expectations are challenged. Geographers have a clear political project around demonstrating the agency of children and young people, echoing the aim in the sociology of childhood to treat children and young people as "competent social actors," and researching areas where children and young people take on roles typically seen as more adult are common.

There are many avenues where children and young people challenge age expectations by taking on older or even “adult” roles (e.g., unaccompanied child migrants are discussed elsewhere in this volume; see ► [Chap. 18, “Subjectivities on the Edge”](#)). Research praxis offers another area of debate – do we need age-specific methods for our work with children and young people? This question is taken up by chapters in Vol. 2, “Methodological Approaches,” of this collection. In the three subsections below, care, child labor, and youth governance are selected to represent realms of social reproduction, waged work, and politics – three areas of life that are often assumed to be the realm of adults.

### 3.1 Care Work

While the prevailing expectation in the West is that children and young people are in need of care and are dependent on adults, many children around the world are carers for family members. In the global south, researchers have examined children’s experiences of caring for parents or sibling, especially in the context of HIV/AIDS and poverty. Evans (2011) has examined sibling-led households in East Africa, where older children take on “adult” responsibilities of caring for their young sibling, but that this “adult” status does not translate outside of the home. One of her respondents says “In the village, when it comes to participating in things, I don’t get involved, I position myself as a child, a student who goes to school, I become young. I don’t get involved with parents. I become like a child, although in our house, I become like parents, but when with others, I become young, like a young child” (Evans 2011, p. 390–391). The flexibility of age identity across space is possible both through the agentic actions of individuals but always negotiating social roles of particular places, including home, school, and the community. Ansell et al.’s (2013) research also picks up on the idea that care work pushes young people into a place that is both childhood and adulthood. Their work offers a temporal theorizing around young people impacted by HIV/AIDS, which is useful when thinking through how (and when) age expectations are disrupted. Using a framework of “relational time space,” the paper tells the narrative of Rex, who became the caregiver for his younger siblings after his parents died. Rather than focusing on the mundane challenges of care work, the paper considers Rex’s wider life course, decisions he makes and constraints he faced, in the context of “linked lives” with siblings, parents, friends, employers, and wife, drawing out the complex implications of becoming head of a household of his siblings as a young man. This retrospective approach is valuable, as it reveals not just instances of opportunity or misfortune, but also how these experiences are understood in the present.

Although less evident in the literature, children in the global north also care for friends and family. Twenty years ago, Olsen (1996) called for more research on young people caring for disabled parents, yet this remains underexplored in geography (although see Aldridge 2008). Instead, charities like the Carers Trust in the UK (see [Fig. 2](#)) attempt to raise awareness about the large numbers of young people with caring roles.

# Young adult carers – Who are they? What do they do?



## Who are young adult carers?

Young adult carers are young people aged **14–25** who care, **unpaid**, for a friend or family member who could not cope without their support.



### How many young adult carers are there?

- There are over 375,000 young adult carers in the UK.
- They are likely to be in every school, college, university and workplace.

Young adult carers care for someone:

- With an illness or disability.
- With a mental health condition.
- Who misuses drugs or alcohol.



### What might a young adult carer do?

- Practical tasks, such as cooking, housework and shopping.
- Physical care, such as helping someone out of bed.
- Emotional support.
- Personal care, such as helping someone dress or go to the toilet.
- Managing the family budget and collecting prescriptions.
- Helping to give someone their medication.
- Helping someone communicate.
- Looking after brothers and sisters.



**“I want college to understand I’m a carer.”**

### Being a young adult carer can have a big impact on the things that are important to growing up

- It can affect a young person’s health, social life and self confidence – over 50% reported a mental health problem.
- Many struggle to juggle their education, working life and caring role which can cause pressure and stress.
- Recent research on young adult carers who were no longer in education showed their highest qualifications were GCSEs grade D–G.
- 29% had dropped out of college/university because of their caring role. This is four times greater than the national average for degree courses.



### Young adult carers should have:

- Support that gives them the same opportunities as their friends such as being able to:
  - Go to school, college or university and complete their studies.
  - Get a job.
  - Have a social life and be independent.
  - Have support for the person they care for.



**“I lost over half of my hours at work because I care for my dad. Is that fair?”**

### Information and support

[www.youngcarersmatter.org](http://www.youngcarersmatter.org) [www.carers.org/timetobehheard](http://www.carers.org/timetobehheard) [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)



**Fig. 2** Young adult carers – Who are they? What do they do? (Source: Reproduced with kind permission from Carers Trust)



Much of the research in geography from the global north focuses on children in need of care, but this narrative has also been challenged by Wilson's (2015) research, which shows how children not living with their biological parents have important practices of self-care. Examining "caringscapes" of children and young people beyond the global south is a research area that could develop further, connecting care to other forms of work that children do every day.

### 3.2 Child Labor

The conventional minority world (or Global North) expectation around child labor is that it is morally wrong and exploitative – that childhood should be preserved away from the pressures and dangers of work. Indeed, child labor is included in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 32, on freedom from economic exploitation (see also Vol. 10, "Laboring and Learning," for a detailed examination of work). Yet in reality, children and young people's lived experience of work is often complicated, bound up not only in economic interest/necessity but also wider narratives of capitalism and globalization (see Aitken et al. 2007 for special issue editorial). Nieuwenhuys (2007, p. 149) traces the history of child labor as it was pushed from the core to the periphery and details the rise of the "global child" in policy discourse arguing "that as representations of child labor hold out the promise of a labor-free childhood to the worlds' children, children's day-to-day responsibilities and work routines are diminished, denied or even criminalized." Rather than study treatises against sweatshop labor, Nieuwenhuys asks us to consider how the work children do within the family – around social reproduction and subsistence instead of factories – is understood as "beneficial" by groups such as the International Labour Organization (ILO). Making visible children's vital everyday work in the global south is critical, as it reveals how international conventions, with their age-based rules for what kind of (industrial) work is appropriate, are economic rather than moral creations.

Beyond this macro approach, much of the geographic work on child labor focuses on children's experiences of work. In Katz's (2004) classic text *Growing Up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Lives*, she blends the macro and micro, writing in great ethnographic detail about "playful work" and "workful play" as children have fun during their chores and play involves learning to do tasks that contribute to the social reproduction of the family. These in-depth stories of children's activities are set against growing economic precarity and "development," which means children's work becomes increasingly important, limiting chances for education – the expected ideal of the global child. Overall, child labor can be exploitative, (see Jensen 2014 on live-in domestic workers) but in some cases children can also find work rewarding (see Bromley and Mackie 2009 on street traders); it depends on how much power children and young people have over their own circumstances rather than how old they are. As research on child labor builds on calls for a more flexible approach, it will be useful to take into account the positive impacts of some forms of work on children's age identities.

### 3.3 Protest, Politics, and Governance

The final age expectation that geographers are challenging is that children and young people are apolitical. Going back to Marshall's foundational work on citizenship, children are framed as "citizens in the making," not legally able to vote or hold political office (see Vol. 7, "Politics, Citizenship and Rights," for full discussion of citizenship). While children and young people are often excluded from "'formal,' 'public,' 'institutional,' or 'macro-' politics," the Political, they often have roles in "'informal,' 'personal,' and 'micro-' politics and related to 'participation,'" the political, to use a helpful framing from Skelton (2010, p. 147). While Skelton calls for a blurring between the Political/political, much of the work in geography focuses on this second framing, where children and young people are politically active within their schools, their local communities, and beyond. Wood (2012, p. 340) examines school as a liminal space within the macro/micro divide. Instead of school councils or mock parliaments (for "citizens in the making"), she presents three vignettes of "everyday" politics, from the "'personal' politics operating within the liminal spaces of the school playground and the classroom" to the young peoples' a "political critique of [...] multinational companies in their small rural school community."

In the Political realm, Kallio and Häkli (2011, p. 100) investigate a "semiofficial parliamentary mechanism for involving children extensively in national and municipal politics" in Finland. While they detail its democratic principles, they also echo other research that found that only certain children are interested in these forms of "official" politics; the structure is inherently adultist, and the program requires adult support to function. They emphasize that while the school, as well as municipal and national arenas, offer an opportunity for children to express political agency, it is only possible with their "good conduct," aligning with the adult requirements for their participation. Kallio and Häkli argue that it is also important to examine the small "p" political, or politics within the everyday lives of children to move beyond the adult gaze. Beyond the school, they use the domestic sphere to discuss children's self-governing when parents and caretakers are away. This expansion of what is commonly recognized as political provokes a useful challenge for the subfield of children's geographies and provides the potential to consider the political agency of subjects at younger ages.

Finally, Jeffrey (2013) uses multiple examples of youth protest from around the world, offering the frame of generational "fresh contact" with social problems from Mannheim to argue that young people can look at issues in new ways. Echoing Skelton's rethinking of the political, for Jeffrey it's important to consider what counts as a political act – rather than framing youth as apathetic, they may be political in ways that are not recognized. Overall, these three short subsections, on care, labor, and politics, represent some of the many contexts where children and young people defy age expectations. While age identities are not always at the forefront, one of the reasons research in this area is interesting and rewarding is that it contests dominant framings of childhood and youth (as a time of dependency, irresponsibility, and indifference) with the competent, agentic actions of full subjects.

## 4 Challenging Age Expectations: Disrupting Age, Being Younger

While the majority of research that challenges age expectations involves children and young people being “older,” including the three areas of research detailed above, there is increasing interest in youth cultures and a recentering of the life course around youth – or when adults take on roles and behaviors that are “childlike” or “youthful.” Also, especially in youth studies, there is growing interest in “young adulthoods,” a stage of life between youth and adulthood that recognizes that contemporary transitions between these two parts of the life course are fluid and diverse. In psychology, literature has shown that middle age and older adults consistently report a younger “subjective age” (Barak 2009). This perhaps represents a wider trend in what’s valued in mass culture, where youth and youth culture are endorsed (Collins and Hinchings 2012). Sue Ruddick (2003) has linked the concepts of childhood and youth to globalization to demonstrate not only how normative ideals of childhood in the West are exported elsewhere but that “youthfulness” is increasingly the realm of adults – where lifelong learning and insecure “youth jobs” are common to many. In the subsection below, research on young adulthoods is examined, often from beyond the subdisciplinary boundaries of the geographies of children and young people. This research takes young adulthood as a starting point and then focuses on different ways age expectations are disrupted by being younger, whether by choice or constraint.

### 4.1 Young Adulthoods, Kiddults, and Delayed Adulthood

Research on young adulthoods has emerged out of youth transitions research, as researchers problematize the seemingly stable category of adulthood, writing about “delayed” youth transitions and new ideas about what it means to be an adult (Blatterer 2009). Returning to the psychological lens from the beginning of this chapter, Arnett’s (2004) work on what he terms “emerging adulthood” has also been influential, describing a period from the late teens through the twenties as a time of few responsibilities where young adults try on possible selves. Within the geographic literature, research on young adults is emerging from different subfields and global contexts. Ramdas (2012) writes about single Singaporean women living abroad, negotiating career aspirations alongside family expectations of caring for others. Her work offers the concept of “punctuations” to understand how singlehood is relative across time and space: women’s lives speed up and slow down as they move back and forth from the family home in Singapore and work abroad. Smith (2013) writes about the barriers to achieving “adult” status for young men living at the border of China and Pakistan. Her work also uses a temporal lens, but rather than the rhythms that Ramdas describes, the lives of young Ladakhi men are bound up with future – she offers “the concept of generational vertigo, a mixture of apprehension and anticipation regarding the future, and suggest that attending to how and why

this vertigo is manifest provides a way to think through relationships between young people, time, and territory” (Smith 2013, p. 572).

Moving to Australia, Gorman-Murray’s (2014) work with “twentysomethings and twentagers” examines masculine domesticities within “parental homes, share housing, and ‘alternative’ family homes.” This work is one example of the growing interest in young adult homemaking, especially in the context of increasingly inaccessible housing markets and the growing trend of living with parents well into the 20s. Finally, in Canada, Worth (forthcoming) examines young adult identity and gender in the workplace. This research details the impact of *feeling* precarious, an experience that may or may not overlap with insecure jobs and under/unemployment. Importantly, feeling precarious is mitigated by relationships with partners, friends, and family, with the paper offering the concept of the “social self” rather than the individualizing neoliberal young worker. While some of the “emerging adulthoods” research positions young adulthood as a time of individual pursuits and fulfillment, the research discussed in this section highlights how young adults are embedded in networks of social relationships, in particular times and spaces. Looking forward, it would be interesting to see how the geographic subfield of children and young people engages with research on young adulthoods. In some ways young adulthood is also on the “social-chronological margins” of the life course, yet it may be more fruitful to consider this part of the life course the not-yet-present geographies of adults (Hopkins and Pain 2007).

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## 5 Case Study: Thinking Through Adulthood with Visually Impaired Young People

The following case study comes from a wider research project with visually impaired (VI) young people (age 16–25), in the North of England. The project examined transitions to adulthood, using in-depth interviews, life maps, and audio diaries to explore how young people understood their own transition to adulthood. The case study considers their “critical moments,” offering an alternative to linear school to work models of transition (Worth 2009a, 2011).

### 5.1 Feeling Autonomous Adulthood, Delaying Settled Adulthood

In the study, young people consistently reported that “real” adulthood (what one participant called being “grown-up”) was a stage they had to reach. This was true for participants who were 16, who speculated that they might feel like an adult at 18, as well as 25-year-old participants, who expected to feel like a “proper” adult when they were in their 30s. This deferral of adulthood, and the growing significance of young adulthood as part of the life course, is a result of both push and pull factors. Deferring standardized adulthood is a way of coping with a world where typical measures of adulthood – a good job, financial independence, one’s own home – can feel increasingly unattainable. By putting off being a “grown-up,” it is argued that

young people have not “failed” at adulthood. Yet this deferral also reflects that what adulthood means is changing; as young people’s aspirations differ from standardized adulthood, what it means to be an adult is beginning to shift.

This ambivalence about the meaning of adulthood is often reflected in how young people talk about the concept. When asked if she thought she was an adult, Alice reported:

ALICE. [pause] [sigh] It is tough because I would say yes, I do in that I think I have as much [pause] like power and as many rights, and this that and the other, as everyone else does. Whereas when you’re a kid you’re still, [pause] you know, to a certain extent answering to other people and I don’t feel like I have that anymore. I feel like I have that independence. I’m still pretty dependent on my parents, but like it’s kind of an optional dependence. Financially and stuff like, you know, they support me a lot. But, you know, if they cut me off I’d be in trouble, on so many levels [chuckles], but that’s not really the point. I basically feel independent and so yes I would say I do feel like an adult. But I guess when you’re a kid you think that it’s a defined line. But it’s not. There’s no moment where you feel grown up. And especially cause, and I still don’t feel grown up because I like to be silly and have fun and. . .

NANCY. Okay, then what does grown up mean?

ALICE. [pause] Boring I guess. [both laugh] I guess it’s a level of responsibility as well that I don’t have yet. [. . .] I don’t have a job really. I mean [sigh] you can get thrown out of medical school, so I mean I have responsibilities in some sense. But I guess that’s still a – I don’t know the word for it. Like I’m still [pause] – what am I going for here? It’s like almost a, a parental or school thing. Like the medical school are higher up than me. They have power over me and I have to do things for them. Like, do you know what I mean? I’m still a student. I’m still under their responsibility on some level. So I guess in that sense you don’t feel grown up yet. I’m not responsible for anyone else, either a partner or a child or anything. I think that makes you not feel – when you’re only responsible for yourself, that’s one thing. (18, in first year of university)

Alice’s split between “adult” and “grown-up” echoes the literature cited above, where modern adulthood for many has become to be defined as *feeling* responsible and autonomous, without necessarily *having* financial or physical independence from parents. VI young peoples’ definition of adulthood as autonomy has several consequences. First, adulthood becomes more achievable, as *feeling* independent and in control of your life is less of a burden than *being* physically and financially on one’s own. Second, the existence of “autonomous adulthood” means that VI young people have changed the rules of the game, changing what it means to be a successful adult, so they cannot “fail” at adulthood. In relation to the work of Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) and risky “choice biographies,” by defining adulthood by intangibles and felt competence, VI young people mitigate risky futures. Finally, “autonomous adulthood” exists as a stopgap within the existing life course stage of “youth” however broadly defined (Evans 2008).

While many VI young people subjectively feel like an adult, they also maintain an objective understanding of adulthood as “settled,” which they defer well into the future (see also Brannen and Nilsen 2002). Elizabeth gives a typical definition of “settled adulthood,” which she pushes more than 20 years into the future. When I asked her if she associated any particular age with the word “adulthood,” Elizabeth

said: “Umm [pause] I don’t know about forty? [laughs] [. . .] Cause I’d like to think that, you know, you’ve got a good career going then and like you might have a family or something, or like settled.” This definition was echoed by Lu, where leaving university and entering “normal life” was a difficult process. She explained that after leaving university:

LU. It’s like ‘Huh?’ It is just so completely different. [. . .] when you come out of it it’s like, ‘Ah, what do you do next?’ Like how do you ring for a plumber or how do you deal with council tax or stuff like that. Or how do you deal with being unemployed and only having, being able to live off forty-five quid a week.

NANCY. So would you say you’re an adult now?

LU. Oh God no! [chuckles] No I was thinking like a lot of my friends have said like, the ones that have passed the twenty-five mark, have said that you start maybe not settling down but getting less stressed about life at twenty-five and understanding a bit more. So I’m thinking may-, maybe at the age of twenty-five and had a few years of life experience maybe you get like a sense of what being a proper adult is.

NANCY. Can you just tell me a bit more what settled means?

LU. Oh gosh! Err um [pause] I guess just where you don’t have to worry about stuff, about what’s around the corner too much. Maybe you’ve got a house, kids, a good group of friends. You’ve gotten a career where you’re happy in— well not necessarily—but you’ve got some career aspirations.

Lu’s definition of “settled adulthood,” in her terms being a “proper adult,” is an imagined future of security that contains no specific plans or personal details, but critically it is a future free from the worry she experiences now. Definitions of “settled adulthood,” although labeled differently by participants, were markedly alike in their events and timing, as well as their lack of specificity. These findings are similar to the research by Patterson et al. (2009, p. 439) who found that in the imagined futures of teens, “one narrative in particular was present. . . that of a ‘happy, stable and contented life.’” The rapid changes to youth transition over the last 30–40 years (Wyn and Dwyer 2000; Lanz et al. 2001) mean that the VI young people involved in this research cannot experience transitions to adulthood in the same way as their parents. This change, over little more than a generation, means that traditional markers of adulthood remain in our metanarratives of what an ideal transition entails and consequently are drawn upon by VI young people as expected futures. Yet, the optimism inherent to young people’s discussion of “settled adulthood,” and their assumption that they will unproblematically reach it, shows that “settled adulthood” is more accurately a hoped for or dreamed future, as young people talk about “settled adulthood” abstractly, and separate from their present experiences in time and space (Nilsen 1999).

Regarding the timing of “adulthood” in the life course, the traditional transition marker of “18” was a readily available answer that VI young people initially fell back on, especially Danielle, Jenny, Will, and Sarah who were 16 or 17 at the time of interview. One might expect “18” to be a popular answer for questions about adulthood, as it is an answer that corresponds to strong social signifiers of adulthood that young people are constantly exposed to (Lee 2001). However it was abandoned as an unsatisfactory definition of adulthood by nearly all participants interviewed

during the course of our discussions. For example, Danielle was asked her definition of “adult,” and she felt that turning 18 was when she would be an adult, both when she would feel like an adult and when society would recognize as her as an adult. But later in the interview Danielle was more reflective about adulthood:

DANIELLE. I think it is still being eighteen but, you know, there’s different things to consider about, you know, whether you want children, or whether you want your own house, what you’re doing next and things like that and I think, sort of, eighteen is just like the starting block of becoming an adult. And all these things then that were on this map, sort of help you become more of an adult and, you know, growing up through life sort of thing.

NANCY. Well I had someone mention that exact thing and she called what would come after that, ‘actual adulthood’, that she became an adult when she was 18, but that she didn’t feel like an actual adult yet. So if I gave you actual adulthood. . .

DANIELLE. Um, [placing label on lifemap] right down there, 30. I’d probably put it somewhere around there. By job and whatever

NANCY. So what does actual adulthood mean?

DANIELLE. Probably that you’ve got a job, you’re working, you’ve possibly got married and probably had children. I think. For me it would, anyway. But, I think you can never stop growing – there’s always room for improvement. [Laughs] But, yeah I think that’s definitely a starting point when you’re all set up, and maybe have got your own house, or whatever, as well.

A definition of adulthood was complicated for Jenny as well. When asked where on the tactile life map adulthood would go, she placed it at 18. But she then related the problems inherent to putting the label in one place. So while “18” was initially important, the larger theme emerging from the narratives is that all of the participants defined “settled adulthood” as ahead of them, regardless of age. So those in their late teens imagined “settled adulthood” in their mid- to late twenties, and those in their early twenties, imagined “settled adulthood” in their early 30s. The importance of the term is its location in the future rather than its relation to previous life course markers. Therefore “settled adulthood” is not tied directly to chronological age, and it varies from 25 to 40 among my participants. This deferral has been noted by youth studies (Irwin 1995; MacDonald et al. 2001; Blatterer 2007; Arnett 2004), with various explanations provided, from longer periods spent in formal education, to the positioning of young people as carefree consumers who remain in the parental home. Critically, although VI young people believe and expect to reach their version of “settled adulthood,” at this time in their lives the concept works to mitigate risk in the present, by imagining a stable future.

After considering feeling like an “autonomous adult” and the deferral of “settled adulthood,” the final argument examines VI young people’s expectations that they will reach adulthood and therefore end the life course stage of youth. Crucially, young people construct youth as ending at adulthood – an eventually “incontrovertible adulthood,” although the boundary is a time and place of great flexibility and complexity (Horowitz and Bromnick 2007). And yet it is adulthood that does not have an endpoint for VI young people. According to Catherine, “I think [...] you mature, I don’t think you actually stay the same person. I might consider myself an



adult now, but in 20 years I won't be the same sort of adult. And then, 40 years I won't be the same sort of adult I am then." For Catherine "adult" was an ongoing project, continuing a process of maturation from youth. Will provides a similar response, believing that you can "finish" youth by transitioning to adulthood, but that adulthood is always a changing category:

WILL. Well I suppose you can be more adult than somebody else but there's no—I know there's legal things—but there's no set age for being an adult. And I think everybody's becoming more adult as they grow up, even adults – well people that consider themselves to be adults—cause you're always learning new things and new skills. And as society changes you change and [...] it's more like enhancing your experience as an adult.

Will's argument for an ever-evolving adulthood echoes Ruddick's (2003) use of "lifelong learning" to examine the growing contestation of clear life course stages. Moreover, just as youth transition is increasingly nonlinear and "destandardized," so too are transitions in later life, with retirement happening earlier for some and later for others, with people also returning to work after formally retiring (Dannefer 2003; Biggs 1999). Overall VI young people highlighted the flexibility of definitions in their discussions of adulthood, as well as youth ending, but adulthood carrying on.

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## 6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined "age" in the geographies of children and young people. Conceptually, the chapter traced age as a category in developmental psychology through age as a social construction, thinking through the value of the related concept of "life course" to get at some questions geographers are interested in, from challenging age norms to understanding age as part of identity (Fincher 2009). As other chapters in this section demonstrate, aspects of identity cannot be examined in isolation, and age is implicitly part of all the research that geographers of childhood and youth are involved in. Paying more attention to how age matters intersectionally with other forms of difference and paying more attention to how the experience of age identities varies across time and space are two ways to more deeply understand age as a social category. Looking forward, there is scope for geographies of children and young people to deepen its study of age at its own margins from infant geographies (Holt 2013) to geographies of young adulthoods (Worth [forthcoming](#)). While research with very young children has its own set of research design and ethical challenges, existing methodological innovation has the potential to be expanded. On the older boundary, while the journal *Children's Geographies* uses age 25 as its age boundary, there is a case to be made for using "young adulthood" rather than a numerical limit to reflect the flexible and situated nature of age, across different spatial contexts as well as in an individual's everyday life.



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Louise Holt

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	24
2	Illuminating the Disablement of Young People in Space .....	25
2.1	What? Introducing the Field .....	25
2.2	Why? (Dis)abling Young People in Space: Commonality and Diversity of Approaches .....	26
2.3	How? Thinking Through Methodology .....	29
2.4	Who's Included? Researching All Kinds of Mind-Body-Emotional Difference . . .	30
3	(Dis)ablement in School Spaces via Formal and Informal Cultures .....	32
3.1	(Dis)ableism in Formal School Spaces .....	33
3.2	Informal Aspects of Schools .....	37
3.3	Mainstream School, Special Schools, and Special Units .....	40
4	Beyond School Spaces: Public Space, "Leisure" Spaces, and Homes .....	42
4.1	Home Spaces .....	43
4.2	Leisure Spaces .....	43
4.3	Public Spaces .....	44
4.4	Transitions to Adulthood .....	45
5	Conclusion .....	46
	References .....	47

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## Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of research about young disabled people in geography. The chapter demonstrates that there is a growing and important body of research about disabled young people in geographies of children and youth. This literature provides insight into commonalities of young people's experiences of disableism and ableism in a variety of everyday spaces in many different contexts across the globalized world. Much of the chapter focuses on

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young people's experiences in institutional spaces, such as schools, which reflect the predominant emphasis of the field. Young disabled people's experiences in nonschool spaces are also explored. It is argued that there is a preponderance toward focusing upon institutional spaces in the Global North and suggestions are made for how the field could be enhanced to include a broader range of spatial contexts. The political potentials of the research are also explored.

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**Keywords**

Disability • Mind-body-emotional differences • Ableism, disableism, exclusion, inclusion • School • Public space

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## 1 Introduction

Until the early 2000s, the experiences of young disabled people were almost absent within geography (with the exception of Aitken and Wingate 1993; Butler 1998) or, indeed, the broader social sciences, with a few exceptions. However, since this period there has been a burgeoning of studies documenting the experiences of young disabled people. The experiences of young people whose mind/bodies/emotional states are disabled in contrast to pervasive norms of bodily, learning, physical, or behavioral competence are a burgeoning subfield of geographies of children and young people (Pyer et al. 2010). The ever-expanding body of literature explores the experiences of disabled young people of diverse ages (from around 7 to 25) with a range of different mind-body-emotional characteristics and experiences of (dis)ablement, in many different spaces (e.g., mainstream and special schools, after-school clubs, homes, etc.) and across the globalizing world (e.g., in the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, and Africa). However, there is still more to be done in understanding the diverse experiences of young disabled people in a range of socio-spatial contexts, as emphasized in the conclusion.

Given the scope and focus of the handbook, this chapter provides an overview of research about the *geographies* of young disabled people or those with mind-body-emotional differences, which are a burgeoning and vibrant field. Mostly based on a review of the literature, the chapter also draws upon the Children's Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability project, led by the author with Sophie Bowlby and Jennifer Lea at Loughborough University and funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (see, e.g., Holt et al. 2012, 2013; Bowlby et al. 2014; Lea et al. 2015). In order to focus and define the review, a line has been drawn around what is considered to be geographical in approach, content, or publishing outlet. Clearly, however, this is a porous and difficult boundary to draw. It was achieved by incorporating research that fell into one or more of the following categories: (1) published by scholars working in "geography" departments; (2) published in a geography journal or publication; and (3) focusing on "geographical" themes, such as space, place, or space-time and/or stating that it is a geographical approach. Because the review does not focus specifically on social science research outside

geography, some key, influential research that might be of interest to readers is not examined in depth. This includes the Life as a Disabled Child project (e.g., Davis and Watson 2001 and their ongoing research – see Watson 2012), Sonali Shah’s research (e.g., 2012), Borgunn Ytterhus (2012), Stalker and Connors (e.g., 2004), Bryony Beresford (e.g., 1997), Mary Kellett (e.g., 2005), and Janice McLaughlin and colleagues (e.g., McLaughlin and Coleman-Fountain 2014) to name a selected few. Because it falls outside of the disciplinary boundaries of geography, the edited collection by Curran and Runswick-Cole (2013) or the recent, *Every Child Matters* project (their publications are too numerous to list, but, e.g., Goodley and Runswick-Cole 2011), is not reviewed except their work published in geography. An attempt has been made to be comprehensive in the review of the geographical literature; however, of course, there are bound to be omissions as a review is of course a selective process.

This chapter is organized into three main sections. The first section reflects upon how geographers have illuminated the ways in which young people are (dis)abled on the grounds of diverse mind-body-emotional characteristics in space. The second section reflects upon how young people are (dis)abled in institutional spaces via both formal school policies and practices and informal young people’s cultures. The third section considers experiences in spaces and times beyond school spaces. The conclusion reflects upon the contributions that have been made by geographers of disabled children and young people and considers some potential future developments.

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## 2 Illuminating the Disablement of Young People in Space

### 2.1 What? Introducing the Field

Research about the geographies of disabled children and young people is clearly connected to two sub-/interdisciplinary fields: geographies of children and youth and geographies of disability. Geographers of disabled children and youth have responded to the relative absence of disabled children’s accounts within both of these fields, within geography and the broader social sciences. Until recently it could be argued that geographies of disability have been implicitly adult centric and geographies of children and youth have been implicitly ableist (although for an early exception, see Aitken and Wingate 1993; Butler 1998). Geographies of disability have not, until the last decade or so, taken account of how the experience of being disabled differs according to age and, specifically, how disability is experienced in particular ways for children and youth, who are subject to specific norms connected to discourses of the “normally developing child” (Holt 2003). At the same time, geographers of disabled young people have emphasized that geographies of children and youth have been implicitly ableist, by generally assuming a (non)disabled subject position of participants. Geographers of children and youth have generally not interrogated mind-body-emotional characteristics and the (dis)ablement that attaches and intersects to these as systematically as they have other

differences, such as gender, class, and location within the globalized world, among other kinds of social difference.

In line with the broader field of geographies of children and youth, those researching with disabled young people have emphasized the social competency and agency of young people. Therefore, a common trend in research about geographies of disabled children and youth has been an attempt to prioritize the voices and experiences of disabled young people themselves. There is also a smaller vein of exploring how young people are (dis)abled via adult practices and institutional constraints, by focusing upon adult discourses and broader policies (e.g., Holt 2003; Ryan 2005; Mathews 2011a).

## 2.2 Why? (Dis)abling Young People in Space: Commonality and Diversity of Approaches

Geographers seeking to understand the experiences of disabled young people have some differences in their theoretical and conceptual perspectives. Although unraveling these differences can enhance understandings of disability and the discussion will turn to some of the differences shortly, there is, arguably, an overarching commonality to the field. Politically and conceptually, we could not have arrived at the points we adopt currently without the social model(s) of disability. The social model(s) were developed by activists/academics who became aware in the 1970s that the barriers they faced to participation were socially constructed around their impairments and consequently devised a new definition of disability:

Impairment – lacking all or part of a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body. Disability – the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social (and spatial) organisation which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities. Union for the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (1975)

Social models of disability have significantly influenced geographies of disabled young people. They are implicitly if not always explicitly an important backdrop. Social models emphasized that disability is a political issue, which is primarily about the organization of society (and geographers emphasized the importance of space) rather than only the bodies or minds of disabled people. Arguably, without this politicizing of disability, this chapter would not be written; there would not be a body of research about geographies of disabled children and young people, or at the very least, they would be different. Although there is some debate about how to most effectively conceptualize the causes of disability, there is not a contribution in the field that doubts the importance of ableism – an insidious set of exclusions/marginalizations, based on the assumption of an able body/mind (Chouinard et al. 2010; Campbell 2009; see Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2013) and/or disableism – the exclusion, neglect, and barriers that lead to the marginalization of disabled people, which flows from ableism.

Most geographers researching disabled children and young people's experiences are not pure "social constructionists," and the majority of geographical studies acknowledge the problematic corporeality of a "troubled" body or mind. Indeed, this is typical, perhaps of broader geographies of disability. Geographers in the field do define and conceptualize disability slightly differently, with some being more attune to bodily experiences of pain, diagnosis, and so on and other sidelining considerations of material, messy, problematic bodies to focus on disabling environments. Although there is not space to account for the entire diversity here, a few illustrative examples are drawn upon. Arguably, the field is typified by polite critique and ontological agreement, although there are small differences of opinion.

Overall, there is a continuum, with some scholars emphasizing more fully the socio-spatial processes of disablement and others paying more attention to the embodied experience of being disabled within disableist or ableist societies. Both of these approaches provide useful insight, although clearly the findings are influenced by the conceptual underpinnings of the studies. For example, by focusing upon the physical barriers to play, Yantzi et al. (2010) are close to a pure social model perspective, although they also argue the need to incorporate children's qualitative experiences in future studies, which might shed light on personal experiences. Other scholars have endeavored to apply the contributions of social models to groups who might not usually be considered disabled, highlighting their barriers to participation. For instance, Madriaga (2010) applies the social model to young people on the autistic spectrum, and this usefully highlights the barriers to the participation of young people on the autistic spectrum in a full university life. Similarly Holt (2010b) suggests that young people with socio-emotional differences can be considered to be disabled since they are disabled by contrast to emplaced norms of social and emotional expression.

In some contrast, Fenton et al. (2013), by focusing upon the emotional experience of the young people, pay closer attention to the embodied experience of having a severe allergy. By developing a phenomenological approach, Allen (2004a) considers young people's ability to resist and contest ableism and (dis)ableism.

Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2013) are concerned that emphasizing the individual experiences of disabled young people might understate the commonalities of ableism or disableism. However, the body of work suggests that the personal experience of disability is always bound up with disableism/ableism; Fenton et al. (2013: 289) suggest:

Excerpts from interviews illustrate the insidious entanglement of the relational – spatial processes and structures in school environments in sustaining the emotional geographies of difference.

Worth (2013a) explores in depth the interconnection between personal experience and disablement. Worth (2013a) goes on to highlight the importance of focusing on the *barriers to being*, or "psychosocial elements of disableism," along with the "barriers to doing" (see also Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2013). This suggests a need to consider how ableism and/or disabling barriers are incorporated into individuals'



senses of selves, limiting not just what they can do but constraining their subjectivities and senses of their own potentialities.

Holt (2007) has similarly striven to emphasize the interconnectedness between material bodies and socio-spatial processes of (dis)ableism, by drawing upon Judith Butler's work on performativity and subjection. Her work endeavors to question the impairment/disability dualism to emphasize that impairment, like disability, is socially positioned (see also Tremain 2003). Stephens et al. (2014) argue that:

Our more nuanced focus on these materialities deepens theories of embodiment and provides pragmatic possibilities for action, inviting adaptations that are more responsive to the complex, varied needs and desire of disabled children in each environment. (Stephens et al. 2014: 5)

Such an embodied conceptualization of disability has also been applied to learning disabilities.

For instance, Goodfellow (2012: 68) considers

‘learning disability’ as a form of embodiment, which is rooted in the participants’ conception of their mind–body differences in relation to others within their social milieu.

These are sophisticated accounts that seek to explore in-depth the intersection between bodies and spaces in (re)producing disability. However, Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2013) claim that too often the focus of social and geographical research about disability focuses upon disabling barriers. What is required, they argue, is turning the gaze more fully onto the ableist norms and expectations that establish an able norm as the human ideal. In the Children's Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability project, we also turned the gaze upon (re)productions of the “norm” (Holt et al. 2012). We argue that norms are not fixed; they are socio-spatially shifting. Importantly, then, norms always have the potential for transformation or to be expanded or performed otherwise.

In much of the field, attention is given to how young disabled people as agents can contest and challenge, and sometimes change, (dis)ableist practices. This is theorized with reference to Deleuze and Dorn's (1998) concept of “mature geographic subject,” by Stephens et al. 2014; they suggest that:

Far from passively conforming to their environments, disabled children act as mature geographic subjects, navigating environments (literally and figuratively) with insight, generating their own multiple subjectivities, adapting their identities to changing environments to generate the best possible fit in that given time and place. (p. 13)

Close attention to the embodiment of young people with visual impairment by Allen (2004b) unravels how the ability to resist and contest (dis)ableism is tied to “class” habitus. Much research in the field has paid attention to young disabled people's experiences and agency within school spaces, and it is to this that attention is now turned.

### 2.3 How? Thinking Through Methodology

The prioritizing of young disabled people's experiences has led to methodological challenges and innovations. In line with the field of geographies of children and youth more generally, many scholars have attempted to engage with young disabled people in empowering ways. Specific techniques have included ethnography (e.g., Holt 2004a; Holt et al. 2012; Stephens et al. 2014; Butcher and Wilton 2008), interviews, and ethnographic observation, often used in conjunction with interviews or informal conversations (Holt 2004a; Holt et al. 2012; Stephens et al. 2014). More creative techniques have included draw and tell (Fenton et al. 2013); self-directed photography (Goodfellow 2012); GPS and time maps (Doherty et al. 2014); and life maps, which help people chronologically order and recall life events and are participatory in allowing people more control over the methods of the research process (Worth 2011). Yantzi et al. (2010) used participatory access audits, which allowed children and young people to assess the "playability" of different playgrounds; and De Vet et al. (2012) drew upon retrospective interviews whereby current university students reflected upon their past experience in schools. Although this presents problems of recall, the respondents were able to critically reflect, from a distance, on their experiences. Many of these substantiate those of young people who are currently attending schools who participate in research, which corroborates their findings.

The Children's Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability project endeavored to adopt a participatory approach, whereby young people were given the option of which methods to use, although all young people were also invited to participate in focus groups and/or interviews (either paired or individual, depending on the young person's preference). In practice, this more open approach was most successful with primary school-aged children (aged between 7 and 11 in our study). In the primary school case studies, the children opted for a range of activities, from a street dance to clay models and role-play. Older youths often sought more direction and generally engaged in self-directed photography and photo-interviews. The project also came across institutional constraints and challenges, with key actors in schools seeking to advise and limit methodological choice, particularly when trying to engage with the experiences of young people with socio-emotional differences, who were often perceived as "at risk" and/or "risky." Similarly, teachers and other adults often tried to protect and therefore to direct research with young people's learning differences – teachers felt that these young people would not be able to cope with or understand the choices offered to them and suggested a more structured approach.

It is important to note that specific challenges can exist in attempting to listen to the voices and experiences of disabled young people, as Skelton and Valentine (2003) discuss in relation to d/Deaf young people. Skelton and Valentine (2003) describe the extra complexities of their research as those endemic with "cross-cultural research," and this description is pertinent to researching with d/Deaf young people, since those who ascribe to a Deaf identity claim the status of a linguistic minority rather than a disabled group. However, it has broader

resonance to young people whose modes of communication and being might be different, in a society where this difference is not viewed neutrally, but is usually regarded as “other.” This can apply also to physical, learning, or socio-emotional differences.

It is evident that the experiences gained in conducting research with disabled young people can provide insight for all geographers of children and youth (Pyer et al. 2010) and geographers/social scientists more generally. For instance, in detailing attempts to listen to children’s voices within the UK Disability Rights Commission, Sin and Fong (2010) remind geographers of the importance of considering wider power relations in the design and execution of research. They highlight: “. . . the need to situate our understanding of the meaningful involvement of children as competent social actors against wider sets of power and structural relations” (p. 20).

## **2.4 Who’s Included? Researching All Kinds of Mind-Body-Emotional Difference**

Listening to the voices and experiences of disabled young people has produced an increasingly weighty body of work that emphasizes the commonalities of experiences of (dis)ablement among young people with mind-body-emotional differences and/or impairments. In comparison with broader social studies of disability, geographers exploring the experiences of young disabled people have included people with a diverse range of mind-body-emotional characteristics. This reflects the broader field of geographies of disability. Whereas broader social studies of disability have, justifiably, been critiqued for slide lining the experiences of people with learning disabilities, geographers have, from the inception of an identifiable field of interest in geographies of disability, incorporated experiences of people with a range of mind and body characteristics, including visually impaired people, people with learning disabilities, and people experiencing mental ill health (see, e.g., the edited collection by Butler and Parr 1999). The smaller subfield of geographies of disabled children and youth has taken a similar, broad approach to defining disability; the voices of young people with a range of mind-body-emotional differences who are disabled by contrast to socio-spatial norms of ability have been included in research.

Research has included physically disabled young people (e.g., Yantzi et al. 2010; De Vet et al. 2012), those with learning differences (Butcher and Wilton 2008; Goodfellow 2012), young people with visual impairments (e.g., Allen 2004a, b; Worth 2013a, b), and people on the autistic spectrum (Madriaga 2010; Holt et al. 2012). Many studies have explored the experiences of young people with a wide range of impairments/diagnoses (e.g., Holt 2004a, b; Holt et al. 2012, 2013; Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2013). The studies of Holt (2004a, b, 2007, 2010a, b) and the Children’s Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability project also included young people who were not labeled as having special educational needs (SENs) and/or did not consider themselves to be disabled, facilitating an exploration of a

multitude of lines of othering/saming, along with exploring disabling experiences which might not be tied to a diagnosis.

Further, researching with disabled young people has highlighted lines of differences and diagnosis which are not generally applied to adults. Holt (2010b) argued that young people with socio-emotional differences can be considered disabled, drawing upon a critical social model of disability, which emphasizes the socio-spatial processes of disablement above the embodied experience of difference. Since the 2014 Code of Practice was implemented in England, young people with socio-emotional differences would often be diagnosed as experiencing social, emotional, and mental health difficulties. In the USA such young people are often labeled as experiencing emotional and behavioral disorders.

The diversity and range of mind-body-emotional characteristics of the young people represented by the field challenge the binary division of disabled/nondisabled or impaired/non-impaired. For instance, Children's Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability project explored the experiences of young people who are and who are not categorized as having special educational needs. Since the SEN institution is spatially variable, even at relatively local scales (Holt 2004a, b, 2007), being categorized as having (or as not having) SEN may not represent anything about the characteristics of the young person. This demonstrates the powerful and contested nature of diagnoses – specifically of SENs that are rooted more in education than medical diagnoses, but it also has implications for other diagnoses based on mind-body differences. This powerfully emphasizes that there is a continuum of mind-body-emotional differences and the powerful nature of the binary divide as disabled or nondisabled. Also, we were interested in the experiences of young people who were disabled and nondisabled. Similarly, Fenton et al. (2013) include young people with anaphylaxis, which broadens the scope of who is considered to be “disabled.”

Finally, included in this chapter are people who are often disabled by contrast to a hearing and oral “norm,” but who often consider themselves to be a linguistic minority rather than disabled: young people who are d/Deaf (e.g., Skelton and Valentine 2003; Valentine and Skelton 2003; Mathews 2011a, b). Skelton and Valentine (2003) point to the complexity of positioning deafness as either a purely medical condition against Deafness as a linguistic grouping:

In different spaces people may be ascribed an identity as Deaf or as deaf. Someone might perceive themselves as Deaf and at their local Deaf club where they feel part of Deaf culture and use BSL, their first language, they are likely to be recognised as this. However, while they might self identify as Deaf, for the same person in their place of work, if they have to use oral styles of communication within a hearing context, then their work colleagues might ascribe them a deaf identity. In such a setting there is no Deaf culture only hearing culture, and using BSL is usually impossible. Young people we interviewed for the research project were negotiating between both types of identity. (p. 456)

Skelton and Valentine (2003) question the pertinence of publishing their research with d/Deaf young people in a special edition about geographies of disability, and this question is of relevance here. Should this work be appearing in a chapter

discussing geographies of disabled young people, since many of the young people they talked to would not consider themselves disabled? Arguably, Skelton and Valentine (2003) answered that question by publishing in the geographies of disability special edition. When d/Deaf people rebel against a label of “disabled,” they are usually questioning the medical model of disability; indeed, viewing Deafness as a linguistic minority has parallels to the social model of disability (Skelton and Valentine 2003). The level of influence of this work to the field cannot be underestimated. Some of the questions raised about the legitimacy of including young people who might not define themselves as disabled in research about disabled young people have arisen in the work of the author, in her own work and in collaborative research with Sophie Bowlby and Jennifer Lea. This challenge is presented by the sheer diversity and inclusiveness of the field of geographies of disabled young people.

The above sections have examined the intersection of disability geography and the geographies of children and young people (“what”); the approaches used in this field, often linked to a concern for social justice (“why”); a variety of methods and research frameworks (“how”); and diverse subjects who identify as “disabled” (“who”); the remainder of the chapter gets into the “where” – situating research with disabled children and young people in space.

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### **3 (Dis)ablement in School Spaces via Formal and Informal Cultures**

Much research about young people with (dis)ability has focused upon the experiences of this group of young people in school, as the space where children and young people spend most of their day. There has been a broad shift, globally, in the perceived appropriate place for educating disabled children and youth away from segregated special toward mainstream schools, since (at least) the Salamanca Statement (1994). This shift is spatially variable and contested in many contexts across the world and recently has been challenged by the UK government, for instance, which sees an increased role for special schools (Holt et al. 2012; Runswick-Cole 2011). These changes have led to a heterogeneous landscape of the spatiality of disabled children’s education, with some disabled children being educated within mainstream schools, whereas others continue to be taught in segregated special schools. Of course, within this binary are other spaces, including “specialist mainstream schools,” whereby specific mainstream schools are given the resources to cater for particular impairments within the mainstream and/or special units within mainstream schools. Given this spatial pluralism, it is unsurprising that geographers have investigated young people’s experiences in a range of types of school and within school spaces. The research has not sought to demonstrate which is the “best” place for disabled children. It is taken as a given in critical disability studies that disabled children should be educated in inclusive spaces. Such discussions are often couched around ideas of children as “social becomings” and a sense that colocating children with and without impairments will (re)produce

more positive ideas of disability. However, research with children and young people which has taken seriously their agency has demonstrated that it is not so simple, and of course young people include and exclude each other on a range of grounds of difference.

### 3.1 (Dis)ableism in Formal School Spaces

The weight of research demonstrates that schools are specific spaces tied to broader societal processes and impulses, and both special and mainstream schools are ableist/disableist spaces. These micro-spaces are connected to and comprise a specific component of the wider education institution and, indeed, society. De Vet et al. (2012: 379) state that:

In this vein, schools were not to be ‘objectified’ but instead to be thought of as having porous boundaries, rendering them insecure and indeterminate by the different ways they are connected, and disconnected, to wider contexts of education funding, political discourse and employment opportunities.

Researchers have demonstrated how the ableist/normalizing imperatives of formal aspects of schools (dis)able, exclude, and marginalize young people. De Vet et al. (2012) point to the spatial layout of schools and the need to move about in high schools and the constraints of space and time as a particular issue for young people at high school. They particularly emphasize the issue of time, but the temporal constraints of the timetable and also the need to attend school for periods of time which can be disrupted through illness, operations, and medical care:

Time was one of the most frequent complaints when participants were asked about the challenges of attending a mainstream high school, including the ‘school day’ and class durations, and stringent timetables. Mel: I just think where everything is, how it’s so far apart, well not really that far apart compared to this place [the university campus], but there were lots of stairs and getting in and out of the rooms I found difficult. Kate: I don’t know about you guys, but I was exhausted by period six, I was just so tired.

Mel: Yeah, I got called home whenever my work would start slipping grades or something.

Kassandra: I think it’s even the trust that they have in you in year seven.

Like, I got sick probably a month and a half into year seven and I was off for three weeks or something\*which for the beginning of school was. (De Vet et al. 2010: 382)

Holt (2004a) explores how the spatiality and everyday practices of mainstream primary school spaces and different micro-spaces (dis)abled children. Four examples are referenced in Holt (2004a) and serve to structure the discussion below.

First, the ordering of schools by age is based on a normative assumption that young people will reach the same level of learning/development at the same age (James et al. 1998), and this disables those who fall outside of this norm and particularly below (Holt 2004b). Second, to accommodate this diversity, children can be organized in ability groupings either within classrooms or in different classes according to their ability or “setting.” This helps to turn children into self-regulating subjects who try their hardest to either move up a set or remain in the top set:

I’m in – top set in Maths and top set in English . . . It makes me feel happy . . . because I feel like, I’m good at English and Maths . . . Ms Richards teaches middle set in both Maths and English, and, in Maths, Ms. Armstrong teaches the bottom set, and – in English, Ms. King takes the bottom set. (Leora, in Holt 2004b: unpaginated)

In addition, as the quote suggests, the spatiality of setting clearly marked out the more and less able children, even when the sets are not labeled as “top,” “middle,” or “bottom.” Similarly, the internal spatial ordering of specific classrooms according to ability or to enable classroom assistants to work with a specific child or groups of children also clearly spatially demarks the more and less able children and/or the children who “need more or special assistance,” as Billy states: “Me, Jacob, Ayisha, Lea and Liam need the most help. That’s afternoon places (Billy, boy with learning disabilities and Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD), class D)” (Holt 2004a: 225).

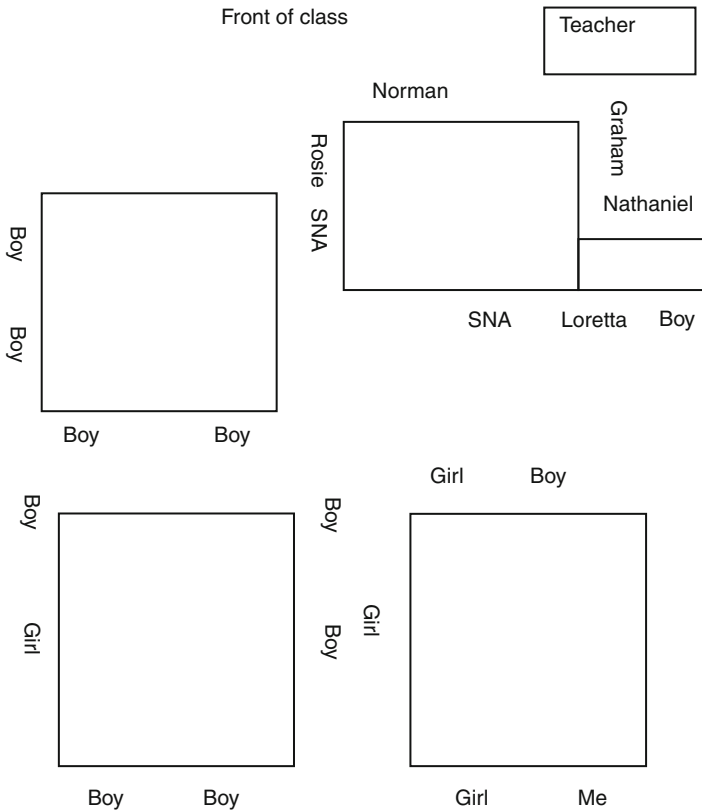
Similarly, Holt (2004a) shows how Lindsay sat separately from the other children to enable her to be able to leave the classroom early and to work with a Learning Support Assistant. Similarly, children labelled with SEN often sat on a table, either alone or with a group, with a Learning Support Assistant, clearly demarking that they are ‘different’ to the rest of the class (see Fig. 1).

Scholars researching in a variety of geographical contexts have identified similar socio-spatial processes of (dis)ablement within formal school contexts. In their research in Canada, Stephens et al. (2014: 14) emphasize that “western school environments (Foucault 1975; Rose 1999), with their concomitant emphasis on children’s conformity and normalcy, makes it understandable that some adaptations in integrated schools (often added on in an ad hoc fashion) are anxiety provoking, because children felt singled out by them.” Indeed, some of the examples they draw upon have resonance to the illustration above, demonstrating a commonality of experience of disabled young people in diverse spatial contexts:

For example Luigi, a 12-year-old girl, noted that while everyone else in the class sat at tables in groups of two, she sat alone at a special (adjustable) desk that she did not like. She also said:

Luigi: I sit next to the door. Mom: They ordered a table specifically for her... it looks like the others but it has adjustable legs.

Luigi: Now it doesn’t stop squeaking, when I move it doesn’t stop squeaking. I don’t want to move because every time I move it makes sound. (Luigi, School Interview, June 2009; Stephens et al. 2014: 15)



**Fig. 1** Seating plan of lower set year five English (Church Street)

Similarly, Stephens et al. (2014: 14) discuss a young person with the pseudonym Louise, who "... sat in the corner to facilitate her early exit," who noted:

I felt I was put in the corner. Eventually I got... I don't want to say I got used to it... it is just another day, it is just a spot to sit, it doesn't really matter, I'm not in the class to get the perfect spot – I'm in class to learn, but it would have been nice to have been a little more centralized in class. (Louise, School Interview, May 2009)

Third, practices of praise and punishment establish norms of appropriate behavior and set apart those incapable of behaving appropriately in place (Holt 2004a). Various strategies that schools use to promote and reward positive behavior and "trying hard" establish an ableist norm and situate as "other" those who are never rewarded in such a way. For instance, Goodfellow's (2012) research about young people with learning disabilities in Canada drew upon self-directed photography and focus groups. In discussing one of the participants' photograph of "student of the month," another participant "commented: 'like all the people that didn't quite make it at something' (Amy). According to Dale, this photograph symbolizes the



school's lack of recognition for students whom hold membership to the 'DD' group" (Goodfellow 2012: 70).

Fourth, children's own social practices and informal cultures are enacted within formal classroom spaces, which serve to include/exclude and identify the same and the other in these spaces, as well as within designated informal spaces. More attention will be given to informal cultures in the next section. However, it has become increasingly evident that young people's sociality and informal cultures are an important element of formal school spaces. Indeed, a key recommendation of the Children's Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability project is that key actors should recognize that young people's socialization and social capital play a pivotal role in their experience of school and to consider young people's informal cultures in everyday practices and decisions about teaching and learning. Jack, in Holt (2004a), highlights how children's sociality is ever present within formal spaces:

'We talk all the while though, but we don't let Miss see . . . When she turns her back on us we like, we talk to each other, really quietly. . . .' (Jack, non-disabled boy). (Holt 2004b: 230)

Clearly, Lindsay was isolated from much social interaction with her peers in classroom spaces, and this played itself out in her broader social relations, which were limited (Holt 2004a, 2007). However, Ali, who also used a wheelchair, managed to contest the isolated position he sometimes found himself in by smiling and waving at his peers when he sat separately from them. This was arguably facilitated by teachers and classroom assistants making sure that he had opportunity to sit with his peers at "carpet time" (when all the children sit down to discuss, listen to a story, and so on, on a carpeted area). In sum, Holt (2004a: 234) concludes that:

The evidence presented in this paper suggests that co-locating children with various mind-body characteristics in educational institutions *may* be necessary, but is certainly not sufficient, to deconstruct the socially situated but powerful dichotomy between the abled (Same) and the disabled (Other). Along with such co-existence, it is necessary to confront, contest and transform the ways that dominant identities can be reproduced through everyday practices in school spaces.

However, contrasting Ali and Lindsay's experiences points to how schools can be enabling environments at times. Therefore, disableism or indeed ableism is not a totalizing set of practices but is performed and enacted; it is therefore possible to transform ableist norms (Holt et al. 2012). For instance, attending a mainstream school does provide educational opportunities that might not be present in segregated special schools (Worth 2013a). Further, it does also provide the opportunity for young people to transform negative representations of difference and create shared experiences and relationships based on trust, empathy, and mutual respect (Holt 2009).

A corrective to the emphasis on disablement is offered by Worth (2013a), who discusses "Michael's" positive experience of schooling. She highlights the role of specific individuals determining to be inclusive and enabling. The weight of research evidence in different socio-spatial contexts can provide evidence and

ideas of good practice which can be applied in diverse geographical contexts. For instance, Michael's "Learning Support Assistant gave him academic support when he needed it without interfering with classroom camaraderie" (Worth 2013a: 113). Indeed, "...Michael talks about never feeling disabled, which could be interpreted as rarely experiencing discrimination or exclusion..." (ibid).

Indeed, nearly all of the young people who participated in the Children's Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability project had aspects of formal elements of school which they enjoyed. Most of the participants in this study also valorized the opportunity to gain academic qualifications, be educated, and gain cultural capital. For instance, Holt et al. (2012: 2201) found that:

...the presence of the young people on the AS expands the norms of behaviour (re) produced in mainstream school space. These fleeting transformations suggest an immanent political potential to broaden the norms of sociality in the school and beyond.

One of the reasons why the weight of research demonstrates the (dis)ablement within school spaces might be tied to that the key benefit of attending a mainstream school might be accessed to academic qualifications and credentials (although these might not be equally available to disabled children; Shah 2012).

## 3.2 Informal Aspects of Schools

Geographers have explored in detail young disabled people's social experiences of schools and have emphasized that young people's informal experiences of schools are connected to their formal experiences of school. One of the key themes emerging from the existing body of research is the importance of informal aspects of school to disabled young people's lives. Worth (2013a: 108) states that "friendships at school are critical, as relationships at school teach us what to expect of ourselves and others – key to future abilities and resilience." Crucially, disabled young people often cannot access all areas of school playgrounds and recreational spaces Yantzi et al. (2010) at all the same times as their peers. Woolly et al. (2006) point out, for instance, that it is important for young disabled people to be in the playground at the beginning of playtime and that this often does not happen.

In playground and recreational spaces, young people have more scope for the open expression of their sociality and cultures (Holt 2007). As emphasized in the section above, often formal practices and spatialities influence young people's social inclusion and exclusion into youth cultures. On the other hand, in the Children's Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability project, we found that young people's views of school were tied closely to their social experiences: those with few or no friends, who experienced bullying and stigmatization, tended to dislike many aspects of school, including formal lessons.

In many different socio-spatial contexts, it has been found that many disabled young people have friends and some good friends. However, often, young people's

social practices intersect with and reproduce (dis)ableism emerging from formal aspects of schooling. Young disabled people's social interactions are "...impeded by stereotypical metanarratives of disability" (Worth 2013a: 104). This is perhaps unsurprising; given young people live in broader (dis)ableist societies, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect that they will automatically challenge (dis)ableism in their own social and cultural practices, although sometimes this does happen (Holt 2009).

In many different contexts and in studies with young people with a range of mind-body-emotional characteristics, scholars have found when talking to young people that young disabled people experience considerable issues of marginalization, exclusion, and stigmatization or bullying. For instance, in Canadian research with young learning disabled people, the participants in Goodfellow's (2012) research discussed experiences of being bullied and isolated:

Researcher:...What does it make you think of?

Amy: Just like loneliness.

Researcher: Do you ever feel loneliness, at school?

Amy: Yeah, sometimes.

Researcher: Why is that, do you think?

Amy: Because I guess I don't really have an actually good friend. (Goodfellow 2012: 73)

Worth (2013a) also discusses experiences of exclusion and bullying in mainstream schools. Indeed, Ann's experiences of being bullied were so severe and caused her so much anxiety and distress that she stopped going to school:

ANN: Well you had, like, people taking the mick out of you and I couldn't, couldn't handle it. Cause the school I was in, you know, it's like, it's like, in [Smithills] you had to like, you went in the main building, and if you turned right, you had like a visual impairment team, and as soon as you people saw you going right, you had mick took out of you. So ... (p. 110)

Similarly, the participants in Holt and Holt, Bowlby, and Lea's studies have also discussed experiences of bullying, exclusion, and isolation. In the Children's Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability project, 108 young people participated, around half of whom were labeled as having SEN. Young people with SEN were much more likely to have few or no or unstable friendships and to be bullied or excluded than young people without this label.

Importantly, young people have complex subjectivities/identities or are subjected along a variety of axes of power. It is not possible always, therefore, to identify that bullying is always and only tied to a young person's disability. Indeed, in the excerpt below, taken from Holt (2010c), it becomes clear that Holly's experience of bullying is tied at least as much to her families' poverty/socioeconomic exclusion as her disability:

Holly: Because this school's crap!

Int.: Why is that?

Holly: Because, no because I get bullied and then no-one sorts it out and then it ends up my mum having to come to school.

Int.: Who do you get bullied by?

Holly: People in my class that think it's funny to take the Mickey out of disabled people...

Although Holly initially claims that her exclusion and stigmatisation is underpinned by her peers' negative representations of disability, she later reveals that her experiences of marginalisation are also associated with her family's economic hardship. For instance, after discussing her experiences of being bullied, she continues: 'They say stuff like, "Oh you get your bag from Oxfam" and I can't remember what else they say, but they say shit stuff anyway'. (From Holt, 2010a: 33)

It might be that children and young people are taught that it is not acceptable to bully on the grounds of disability and therefore are more able to label and stand up to disableist bullying than that which also is tied to poverty or socioeconomic hardship (see also Allen 2004a). Indeed, in the Children's Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability project, we have found that young people who are both labeled as having SEN and come from poor or socioeconomically excluded backgrounds experience multiple exclusions, segregations, and bullying. Similarly, the participants in Worth (2013a) point to intersecting exclusions based on geographical location, socioeconomic status, and disability, with those who attend "rough schools" experiencing bullying:

For Arran, Macar and Ann in particular, bullying about their sight loss was a difficult and definitive part of their experience of mainstream school. The teasing that Arran faced in junior school escalated into physical bullying when he started secondary school. When he received blame rather than support from teachers, he challenged the bully in the schoolyard:

ARRAN: Um [sigh] people sort of noticed – when you're kids people don't really mind if you can't see something. They're just, they're more understanding. But as you get older it's kind of, you start forming into social circles and that's when it's all changed. Their views changed straightaway and you meet new people and they're not always nice. [...]—I didn't actually want to go to the school. Knew it was a rough school, fights...Straightaway target and it was pretty much like that. So I went with it for a while. Year Eight, after a lot of building up of anger over the past sort of six years, and teachers just ignoring the problem, saying that I was causing a lot—although I wasn't doing anything—I lost my temper, and solved my own problems, basically. [...] I got into a fight with the lad that was doing a lot of the hassle, and came off better [chuckles]

(Worth, 2013a: 109)

Worth (2013a) points to the importance of young people's agency in confronting bullying, and Holt (2010) also emphasizes how friendships can provide support and a buffer from bullies; Having good friends is consistently shown to be important throughout the literature (De Vet et al. 2012) "How dare you say that about my friend. ..." Worth (2013a), among others, provides insight into the fact that often

disabled people do have friends, and indeed, friends and good friends can be crucial to having a positive experience of school:

ELIZABETH: My friends have been extremely important to me really. You know they've [sigh] I don't know, they've been my friends for like seven years, as I've said. And not one has ever complained about reading a word off a board or you know. If I can't see something they just tell me what it says, they've never, never ever complained. To be honest, they've just been really good. The people that I'm at school with, like will go and sit next to you, that you don't really know, they'll do the same. You just have to say, 'What does that say?' And they'll just do the same for you. It's not, they won't find it a big issue. Most of them do know. (Age 17, 6th form, Worth 2013a: 109)

Since people are subjectified via positive social relationships along with more conflictual and negative ones, young people's friendships can be implicated in (dis)ableism. Young disabled people might perform a specific disabled identity, such as being dependent in order to gain social recognition. For instance, it is possible that Elizabeth, in the extract from Worth (2013a) above, is performing a "disabled" role in the friendships she has. Close relationships between young disabled and nondisabled people can lead to a resignified disabled subject position, which might be seen as "different," but where this difference is not viewed pejoratively as "other" (Holt 2008; Worth 2013a).

### 3.3 Mainstream School, Special Schools, and Special Units

A key question for geographers pertains to the most appropriate place to educate disabled young people, although this question is often not addressed head-on. Indeed, Runswick-Cole (2011) usefully points out that the bias toward inclusive education is a myth in the UK context, and this provides a useful context for the following discussion. Clearly, those who are closely aligned to social models of disability would be hard pressed to challenge the human rights argument that mainstream schools should be inclusive spaces that can educate and socially incorporate all young people regardless of their disability and/or other axes of power. Of course, however, as the foregoing discussion has emphasized, it has been found that mainstream spaces are largely not fully inclusive spaces, and even those schools where key actors seek to be inclusive and try hard to be non-(dis)ableist and to meet the needs of all pupils, (dis)ableism continues. Given schools are specific spaces connected to broader socio-spatial and economic and political imperatives, this is unsurprising. In this context, it is unsurprising that some parents prefer that their children are taught in segregated special spaces. Further, since schools are largely not fully inclusive, sometimes young people are segregated into special units for more or less of the school day so that their perceived educational needs can be met.

The Children's Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability project found that often young people who attend special schools were either excluded from mainstream schools or they and their parents selected segregated special schooling due

to either a perception of or a direct experience of bullying at school. Some young people with learning differences experienced intersecting exclusions and bullying from teachers and children and young people in mainstream school spaces and therefore opted for segregated special education. In this project, overall, young people who attended special schools did have more friends and greater embodied social and emotional capital (Holt et al. 2013). However, special schools were also typified by social hierarchies, exclusions, and inclusions, often along similar grounds to within mainstream schools. Worth (2013a) has similarly found that young people with visual impairments often have positive social experiences of residential special schools. In Worth's research young people who attended segregated special schools frequently achieved well in terms of educational qualifications. It is evident that while segregated special schools might offer opportunities for young people, the choices that disabled young people and their parents make in relation to where to send young people are constrained by the pervasive normalization within mainstream school spaces and a broader (dis)ableist society. Indeed ableism is often internalized by disabled young people and their parents, who might view disability as a tragedy and be grateful for any accommodations made (Runswick-Cole 2008; Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2013).

Special units within mainstream schools can be viewed as mirroring the segregation of disabled young people within segregated special schools, but on a smaller scale (Holt 2004). Often these units have a more fluid spatiality and temporality, with young people moving into and out of special units and mainstream spaces of the school. There are often negative elements of special units, which symbolize otherness and mark young people out as different (to the extent that Ann, in Worth (2013a), cited above stopped attending school). In special units much time is often spent normalizing the perceived deviance of young people, for instance, by trying to teach young people on the autistic spectrum to cooperate (Holt et al. 2012), although this is also a tendency inherent within the normalizing special and mainstream education institutions. However, there can be positive elements of special units. In relation to both segregated special schools and special units, a distinction can usefully be made between segregated special spaces and "separate places" that can act as a sanctuary from the omnipresent ableist gaze and offer opportunities for disabled children to regroup" (Runswick-Cole 2011: 116).

The experiences of young d/Deaf people also complicate the debate about the most appropriate place for educating disabled children, since Deaf people perceive themselves as a linguistic minority rather than a disabled group, as discussed above. Indeed, Valentine and Skelton (2007) suggest that young Deaf people's transitions to adulthood are often closely aligned to a growing awareness of their status as a linguistic minority rather than a disabled group. Elizabeth Mathews (2011a, b) has emphasized that the awareness of a Deaf solidarity and culture and positive Deaf identity is often tied to education that is segregated special rather than mainstream spaces, in Ireland. This is particularly the case since sign language is often not taught in mainstream schools in Ireland which tend to follow an oralist tradition.

Much of the research about the appropriate place to educate disabled children within geography has been conducted in the Global North and in Anglophone

countries. There are some emerging accounts from the Global South. Two examples are Stefanie Gregorius' doctoral thesis, completed at Loughborough University (see Gregorius 2015) and Martha Geiger's (2010) research in Botswana. Gregorius' research emphasizes that the concept of inclusive education has been developed within the Global North and then applied across the globe. Indeed, often young disabled people in many contexts in the Global South do not attend school at all (UN 2011). However, inclusive education assumes a particular historical trajectory and the existence of a special educational need system. In Gregorius' study in Ghana, attending a special school was often seen as key to realizing the educational aspirations of young disabled people. Gregorius' thesis details how mainstream schools viscerally do not cater for the most basic needs and rights of disabled people:

By that time, I didn't have a wheelchair and I had to crawl everywhere on my hands. Because I was dragging my legs behind me, it made a sound and my colleagues [pupils without impairment] called me 'sweeper'; you know my legs made the sound when you sweep. [. . .]. I don't know why, but some of them [pupils without impairment] didn't like me [. . .] and sometimes they kicked me in the face. You know I was much lower than them and I couldn't run away; that is why. That was very painful [. . .], I, I, I, suffered a lot, ey!' (MacLean)

'If like I want to go to toilet, sometimes they [classmates without impairment] were shouting at me, that I am disturbing them. They were making fun, but sometimes I don't understand them, they won't come to me at all. I will be sitting down and spoil myself, the thing will just drop and I will be sitting down and I cannot do anything. The thing will spoil all my trousers and then they will call my mother to come and carry me back and then my mother will come and bath me and give me some medicine to sleep. [. . .] Honestly, I always feel lonely and sad that I am in this situation [physically impaired]. I wish I can move and do other things as my school friends and that makes me very sad. Now, I don't even have friends.' (Ismael, both in Gregorius' thesis, published 2014)

This section has emphasized the diverse experiences of (dis)ableism of young people in school spaces and also the commonality of experiences in different places globally. Emerging research in the Global South shows how visceral (dis)ableism can be in countries where shortage of resources and hardship are a fact of life for many.

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#### **4 Beyond School Spaces: Public Space, "Leisure" Spaces, and Homes**

The preponderance of research about disabled young people has focused on institutional spaces of schools. However, studies are emerging that discuss young disabled people's experiences across a range of spaces, and it is to this that attention is now turned. Some studies have charted young people's experiences across a range of spaces, from home to school, to leisure spaces, and/or to public spaces. As Stephens et al. (2014: 15) emphasize: "The proliferation of these combinations derives crucially from the enhancement of a child's capacity to act in unique ways in different environments." These spaces are not self-contained but porous. For

instance, Holt et al. (2013) explore how social relationships beyond the school permeate school spaces, both tangibly in that friendships forged outside school spaces continue within schools and intangibly, as social relations provide emotional capital, helping young people to have a positive sense of themselves and forge friendships and positive networks within the school spaces.

## 4.1 Home Spaces

A much more limited amount of research has explored disabled young people's experiences of home spaces than schools. That which does exist has emphasized that families can provide crucial support for young people who experience exclusion and marginalization in school spaces. For instance, Holt et al. (2013) consider how relationships forged at home with family members provide emotional capital for young people, even in families viewed as "troubled" or problematic by key actors, although the power reproduced via families cannot be ignored. Via in-depth ethnography and drawing upon critical feminist notions of homes and families, Stephens et al. (2014: 19) argue that:

We cannot . . . presume that children's capacity is only constrained in some environments (e.g. schools) while others remain 'natural' and enabling (e.g. homes). Intersecting forces of material spaces, meanings and identities are at work in all environments, albeit with varying expectations and intensities.

Ableism exists in home as well as school spaces. Nonetheless, Stephens et al. (2014) do point to ways in which young people negotiate their homes in freer and more enabling ways than in school spaces. For instance:

Brittany got down the stairs by sliding on her bum. She seemed a little embarrassed when her family told us that she slid down the stairs. (Excerpt from field notes, Home Interview, January 2009) (p. 11)

In her research in Botswana, Geiger (2010) points to the importance of considering home cultures and modes of communication when working with young people with communication differences. Gregorius' research in Ghana more problematically emphasizes just how disabling home spaces can be to disabled young people. Some of her respondent people were neglected, abused, and/or excluded from their original home. Her research also documents how young people negotiate creating their own home spaces in creative ways.

## 4.2 Leisure Spaces

A small and growing literature details disabled young people's experiences of leisure spaces.



In the Children's Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability project, we took a fluid view of "leisure" spaces to include any space that was not home or school spaces, where young people spent their leisure time, and this is paralleled by Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2013). A key finding from the Children's Embodied Social Capital and (Dis)ability study is having opportunity for leisure activities with friends, both formal and informal, and provides social and emotional capital for young people, which enhances their social inclusion in mainstream schools and which in turn enhances their overall experience of both formal and informal aspects of school (Holt et al. 2013). However, we found in common with Von Benzen (2011) and Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2013) that young disabled people's ability to socialize outside schools can be limited by the large catchment area of special schools and/or constraints of specialist transport.

In common with experiences of school, Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2013) detail the multifaceted ableism that pervades mainstream leisure spaces, meaning that many young disabled people simply did not attend mainstream leisure activities. There was a strong sense in which the young people had to prove they were "able enough for the mainstream" (ibid 318), and often the young people in their research had to exceed the norms and expectations placed on other children in order to be allowed to participate in mainstream activities. There was little expectation that the mainstream activities should adjust to accept the young disabled person. Stories of exclusion and marginalization abound in Hodge and Runswick-Cole (ibid) such as Roberta and Cerys' experience, whereby parents requested that Cerys leaves girl guides and she was asked to leave by the leader. By contrast, many of the young people in Hodge and Runswick-Cole's research discussed the importance and value of separate leisure activities (see also Holt et al. 2013). However, separate leisure activities often represented a "diagnostic apartheid. . .," whereby "the practice of segregation is often made palatable by such a presentation: segregation is in the best interests of the disabled person" (Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2013: 221). Ideas about risk also influence the extent to which disabled young people can participate in specific leisure activities, as Von Benzen (2011) points out in her study of young learning disabled people's access to natural environments.

### 4.3 Public Spaces

In comparison with the volume of research focusing upon young disabled people's experience of institutional spaces and (implicitly) disabled adults in public spaces, there are limited which specifically explore young disabled people's use of public spaces. An early work in the field was Butler's (1998) study of young disabled people in public spaces. She explored representations and experiences and also agency to contest disableist norms. Allen (2004a, b) analyzed young people with visual impairments' use of public and home spaces. Ryan (2005) explores mothers' responses to reactions to learning disabled children in public and emphasizes that mothers' responses to (dis)ableist public spaces constrain both mothers' and their disabled children's use of public space.

Transport and mobility have been highlighted as an issue constraining young disabled people's access to public space and leisure activities by authors such as Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2013). Pyer and Tucker (2014) explore the issue of mobility more fully. As expressed by one of their participants: "I find it really hard to go to the museum because we don't have a car, and the buses on that route I can't get on" (female, aged 15, manual wheelchair) (p. 6).

Similarly, everyday mobilities are implicitly explored by Worth (2013b), who examined the more mundane ways in which visually impaired young people move around in and use the city. This study emphasizes that their experiences are marked by ableism more than concrete barriers. Worth (2013b) discusses three strategies that young people use to negotiate the ableism of the city: concealing visual impairments, and relying on friends helping the young person to negotiate public space; performing VI with white canes, which can be used as either a symbol of visual impairment or a navigational aid; and traveling with guide dogs. Worth (ibid.) found that the approach differed according to age. In a similar vein to Valentine and Skelton (2007), who found that acceptance of Deaf culture was a key transition point for d/Deaf young people, being confident to use navigational aids represented a transition toward becoming adult for young people with visual impairments.

#### 4.4 Transitions to Adulthood

Transitions to adulthood have been a sustained subtheme of geographies of disabled young people, with a number of studies exploring the experiences of older young people and their transitions to adulthood. Examples here include Valentine and Skelton (2007), Worth (2009), and Gregorius' recently published PhD (see also Gregorius 2015). Traditional notions of transitions to adulthood are largely rejected in favor of factors that young people themselves prioritize and more critical ideas of youth transitions. However, government policy in many neoliberal nations continues to view paid work as a pivotal component of transition to a successful adult life (Butcher and Wilton 2008). Butcher and Wilton, therefore, explore paid work opportunities for learning disabled people. They argue that workspaces are often not transitional spaces, as they often do not lead onto anything other than being at home. Rather than focusing upon the economic imperative which underpins the policies of trying to integrate learning disabled people into mainstream work opportunities, Butcher and Wilton point to the importance of work as a social space. They argue that, rather than focusing upon the transition to economic independence, a more appropriate goal would be one of "transition to meaningful activity" (Butcher and Wilton 2008: 1091). Indeed, the importance placed on social interaction by Butcher and Wilson's respondents reflects the findings discussed above in relation to schools.

The transition to university is often viewed as a key milestone in the transition to adulthood for more affluent cohorts in many societies, and Madriaga (2010) explores the experience of young people on the autistic spectrum who follow a

traditional path to university. He suggests that while young people on the autistic spectrum might be included in mainstream learning activities, social and informal elements of universities are (dis)abling for many of these young people. Although this is often just accepted as part of the “condition” of autism from a medical model perspective, Madriaga emphasizes that:

Many of these difficulties stem from HE institutions having little success in eradicating disabling barriers and providing a sense of inclusivity for all students. Failure to dismantle barriers was demonstrated in the narratives of over half respondents who identified fresher’s week, the local student union pub and the library as inaccessible places. (p. 48)

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## 5 Conclusion

As the body of research about young disabled people’s experiences grows, it becomes clear that there are many similarities of experiences, notwithstanding the contextual specificities of young people’s encounters with environments. This commonality could help to produce counter-topographies, which theorize: “the connectedness of vastly different places made artificially discrete by virtue of history and geography but which also reproduce themselves differently amidst the common political-economic and sociocultural processes they experience” (Katz 2001: 1299). Such counter-topographies could perhaps encourage collaborative action among young people in different socio-spatial contexts.

Despite the many commonalities of young people’s experiences, social and spatial differences exist in the experiences of young disabled people; across space, in different schools, in different types of schools, and in different geographical contexts; and according to how specific mind-body-emotional characteristics are interpreted in particular places. These differences provide insight into how (dis)ableism can be contested and challenged, sometimes by critical adults and sometimes by young people. Young people themselves often transform and challenge (dis)ableism. Although this is often in mundane everyday ways, which are about personal experiences of (dis)ableism, there is the potential to scale up these political practices to transform (dis)ableism on a broader scale.

This chapter has demonstrated that the geographies of young disabled people are a burgeoning and vibrant area of interest within geographies of children and youth. In the early 1990s, there were few studies that sought to understand the experiences of young disabled people. Today it is possible to identify a field of interest, with young people’s experiences in a host of different socio-spatial contexts being explored. The extent of the scholarship facilitates exploring similarities and differences in the experiences of young disabled people in different types of spaces (institutional, public, etc.) and in different places across the globe. This scholarship has the potential to be a launching pad for generating a new global collective political consciousness, stimulating change and enhancing young disabled people’s lives in a variety of contexts.

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# Childhood, Youth, and Religious Identity: Mapping the Terrain

# 3

Peter J. Hemming

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	52
2	Foundations of the Field .....	52
3	Religious Identity .....	54
4	Socialization .....	56
5	Agency .....	58
6	Expression .....	60
7	Belonging .....	62
8	Conclusion .....	64
	References .....	66

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### Abstract

This chapter outlines the broader interdisciplinary field of emerging academic work on childhood, youth, and religious identity, identifying and investigating the geography that can be found within it. It begins by outlining the foundations of the field, before introducing the concept of religious identity and some of its key features. The chapter then goes on to explore a range of cross-cutting themes including socialization, agency, expression, and belonging. The role of geographical concepts and perspectives are considered in each of these four sections. The chapter ends with reflections on future directions and challenges for the study of religion and religious identity in geographies of children and young people.

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### Keywords

Religion • Religious • Identity • Agency • Socialization • Belief

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## 1 Introduction

The study of religion in geography has seen substantial growth over the last couple of decades, a trend that has been reliably and competently documented by Lily Kong's (1990, 2001, 2010) decennial reviews in *Progress in Human Geography*. These reviews have mapped the development of the subdiscipline from a primary concern with religion's distribution, diffusion, demographics, and dynamics to an interest in the spatial politics and poetics of religion and the significance of identity, community, post-secularism, and diversity (of the religious, spatial, sensuous, and demographic kind). In the most recent review, Kong (2010) highlights children and young people as one of the new population constituents gaining the attention of geographers of religion. She situates this within the more general development of the geographies of childhood and youth subdiscipline, evidenced in this current volume and book series.

This chapter seeks to go beyond Kong's (2010) review, by drawing on work from a range of disciplines to identify and investigate the geography that can be found within a broader field of emerging academic work on childhood, youth, and religious identity. It begins by outlining the foundations of the field, before introducing the concept of religious identity and some of its key features. The chapter then goes on to explore a range of cross-cutting themes including socialization, agency, expression, and belonging. The role of geographical concepts and perspectives are considered in each of these four sections. The chapter ends with reflections on future directions and challenges for the study of religion and religious identity in geographies of children and young people.

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## 2 Foundations of the Field

Geographical scholarship on children and young people has drawn heavily on the "new" social studies of childhood. This body of work acknowledges the socially constructed nature of childhood as a category and the way it has varied across time, space, and cultures. Within this approach, children are viewed as a variable of analysis in their own right, rather than merely subsumed as part of a family or educational unit, and as social actors and agents who are actively engaged in constructing their own life worlds (Prout and James 1997). Research has therefore tended to emphasize the child- and youth-centered study of children and young people, taking their own priorities and concerns as starting points for social enquiry. Consequently, ethnography has often proved a useful methodology for exploring children and young people's everyday lives and uncovering depth and meaning in a way that other approaches cannot always achieve (James 2001). This has sometimes involved the use of creative or "child-centered" methods, such as drawing, drama, and photography, to provide diverse opportunities for children to communicate their perspectives (Barker and Weller 2003).

Research on childhood, youth, and religion, however, has not always followed a similar pathway. Earlier work on the subject relied quite heavily on Piagetian-influenced

psychological and developmental approaches to childhood, for example, defining age groups and cognitive stages by which children were supposed to understand religious knowledge and identity (e.g., Goldman 1964). Criticisms of such approaches include the fact that childhood “development” is socially, culturally, and historically specific and that decontextualized laboratory experiments cannot accurately represent children’s full capabilities. More recently, scholars in the field have questioned the marginal place of children and young people in their home disciplines, identifying a tendency to view these constituents as outside of mainstream concern (e.g., Bunge 2006 on religious studies) or instead pointing to a failure to view the category of childhood through a more critical lens and to move away from adult-centered concerns such as pedagogy and philosophy (e.g., Miller-McLemore 2006 on religious education).

Another strand of research in the field has approached the issue of childhood, youth, and religion from a quantitative perspective. Many of these studies have employed surveys to investigate young people’s religious attitudes and values (e.g., Kay and Francis 1996; Ziebertz and Kay 2006). This body of research benefits from a focus on young people’s own answers and is helpful for identifying broad patterns and relationships, as well as important influences on religious identities and experiences. However, in an attempt to “measure” religion, such approaches inevitably simplify a rather complex phenomenon, reducing it to objective markers and neat packages, rather than exploring real depth and nuance. Questionnaires are also notoriously difficult to use with younger children because of problems with comprehension, hence most of the work in this area focuses on teenagers and young people. Despite their strengths then, quantitative approaches may complement but on their own can rarely constitute a child- or youth-centered approach to the study of religion, due to difficulties in fully engaging with children’s and young people’s priorities and perspectives.

It would be wrong to suggest, however, that a “child- and youth-centered” approach has always been missing from research on childhood, youth, and religion. There have been a number of high-quality ethnographic studies in the field of religious education stemming back to the early 1990s, most notably from scholars at the University of Warwick in the UK. For example, Nesbitt’s (2004) work highlights key issues about children’s religious beliefs, practices, traditions, and celebrations from a range of different faith backgrounds and their relevance for religious education in the school context. More recent work in this area has engaged with questions about interfaith relations and dialogue, following the wider social and educational policy interest in these issues (e.g., McKenna et al. 2008). Also informed by quantitative studies, such as those discussed above, this body of research has been important for developing new perspectives on curriculum and pedagogy in religious education (e.g., Jackson 1997, 2004).

There is also a large body of research on children’s spirituality, again mainly developed within the disciplines of education and religious education. Some of this work has operated within a religious framework (e.g., Coles 1990; Heller 1986), dealing with issues such as worship, prayer, and the divine. Others have focused on a broader understanding of spirituality, encompassing concepts such as

“experience,” “meaning,” “purpose,” “connection,” and “transcendence” or the nonrational and material aspects of existence (e.g., Hart 2003; Hay and Nye 1998). There are also examples of more holistic studies that bridge the religious and nonreligious divide (e.g., Erricker et al. 1997). This collection of work is significant firstly because it includes a focus on younger children, sometimes even of preschool age, and secondly because it features the use of creative “child-centered” methods, such as drawing and artwork. Together with the ethnographic studies mentioned in the previous paragraph, this body of research constitutes a much more “child-centered” way of approaching the topic.

More recently, there has been a significant expansion of work on childhood, youth, and religion, much of which is consistent with the “new” social studies of childhood. One notable development has been in the disciplines of religious studies and theology, where constructions of childhood are beginning to be viewed in a much more critical light, and children’s voices and experiences included more in theological discussions and debates (see Ridgely 2012). In the past few years, there has also been a major growth in research on children, young people, and *religious identity*, including a number of large-scale, mixed-method studies (mentioned later in the chapter). These developments have originated from a range of disciplines including religious education, sociology, psychology, and of course human geography. As the field continues to grow, a number of key themes begin to emerge, all of which possess a geographical dimension. These themes are explored in detail later in the chapter, but the complex concept of religious identity is first introduced.

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### 3 Religious Identity

As will be apparent throughout this volume, identity has become a central concern for geographies of children and young people, in part as a reflection of its long-standing significance in social geography. The concept of identity is inherently geographical because it is contingent on space, place, and social context. This is the case both for personal identity, which refers to an individual’s distinctive biography and unique sense of self, as well as social identity, which relates to the wider social groups with whom the individual shares commonalities (Bradley 1996). Social identity, including attributes such as gender, class, ethnicity, (dis)ability, and sexuality, can influence a person’s social location within society and how (s)he interacts with others. It not only relates to perceptions about who that individual is but also who (s)he is not, hence constituting social differences in particular ways (Payne 2000). Social identities play a key role in shaping and interacting with personal identities, hence contributing to individual biographies.

Identity is not constructed in a vacuum but may change and evolve through interaction with social actors, spaces, and processes. Hall’s (1992) “sociological subject” draws attention to the relational nature of identity by eschewing the idea of an innate, autonomous human self. Instead, this model insists that identity is formed through interaction between the self and others, shaping a person through participation in social structures. Postmodern developments have also emphasized the

multiple and contradictory nature of identity as a fluid project, resulting from the competing social interactions and diverse social contexts that individuals encounter in their everyday lives (Giddens 1991). Social identities are thus subject to continual negotiation and are performed across a range of social spaces and at different stages of the life course. They are also structured through interaction with other social identities via complex processes of intersectionality (the interplay between social differences, often resulting in multiple forms of (dis)advantage). This is why identity is so intermeshed with space and place. It cannot be understood as fixed and ascribed, but rather fluid and socially and spatially contingent.

Religious identity can be viewed as a social difference alongside the likes of gender, social class, and ethnicity. In a similar way to the aforementioned categories, religion often constitutes an axis of difference, structuring social interaction, influencing social location, and constructing social boundaries. The concept of religion itself is rather complex and multifaceted, consisting of different dimensions. For example, Lincoln (2006: 5–7) suggests a useful definition encompassing “discourse,” “practice,” “community,” and “institution” in order to account for the variety of functions inherent in the term’s meaning. However, there are also a range of other definitions, some of which place more emphasis on thought and belief (Weberian) and others on action and ritual (Durkheimian). Consequently, religious identity is also a complex concept and includes a number of components: affiliation and belonging, behavior and practice, beliefs and values, and religious and spiritual experiences. This multidimensional nature of religious identity has long been recognized (e.g., Stark and Glock 1968) and is integral to recent discussions about the nature of Christianity in contemporary European societies, such as whether or not individuals continue to hold religious beliefs despite eschewing religious institutions (e.g., Davie 2007).

Intersectionality is an important concept for understanding religious identity. Existing research has pointed to the significance of other social identities and the ways in which they intersect with religion. Gender has often been a key focus because girls are generally understood to demonstrate higher levels of religiosity than boys, along with variations in religious understandings, behaviors, attitudes, and experiences (e.g., Levitt 2003; Smith et al. 2003). Age has also been of interest to researchers, but findings have been less conclusive. While some studies suggest that children and young people show declining levels of religiosity with age (e.g., Francis 2001; Wallace et al. 2003), others maintain that age is not significant for influencing religious attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Mason et al. 2007; Smith et al. 2003). Class, sexuality, and disability have generally received much less attention in the literature on childhood, youth, and religious identity, despite the fact that there are also significant markers of social difference (although see Ramji 2007; Yip and Page 2013). This may be a reflection of the emerging nature of the field and hence its lack of engagement with issues that have at different times been marginalized within social scientific research.

Ethnicity has a much closer and sometimes overlapping connection with religion, and studies concerned with this relationship have often focused on minority communities in Western societies (although exceptions include Day 2011 as discussed later).

Key themes in this literature include the different ways and contexts in which ethnic and/or religious labels are used (e.g., Baumann 1996; Moinian 2009); the relative significance of religious identities in comparison to ethnic, cultural, and national ones (e.g., Duderija 2007; Valentine and Sporton 2009); and the role of religion in processes of racism and exclusion (e.g., Hopkins 2004; Lewis 2007). Religion may have the effect of setting up social boundaries, hence strengthening minority identities (e.g., Jacobson 1998), and may even differentiate individuals from other groups that share ethnic and cultural traits (e.g., Raj 2000). In its entirety, this body of work emphasizes the complex, fluid, and interconnected relationship between religious and ethnic identities.

The geographical nature of children and young people's religious identity is apparent firstly through the ways in which it takes shape variably within and across a range of social spaces and contexts. These include the home and family, the school, the peer group, faith and neighborhood communities, media space, and society as a whole (Hemming and Madge 2012). However, there are also a number of other geographical dimensions present within this research field, and these are now explored through a focus on the key themes of socialization, agency, expression, and belonging. As is inevitable in a contribution of this kind, the studies mentioned here are intended to provide an illustrative rather than exhaustive representation of the issues under consideration.

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## 4 Socialization

The maintenance of religion from one generation to the next is clearly a key concern for the field of research on childhood, youth, and religious identity, and the family is an important arena in children's and young people's everyday lives. The concept of intergenerational religious transmission has often been used to refer to the process by which parents pass on their beliefs to their children, particularly at the scale of the population as a whole. Studies on religious transmission tend to be quantitative and large-scale in nature, often attempting to measure how successfully a particular group's religious affiliation and practice is relayed across generations and over time (Boyatzis et al. 2006). Yet the term "transmission" tends to imply a rather simplistic and unidirectional process, with children and young people passively and automatically "receiving" religion from their parents and families. The reality is, of course, much more complex, and the terms "socialization" (the adoption of cultural norms and values) and "nurture" (promoting growth and development) tend to capture the everyday micro-level realities of intergenerational religious processes much more successfully (Scourfield et al. 2013).

The concept of socialization has often had rather a bad press within the "new" social studies of childhood. It has generally been associated with developmental psychology and the quite passive and linear constructions of childhood that have traditionally been prevalent within this school of thought (James et al. 1998). However, childhood theorists have recently sought to bring together developmental and social/cultural understandings of childhood and to break down unhelpful

dualisms. As Honig (2009: 67) argues, “if childhood studies have nothing to say about children growing up, they will have constituted with a disinterest in children’s growing up.” Socialization can still be understood as a useful concept if approached from an interpretive perspective. The symbolic interactionist view of socialization sees it as a process of interaction between children and adults, hence constructing the child as a social actor with a constitutive and self-reflexive role (Musolf 1996). Socialization can, therefore, be just as much about the everyday realities of being a child, than the pathway of development toward adulthood.

The complex processes involved in religious socialization are illustrated well through a consideration of two key studies. The first is by Hopkins et al. (2011) and documents the dynamics of intergenerational religious relations of young Christians in Scotland (aged 16–27). In many ways, this study is quite typical of work on children, young people, and religion, in that it focuses on the upper end of the childhood and youth age spectrum, and considers the identities of white Christian young people. However, the study is distinctive in the way that it teases out the multiple and nuanced subject positions inherent in the intergenerational religious processes considered. Hopkins et al. (2011) categorize these positions as “correspondence” (adopting similar, but not identical, positions to their parents), “compliance” (conforming to parental religious expectations but privately questioning them), “challenge” (openly debating and negotiating the religious position of family members), and “conflict” (adopting combative stances that are in contradiction with those of their parents).

The second study is by Scourfield et al. (2013) and focuses on the religious nurture of Muslim children in Wales. This research does offer something quite different from the norm, in that its constituent group is children in “middle childhood” (aged 4–12) and their families, and the study draws on a range of “child-centered” methods. It also considers the experience of a minority religious group in a Western context, which may be subject to theories of “minority defense.” As Scourfield et al. (2013) outline, most Muslims in the UK are visibly from an ethnic minority, and many have experiences that fall outside of the mainstream population (e.g., of migration, social and economic disadvantage). As such, religion may be particularly significant in a situation where it may help to preserve a distinctive group culture or identity. Within this context, Scourfield et al. (2013) document the various forms of religious socialization experienced by the children in their research, such as learning the correct way to pray and recite the Qur’an, as well as how to behave appropriately as a Muslim. These processes of socialization took place through overt religious teaching in the home and supplementary schools (e.g., *madrasahs*) and more subtle influences from a range of other sources.

Taking the findings of these studies together, they highlight some significant points about the space of intergenerational socialization itself. Rather than consisting of passive and unidirectional processes, this space is extremely dynamic, with active participation from both parents and children. For example, in the study by Hopkins et al. (2011), young people responded to their parents’ religious nurture in a variety of ways, often contesting the notion that religious tradition is either wholly successfully or unsuccessfully transmitted. In contrast to this dominant

model, young people demonstrated a variety of active subject positions in relation to their parents, including correspondence, compliance, challenge, and conflict. There were also examples of participants influencing their parents' religious beliefs and practices, hence challenging the unidirectional model. Processes of negotiation were much more limited in the study by Scourfield et al. (2013), yet children nevertheless actively resisted religious teachings, albeit in small ways, for example, through frequent trips to the toilet during Qur'an classes or mouthing Christian worship in school assemblies. Clearly, there is an issue here about religious agency and the extent to which children had the opportunity to express this at different ages, but this will be explored further in the next section.

The spaces within which religious socialization took place were also much more varied than traditional accounts of transmission allow for. In line with interpretive theories of socialization that include both primary and secondary stages, children and young people not only received religious input from their parents but also from their extended families (most notably grandparents), friends, and religious leaders and teachers. The home was an important space of nurture for Muslim children to learn appropriate beliefs, practices, and behaviors in Scourfield et al.'s (2013) research. This formal learning was reinforced more informally through material objects and symbols around the home such as Arabic texts, prayer mats, photographs of mosques, and copies of the Qur'an. However, religious identities were also shaped in formal supplementary classes, through multimedia and cyberspaces (via online tutors), and in more subtle ways in the wider community. Although the home was an important site for processes of religious socialization in Hopkins et al.'s (2011) study, the authors identify a range of other significant spaces including schools and youth groups. They also suggest that religious discussions took place in a number of "alternative sites of transmission," including journeys to and from church and walks in the countryside.

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## 5 Agency

The idea of children as social agents in their own right is central to the "new" social studies of childhood, but popular understandings of children rarely acknowledge their agency within the religious realm. The continuation of a religious tradition relies heavily on its successful transmission between the generations and hence too much agency on the part of children could be viewed by some as a threat to this. Even those arguing against the religious indoctrination of children tend to assume that they are passive recipients of religious teachings, rather than interpreting such messages actively and critically. Yet as was apparent in the previous section on socialization, children and young people may often play quite an active role in the construction of their religious identities. This can stem from minor contestation of religious practices, as in the case of the children in Scourfield et al.'s (2013) study (see also the examples in the next section), or alternatively much more significant renegotiations of religious beliefs and identities, as with the young people in Hopkins et al.'s (2011) research.



It is important not to overstate the religious agency available to children and young people, although often the extent of their agency is influenced heavily by the age of the child. As mentioned previously, the discipline of childhood studies has recently shown a renewed interest in the concept of development, accepting that younger children cannot be expected to demonstrate the same capabilities or agency as older children, due to their lack of social experience if not biological development. As Scourfield et al. (2013) point out, it is not unusual for the lives of children in early and middle childhood to be significantly influenced by their parents and other adults, their religious agency thus expressed within tightly set limits. In contrast, teenagers and young people are likely to experience much more freedom to develop their own religious positions and experiences. The young people in the study by Madge et al. (2014) agreed with this, describing how their views and ideas about religion had changed and evolved as they moved from middle childhood into adolescence and started to grapple with their developing identities in a wider sense. Whatever the age, however, it is likely that most children and young people have the ability to demonstrate *some* religious agency.

Hemming and Madge (2012) outline four ways in which previous literature has shown the potential of children and young people to express religious agency. The first is that children and young people may attach their own personal value and importance to particular religious and spiritual concepts, ideas, and practices. These elements may sometimes be very different to those of adults, constituting a “child-centered” experience of religion. The second is that children and young people may reconfigure and renegotiate formal religious meanings and practices. The complex processes of religious socialization highlighted in the last section from Hopkins et al. (2011) and Scourfield et al. (2013) provide good examples of this. The third is that children and young people draw on a wide range of sources to make sense of religious issues and concerns, including their own faith, other religions, science, the media, and their own experiences. They are certainly not religious “dupes” passively accepting everything that adults tell them. The fourth way in which children and young people may demonstrate religious agency is most relevant to this chapter, in that they may develop their own complex religious identities that often challenge dominant representations and discourses. This is especially the case for minority religious groups, who sometimes experience stereotyping and discrimination from the wider society.

Dwyer’s (1998, 1999) work on young British Muslim women is particularly useful for illustrating this fourth way of expressing religious agency, within the context of the diasporic community. The participants in her research, who were all of secondary school age, used a variety of strategies to negotiate their own religious identities, through the use of dress. The girls would resist the false dichotomy between “traditional” and “passive” Asian clothes and “modern” and “rebellious” Western clothes through mixing and matching. In this way, participants actively constructed their religious identities in opposition to dominant societal discourses. Similar strategies were employed to negotiate expectations from parents, classmates, and the wider Muslim community. Islamic dress was one way in which the young women could assert their own identities, either by challenging cultural norms



by “covering up” through the use of nonconformist dress or by wearing the *hijab* against parental wishes, reworking meanings of the headscarf as both a symbol of religious identity and also resistance. There was also a spatial dimension to these strategies, reflected in the way that the girls would wear different configurations of clothing at home, school, and in public space. For example, some of the young women felt less comfortable wearing religious dress at school due to the perceptions of other pupils, but were more willing to challenge their parents’ and community’s expectations at home and in public space. Other girls used the school toilets as a space in which to experiment with makeup and different styles of headscarves, in a way that they would have felt less comfortable doing at home.

The concept of agency also has salience for making sense of young religious identities at a wider societal scale. Sociologists have pointed to the significance of individualization, choice, and consumption for both religion and self-identity in late modern societies. It should therefore come as no surprise that the construction of religious identity is also influenced by these aspects of postmodernity. Madge et al. (2014) found that many young people in their British study tended to emphasize personal choice, individualism, and agency in their accounts of their own religious identity. This was even the case for those individuals the authors describe as “strict adherents,” who were keen to stress how it had been their own personal decision to remain devoutly committed to their faith. However, it was often clear from participants’ responses to other questions that their agency nevertheless operated within various familial and community restraints. In other words, young people often invested heavily in the *discourse* of liberal individualism, foregrounding their own agency, even in cases where the reality of their religious lives did not always completely support these claims. This was no doubt a reflection of the particular societal context within which their identities were constructed and the cultural value placed on individuality within this context. Both of the above examples work as a useful reminder of the complex nature of children’s and young people’s religious agency and the importance of geography for the way it is understood and enacted.

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## 6 Expression

Much of the research on young people and religion has been concerned with what might be termed the “expression” of religion. One of the most obvious ways of thinking about this is through the lens of religious belief, something that has been considered by all of the most recent large-scale studies in this area (e.g., Madge et al. 2014; Mason et al. 2007; Smith and Denton 2005; Ziebertz and Kay 2006). The overriding narrative from this research is that of diversity. As Madge et al. (2014: 208) put it, “by their teenage years [. . .], young people display a wide variety of faith positions and ways of expressing their religiosity, both across and within faith groups.” Yet despite this, common threads regarding the changing nature of belief among young people in late modern societies do still appear within these studies. These include the increasing prevalence of individualized beliefs and

understandings, the tendency to focus on happiness and interpersonal relationships rather than doctrinal truths, and the variable but nevertheless pertinent influence of secularization on overall levels of belief and religiosity.

The religious beliefs of young people also have a geographical dimension. Clearly, the studies discussed in the above paragraph all took place within Western contexts and are so likely to be influenced by the late modern nature of these societies. This is confirmed by Madge et al.'s (2014) analysis, which shows that religion was viewed as less important by young people and belief in God less certain, the more family members that had been born in the UK. In other words, recent immigrants were much more likely to express religiosity than those whose families were settled, a pattern that the authors refer to as a "generation effect." Madge et al. (2014) argue that this finding is evidence of the effects of Westernization (with its secularizing tendencies) but it also shows the influence that international migration and geographical mobility can have on the religious identity of families and their children. The significance of more small-scale mobility, specifically the experience of going to university, is explored in the next section.

Place is not only important at the national level but also at a more local scale. Madge et al. (2014) describe what they refer to as a "locality ethos," which seemed to influence religiosity and religious belief in each of the three research areas they focused on in England. In Newham, East London, they found there were greater numbers of young people who reported that religion was important in their lives, held a belief in God, and expressed positive attitudes toward religion, than in Hillingdon in West London or Bradford in West Yorkshire. In other words, there was something about each of the localities that seemed to influence levels of religiosity over and above the general variations characteristic of the different religious and ethnic groups present in the study. For example, religion was more likely to be viewed as "very important" by White Christians living in Newham, than White Christians living in Hillingdon or Bradford. This is a very interesting finding that is worthy of further enquiry.

Religious expression is not just about belief however, as practice is also a key component of religious identity. Recent work has begun to question the distinction between the two, arguing that in a late modern context, it makes more sense to view believing as a practice or performance in itself rather than considered solely in the context of propositional belief systems (Day 2011). This idea is extended by Vincett et al. (2012) in their research on young socially and economically included Christians in Scotland. They argue that these young people emphasize "performance Christianity," through everyday religious action and practical expression. For these participants, their religious identities were shown to be authentic through the "living out" of their beliefs, both in terms of the sharing of their faith with other believers and also activities such as volunteering and helping others in a wider sense. The enactment of belief therefore took place across a range of religious and secular spaces, often outside of traditional church contexts, hence deconstructing and reinterpreting "the sacred." Spaces such as the pub and the street were therefore highlighted as significant for young people's performance of contemporary Christianity.

Religious practice is of course intensely corporeal, often involving ritual actions that “performatively produce and transform bodies and identities” (Vincett et al. 2012: 278). The ritualized expression of religion is something that is often learned and experienced at quite a young age, as documented by Ridgely’s (2005) work on children’s interpretation of First Communion. As the primary ritual of the Catholic Church’s seven sacraments, and the second of the three initiation rites, participation in the Eucharist represents an important step toward full membership of the congregation. As such, the 7- and 8-year-olds in Ridgely’s (2005) study approached the event with a very strong sense of anticipation, but for rather different reasons than the adults involved. The children’s focus was on the embodied actions involved with the ritual – the eating, drinking, and tasting of the bread and wine – rather than the beliefs associated with these actions. This was not because they did not understand the beliefs (all had attended numerous preparatory classes), but rather they desired to be properly included in the church community through active participation in its central ritual. In other words, the embodied performance of the religious ritual helped to constitute the children’s developing identities as young Catholics.

Embodied geographies can also be significant for the development of religious-based institutional identities, as was the case in Hemming’s (2015) research on religion in the primary school. While a variety of rituals were used to build a sense of community and togetherness in the Catholic school featured in the study, children nevertheless demonstrated their ability to negotiate these requirements through embodied acts of resistance, such as subtly avoiding to take part in collective class prayers or (in the case of Muslim pupils) changing the words of the prayers in their heads. Religious agency was also evident in the alternative understandings of school assemblies that children in the study expressed compared with adults. While such events were designed for pupils to develop morally and spiritually, children’s accounts often focused on the intensely embodied sensations of soreness and stiffness caused by sitting on a wooden floor in the school hall for an extended period of time, along with feelings of enjoyment experienced when performing bodily actions to hymns and songs. These findings concur with those of Scourfield et al. (2013) explored earlier, where children also used embodied practices to subtly contest religious socialization.

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## 7 Belonging

The previous section began to touch on issues of community and belonging, an important area of study in social and cultural geography, and this theme is explored further here. The potential of religious communities to act as a source of belonging for children and young people is illustrated well in research by Sharma and Guest (2013) on Christian students’ experiences at English universities. Moving away from home for the first time can be a quite a stressful event for many young people, and the authors highlight how seeking membership of new Christian collectives can help to alleviate feelings of isolation. However, mobility between one Christian

community at home and another at university often had quite significant impacts on participants' religious identities. The university contexts typically provided young people with the opportunity to reaffirm and/or renegotiate their religious beliefs and identities, sometimes influenced by new intragenerational peer relationships, or alternatively to reevaluate their faith altogether as a result of academic or social experiences. Going away to university therefore had the potential to both reinforce and challenge young people's religious identities.

The existence of close-knit religious communities does not necessarily imply that everyone always feels like they belong. Indeed, it is now well established in social scientific thought that the ideal of community can actually result in exclusion, when the promotion of homogeneity and unity over difference and diversity means that certain individuals find they do not "fit in." In Sharma and Guest's (2013) research, a number of the young people recounted negative experiences of feeling excluded from Christian groups they had attended at university, inevitably presenting challenges for their religious identities. The participants gave a number of potential reasons for these feelings of alienation, including divergent personalities and interests, but also ethnic and social class differences. Similarly, a lack of belonging in the context of religious communities was experienced by some of the young Christians in Hopkins et al.'s (2011) study, particularly in cases where religious affiliations had changed, often leading to intergenerational conflict.

The two studies above refer primarily to those young people who actively engage with religion and for whom their Christian identity and beliefs are very important. However, Christian affiliation can also relate to much wider patterns of belonging, as illustrated by Day's (2011) research on belief and social identity in the modern world. Many of the young people in her study identified strongly with the "Christian" label yet admitted a lack of religiosity or Christian belief and practice. This was because they viewed the label as an ascribed identity that denoted membership and belonging of other collectives, most notably their extended family unit and friendship networks, but also a wider ethno-cultural "English" identity of which Christianity was viewed as integral. The term "Christian" therefore acted as a marker of difference that differentiated interviewees from certain religious and ethnic "others," such as Asians and Muslims. Day (2011) refers to this tendency as "Christian nominalism," emphasizing its performative qualities and its significance for understanding the dynamics of belonging.

The issue of belonging is particularly pertinent for minority religious groups in a multi-faith context and is often influenced by religious citizenship and interfaith relations. These processes often relate to much more "official" and "institutional" understandings of belonging than those explored above. Hemming (2015) defines the concept of religious citizenship as the role of religion in devising criteria for access to state or community membership, the political rights and responsibilities attributed to particular religious groups within that membership, and the religious aspects of collective social/cultural identity that influence belonging. The concept builds on theories of multicultural citizenship (e.g., Joppke 2007; Kymlicka 2007), hence recognizing the close but complex relationship between religion and ethnicity evidenced in the work of Day (2011) discussed above. For children and young

people, religious citizenship and interfaith relations are most likely to affect them at the level of the school and the local neighborhood. These contexts are therefore the focus of the remainder of this section.

In the school context, religious citizenship is often partly constituted through the recognitions and accommodations extended to children from minority faith groups, inevitably impacting upon their sense of belonging. These issues are explored by Hemming (2015) in the context of two contrasting primary schools, including the marking of festivals such as Eid and Diwali, coverage of world religions in religious education, the provision of prayer space and specific food needs, withdrawal from particular religious ceremonies and practices, and policies on minority religious dress. Although both schools in the study had made some progress toward catering for minority groups, decisions were highly contested by school stakeholders and often intermeshed with wider issues about school and community identity. As Nesbitt (2004) shows in her ethnographic work on religious education, such arrangements are also significant for religious identity. Children construct and negotiate their developing identities in the context of school practices and discourses, as a key influence in secondary socialization.

As discussed earlier, identities are intensely relational, pointing to the significance of interreligious dynamics for processes of belonging. Hemming (2015) found that primary school practices were important for the fostering of positive relations between pupils of different faiths, through the teaching of “emotion work” and other embodied forms of social cohesion. Keddie (2014) similarly recognized the importance of school ethos for harmonious interfaith relations in the secondary school context, but emphasized how the socially contingent nature of pupil’s own understandings of religious identity could also contribute to a cohesive school community. Schools cannot be viewed in isolation from their local neighborhoods, and a number of studies, including those by Ippgrave (2012) and Holden (2009), have highlighted the importance of locality and region for understanding pupil attitudes toward religion and religious difference. According to this research, the quality of interreligious relations in schools and the extent to which they can be considered as socially cohesive are significantly influenced by neighborhood factors such as levels of religiosity, ethnic and religious diversity, and local political discourses.

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## 8 Conclusion

In mapping the field of scholarly work on childhood, youth, and religion, the significance of geography is difficult to ignore, and references to geographical concepts and perspectives have been made throughout the chapter. Taken as a whole, there are six aspects that have emerged in particular, but these should by no means be viewed as exhaustive. They include the following:

- One of the most important religious “spaces” is a metaphorical one – the space of intergenerational socialization and transmission. The research discussed has

shown this space to be much more complex than often assumed, involving active participation from adults and children and resulting in multiple positions and multidirectional processes.

- While religion is most frequently associated with sacred sites and spaces, a whole range of diverse “alternative” or “secular” sites of enactment and transmission are evident in the research literature. They include youth groups, car journeys, pubs, country walks, and cyberspace.
- Embodied geographies were central to the performance of religion, challenging the rigid distinction between belief and ritual or practice. Corporeal experiences and actions were also integral to expressions of religious agency, such as subtle contestations of practice, and child-centered religious perspectives, such as sensual and embodied experiences.
- Mobilities emerged as important, particularly in terms of their potential to contribute to changes in religious identity. This was shown in the context of international migration and the “generation effect” (Madge et al. 2014) as well as more local examples of mobility, such as the experience of moving to university.
- The contested nature of community and its links with religious identity have featured heavily in the chapter, whether understood as a small religious group or community, a school institutional community, a diasporic community, or a wider national and ethno-cultural community.
- Place and locality, the most fundamental of geographical concepts, have also proved important for influencing individual religious beliefs and school-based interfaith relations, something that Madge et al. (2014) refer to as “locality ethos.” Place does not determine children’s and young people’s identities, but it certainly plays a role in contributing to its ongoing development.

Despite the importance of geography for making sense of the research literature in this field, there still remains a lack of systematic engagement with issues of religion within geographies of childhood and youth. Much of the explicitly geographical work to date appears to sit more comfortably within the geographies of religion subdiscipline than children’s geographies. The two fields would certainly benefit from a more sustained dialogue and an acceptance from the sometimes rather secular academy that religion is indeed an important aspect of many children’s and young people’s everyday lives and as such deserves the attention that other areas of social identity have already received. Geographies of childhood and youth have much to offer in this field, particularly methodologically and theoretically, such as expertise with child-centered methods and insights into the significance of space and place.

Viewed as a whole, the field of research on childhood, youth, and religious identity would benefit from more attention to early and middle childhoods, rather than just young people and adolescents. There is also much potential to widen the scope of study to a more diverse range of religious identities, to encompass both mainstream and more peripheral religious and spiritual traditions, thus correcting the current dominance of work on Christianity and Islam. This should almost certainly include a consideration of nonreligious positions such as atheism,

humanism, and secularism, which are becoming more important in the wider field of religious studies and the sociology of religion. Finally, a more thorough engagement with the multiple sites and spaces of children and young people's religious lives that have begun to emerge from the existing work in this area would help to further enrich the field. Geography is integral to this research agenda, and hence it is imperative that geographers play an active role in its development and realization.

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# Neoliberal Subjectivity and Gendered Inequalities

# 4

Karin Schwiter

## Contents

1	Introduction: How Neoliberal Transformations Impact Young People’s Lives .....	70
2	Conceptualizations: Becks’ and Foucaultian Approaches to Subjectivity .....	71
3	Tracing Neoliberal Subjectivities: The Example of Young Adults from Switzerland .....	72
3.1	Young People’s Self-Concepts: The Discourse of Being Different .....	73
3.2	Young People’s Self-Concepts: The Language of Choice .....	74
3.3	Young People’s Self-Concepts: Keeping Up with an Unpredictable Labor Market .....	75
3.4	Young People’s Self-Concepts: Encountering Gendered Expectations .....	77
3.5	Young People’s Self-Concepts: Finding Individual Solutions .....	78
4	Conclusion: Individualized Responsibility and the Privatization of Gendered Inequalities .....	80
	References .....	83

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## Abstract

This chapter traces the notion of neoliberal subjectivity from a conceptual and empirical perspective. It explores to what extent neoliberal discourses transform how young people understand themselves. The conceptual part juxtaposes the two often referred approaches to subjectivity by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and by Foucault. Drawing on two empirical studies on the life plans of young adults in Switzerland, the chapter then fleshes out how neoliberal subjectivity manifests in young people’s understandings of themselves. The final section relates the findings to studies from other contexts and discusses the consequences of this self-concept of young adults. Using gender as the primary analytical category, the chapter illustrates how neoliberal subjectivity individualizes responsibility and thereby privatizes persisting inequalities.

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**Keywords**

Youth • Young adults • Subjectivity • Identity • Neoliberalism • Gender • Occupation • Inequality • Discourse • Switzerland

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## **1 Introduction: How Neoliberal Transformations Impact Young People's Lives**

A growing body of research analyses how processes of neoliberalization impact the experiences of young people. “Neoliberalization” is thereby used as an umbrella term to label recent social, cultural, political, and economic transformations. In a nutshell, it denotes a shift towards a regime of governance that emphasizes individual choice, calls for a lean state, and privileges market-based solutions. It understands market competition as the prime means to ensure efficient service provision. Thus, neoliberal policies typically entail the rollback of public spending, privatization, deregulation, and the rollout of market-like institutions (Larner 2009).

Most studies argue that these transformations have made the transition to adulthood more complex and challenging. Continuing trends of neoliberalization such as declining public funds for education, social support services and welfare, the privatization of schools, as well as deteriorating labor standards and rising unemployment rates erode previous stable pathways through education systems and into labor markets. As a consequence, the prospects of young people have become more uncertain (for an overview cf. Jeffrey and McDowell 2004; Mills et al. 2005; Jeffrey 2010).

A number of scholars argue that these shifts contribute to extending the youth phase of the lifecourse. Today's transition from childhood to adulthood is marked by a continued dependence on the support of parents and family. Drawing on interviews with young adults in Italy, Santoro (2006) for example identifies transformations in the labor market and the rising number of young people employed in atypical and temporary jobs as one of the key reasons for their prolonged stay in the parental home. Furthermore, Biggart and Walther (2006) use the term “yo-yo-transitions” to draw attention to the fact that pathways to adulthood do not follow linear trajectories. Steps towards independence, they argue, have become reversible. To an increasing extent, phases of living independently and having a stable income are followed by phases of financial dependence and moving back in with the parents.

The studies delineating these trends draw on data from diverse countries in the Global North as well as in the Global South. However, analyses by geographers caution against universalizing generalizations. They show that the experiences of young people as well as notions of dependence and independence, of youth and adulthood, and of expected transitions depend on geographic context (Evans 2008). Furthermore, young people's lives differ depending on their class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and other markers of social inequalities (Van Blerk 2006; Dyson 2008).

When analyzing how processes of neoliberalization affect youth, geographers often lay their emphasis on socially excluded and marginalized groups, such as

homeless young people (e.g., Evans 2006) or youth with impairments (e.g., Worth 2009). They illustrate how – especially for these groups – transformations of school systems and employment regimes have contributed to widening the gap between aspirations and opportunities (Jeffrey and McDowell 2004). Notwithstanding these patterns, most of the studies do not portray young people just as passive victims of increasing uncertainty. They analyze the diverse and often cunning strategies that youths employ to react to and improve the situations they find themselves in (Dyson 2008).

While the existing body of research has allowed for better understanding of the lives of youth today, social and economic transformations appear to remain conspicuously external to young people. This raises the question about the extent to which powerful neoliberal discourses do not only affect people's experiences and life strategies but also transform how young people understand themselves. How does it change their identities? In what ways do young people themselves increasingly develop what could be called a neoliberal subjectivity?

The remainder of this chapter will trace this notion of neoliberal subjectivity from a conceptual and empirical perspective. The following section discusses recent approaches to individualization and the neoliberalization of subjectivity, drawing on the work of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) and Foucault (2008). Sections “3” and “4” use empirical material from two studies on the life plans of young adults in Switzerland to flesh out how neoliberal subjectivity manifests in young people's understandings of themselves. The final section relates the findings to studies from other contexts and discusses the consequences of this self-concept of young adults. Using gender as the primary analytical category, it illustrates how neoliberal subjectivity individualizes responsibility and thereby privatizes persisting inequalities.

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## 2 Conceptualizations: Becks' and Foucaultian Approaches to Subjectivity

The vast majority of studies focusing on changes in how young people construct their identities relate to Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim's theory of individualization (2001). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim define individualization as a current social development, which involves the disintegration of previously existing frames of reference and role models ordained by religion, family, class, etc. This means, for example, that having children is no longer perceived as a given, but as an option. It has become a question of individual decision (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001, p. 126; cf. also Schwiter 2011a). Analogously, the division of labor in the family is no more predefined by fixed gender roles, but a matter of individual negotiation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001, p. 105; cf. Schwiter 2013). With the weakening of preordained life courses, individuals increasingly can and must decide for themselves. They are set free and compelled to develop their own guidelines and lead their own independent lives.

The dissolution of previous controls and restrictions, however, does not lead to an absolute freedom. Previous frames of reference are replaced by the new demand that

individuals take their lives into their own hands and provide for themselves: “individuals are not so much compelled as peremptorily invited to constitute themselves as individuals: to plan, understand, design themselves and act as individuals – or, should they ‘fail’, to lie as individuals on the bed they have made for themselves.” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001, 3 f.). According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim these transformations have led to a precarious state of freedom, which requires individuals to make a myriad of decisions, while being unable to foresee the decisions’ outcomes. The human being becomes a “homo optionis” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001, p. 5). In consequence, individuals feel uncertain and overwhelmed by the choices that they need to make and the responsibilities that follow from them. They are at a loss at the tyranny of possibilities.

Like Beck, Michel Foucault describes a sociopolitical transformation that changed how people understand themselves. He delineates the establishment of a neoliberal governmentality, in which subjects are no longer controlled by coercive power, but asked to manage and control themselves (Foucault 1988, 2008). External policing has been replaced by self-regulation. Foucault’s writings conceptualize the individual as the product of a discursive regime of power. Neoliberal governmentality constitutes a subject that feels responsible for forging its own destiny and governing itself. The individual becomes an “entrepreneur of himself” (Foucault 2008, p. 226; cf. also Kelly 2006).

While Beck and Beck-Gernsheim emphasize the uncertainties people experience when continually forced to take decisions without knowing the consequences and their struggles in dealing with the new world of uncertainties, Foucault conceptualizes neoliberal governmentality not as an outside process that forces people to adapt but as an intrinsic part of their understanding of themselves. Their self-concepts are discursively produced in relation to the accepted frames of reference in a specific context at a certain point in time. This approach allows for analyzing the particular subjectivities of young people as the products of the discourses that they coproduce in their narratives about their lives and their aspirations. That means, by talking to young people about their experiences and expectations we are able to analyze neoliberalization as it is ingrained in young people’s understandings of themselves.

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### **3 Tracing Neoliberal Subjectivities: The Example of Young Adults from Switzerland**

The following sections trace this idea of neoliberal subjectivity by analyzing narratives of young adults from Switzerland. The empirical material stems from two consecutive research projects. The first involved 24 in-depth interviews that were collected for the project “Life Plans” (cf. Schwiter 2011b). Operating from a gender perspective, the study explored how young people in Switzerland anticipate having children and forming a family and how they envision their employment careers and other plans for their future. The interviewees, an equal number of women and men, were all in their mid-twenties and childless. Apart from these common characteristics, the theoretical sampling (cf. Glaser and Strauss 1967, 45 ff.) aimed for the

highest possible variability with regards to the participants' places of residence, educational trajectories, occupations, family backgrounds, sexualities, etc.

The project "Gender Inequalities in Educational and Vocational Pathways" (cf. Maihofer et al. 2013) added 32 in-depth interviews with young adults. They were selected from the so-called TREE study, a representative longitudinal survey of Swiss youths' educational trajectories and their transitions into the labor market (cf. TREE 2013). At the time of the interviews, these participants were also in their mid-twenties. The sample consisted of an equal number of women and men in gender typical and atypical occupations, which were chosen randomly from the representative sample. An interviewee's occupation was defined as gender typical, if more than 70 % of current Swiss workforce in this occupation had the same sex, and as gender atypical if this proportion amounted to less than 30 %. Following this definition, female electricians and male nurses, for instance, were categorized as gender atypical, female hairdressers and male mechanics as gender typical. The interviewees were invited to tell the story of their educational and occupational pathways and reflect on what they identified as relevant turning points in their biographies. Furthermore, they were asked to share their expectations of the future with regards to employment careers as well as family formation and other areas of personal interest.

All interviews in both projects were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The quotes used in this chapter have been translated from Swiss German or French. The studies adopted a Foucauldian discourse analysis as suggested by Waitt (2010). This method of analysis places special emphasis on identifying what is considered "normal" or "self-evident" when young adults talk about their lives. Furthermore, it asks the researcher to reflect not only on what is typically being said but also on the silences – the topics, terms, and arguments that are not present in the narratives. The following discussion focuses on the shared patterns that appeared repeatedly across the interviews. However, this does not imply that the patterns were visible in all the interviews to the same extent. Although the brevity of this argument will not allow for them to be discussed in detail, fractures and contradictions did exist, as "there are no relations of power without resistance" (Foucault 1980, p. 142).

### 3.1 Young People's Self-Concepts: The Discourse of Being Different

When young adults talk about their lives, their narrations show a prevalent discourse of "being different." The interviewees do not envision themselves as part of a group with similar life experiences and aspirations – be it due to their common gender, their generation, their ethnicity, or any other commonality. First and foremost, they see themselves as one of a kind with a unique set of interests, talents, and aspirations. They say for example:

Every human being is different. You can never generalize about others from yourself.

Each and everyone has to find out for himself, what is the right thing in his situation.

More and more, I feel inside myself, what fits for me.

Every human being has a talent, I say to myself, a talent. He can deal with some things better than other people.

As the above quotes illustrate, the interviewees foreground being unique. They feel singular in what they are good at, in what makes them happy, and what they aspire to in life. Their understanding of themselves thus builds on differentiation rather than commonalities. As a consequence of this individualized self-concept, they do not perceive traditional biographic trajectories as relevant for their own lives. If people are individual in their needs and aspirations, they argue, it is impossible to have one standard life course fit everybody. Instead, everyone has to forge one's own path. The personal biography thus becomes a project that young people can and must design for themselves. The young people see it as their responsibility to shape their biographies according to their own interests and aspirations. This discourse of being different reflects neoliberal thought in that it conceptualizes people as responsible, autonomous individuals who govern themselves.

### **3.2 Young People's Self-Concepts: The Language of Choice**

From the perspective of these young adults, the future appears as a multitude of biographical options from which the individual has to choose. In consequence, biographical pathways must be constantly reflected upon and cleverly managed. With regard to educational trajectories, for example, this discourse of individuality means choosing out of many the training courses, apprenticeships, or subjects of study that fit their individual interests and talents best.

The interviewees' narrations about how they entered their occupational fields are diverse. While some explain that they had known their preferred occupation for as long as they could remember, others recall a long process of considering different occupational trajectories, changing their anticipated pathways repeatedly, and being undecided until the very last moment. With hardly any exceptions, however, the stories culminate in a moment of choice: The narratives feature a key turning point, when the youths "decided" and "chose" their occupations:

I said, this is the occupation I want. No matter what.

In that very moment I decided, I will become a watchmaker.

Many of the accounts feature relevant others who suggested pathways or served as role models. Some refer to a parent or relative who worked in the same occupation, while others mention a teacher or a friend who oriented them towards a particular field of study. Despite the appearance of role models in their narratives, however, the young adults insist that it had been their choice alone and strongly reject any interference. One interviewee for example recounts how he resisted his

uncle's inappropriate attempts to push him towards an apprenticeship as a cook. And another interviewee illustrates this by saying:

At home, for instance, no one told me, learn this or learn that. My brother and I always had absolute free choice. That was good.

Surprisingly, this language of free choice is not only prevalent in the stories of young people with above average educational credentials. It is present also in narratives of young people with difficult educational pathways who might be more constrained in the types of employment they can find. A young women, for example, wanted to become a clerk. She recounts how she wrote countless applications, all of which were rejected. When she got more and more desperate after months of rejections, her mother insisted that she apply for other jobs as well and pointed her to a position as a janitor. She recalls how she initially got furious and refused to apply, because she had vowed to herself that she would find an office job and that she would never go into cleaning. Nevertheless, she applied and got invited for a 1-week trial period, which she found surprisingly enjoyable. At the end of that week, she narrates:

And then I said, I want this profession. And I truly wanted it. (...) I chose this profession, because I absolutely wanted it.

The janitor's story illustrates how the discourse of choice can be prevalent in a narrative even though the person might not have had any other options available. The imaginary of free choice forms a key element in neoliberal thought. Neoliberalism propagates "governing through freedom" (Larner 2012, p. 363). It envisions "free markets" as ideal way of organizing economic activities. Thereby, the individual is imagined as customer who chooses among different commodities and suppliers. This imaginary of choice is mirrored in the young people's narratives of choosing one's occupation and life path. It disregards the fact that some people have much more limited options available to them than others.

### **3.3 Young People's Self-Concepts: Keeping Up with an Unpredictable Labor Market**

According to the youths, a professional education should not only fit one's own interests and talents, but it should also be in demand. The interviewees see it as their individual responsibility to make sure that their occupations are sought after on the labor market and that their educational credentials stay up-to-date. As the interviews suggest, no one expects to work in the same job, for the same company, or even in the same field throughout one's employment career. As a matter of course, the youths assume that labor market demands shift quickly and unexpectedly and that they will have to look for new employment opportunities multiple times during their careers:



I won't be here (doing this job) four, five, six years on. You never know what the future brings.

There is no guarantee that it will still be like this in two years time. No one gives me a guarantee that I will still run this shop in two years time.

One is very easily replaceable. (...) Demands for educational credentials rise. Workplace security does no longer exist in the way it existed previously. That's why you have to stay flexible.

As these quotes suggest, having to look for new employment opportunities appears natural and inevitable. In reaction to employment insecurity, the interviews disclose a discourse of flexibility as the prime strategy of keeping up with labor market demands. Many interviewees mention that they deliberately "choose" educational credentials that are flexible in the sense that they are applicable in various employment fields. A mathematician for instance points out that mathematical knowledge is needed not only in statistics and finance but also in engineering. An assistant in a home for blind people explains that she could also look after people with other kinds of care needs. Furthermore, some interviewees deliberately attempt to get formal training in a second employment field. A sales assistant for instance trains as a cosmetician, and an electronics technician as a sales manager. The interviewees emphasize that it is vital to stay open-minded, to keep as many doors open as possible, to constantly watch out for newly emerging opportunities. One interviewee summarizes the notion of flexibility by saying:

I want to have the option of switching to another job. That's important for me.

Moreover, it is striking that the sample comprises not a single interviewee who is not enrolled in or plans to enroll in some kind of further education. Only one respondent challenges the perceived necessity to attain additional qualifications. He calls it stupid how everyone signs up for further training courses simply because everybody else does, too. Despite this criticism, he shows no less commitment to further invest in his educational credentials than the other interviewees, who state for example:

One's education is never complete. Less and less so.

I don't want to get stuck with regard to my education.

I sure want to upgrade my qualifications within the next few years.

The interviews disclose a multitude of statements in the vein of the above quotes. Again, the discourse of life-long learning was prevalent across the interviews. While young adults with higher education and from wealthier family backgrounds considered going to graduate school or adding an MBA to their already impressive educational portfolios, respondents without formal degrees and less financial means mentioned for instance a language or a computer course at a community

center. Notwithstanding these differences, the young people perceived themselves as active managers of their educational and employment careers. In contrast to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's theory of individualization, the young adults did not seem to perceive this responsibility to continually update their educational credentials for an unpredictable labor market as overwhelming. For the most part, this perceived necessity appeared self-evidently normal. Taking a Foucaultian perspective, the unquestioned acceptance of individual responsibility for keeping up with shifting labor market demands indicates the extent to which young adults internalized the demands of neoliberal governmentality and have become "entrepreneurs of themselves" (Foucault 2008, p. 226).

### 3.4 Young People's Self-Concepts: Encountering Gendered Expectations

The discourses of being different, free choice, and individual responsibility are prevalent in interviews with women and men alike. In accordance with the notion of individuality, the respondents do not justify their educational pathways through their gender (cf. also O'Connor 2006). This means, for example, when women favor professions which allow them to help others, they do not relate this to their being women. Similarly, when men explain that it is important for them to make a high salary and be their own boss, they do not justify this with norms of masculinity. Traits are presented not as specific to one or the other gender but as individual characteristics unique to a particular person. As long as educational trajectories comply with gendered expectations, gender norms are not explicitly referred to. Gender remains irrelevant to the interviewees.

However, the interviewees in gender atypical occupations narrate repeated encounters with gendered expectations. Thus, gender norms become an issue in the narratives as soon as they are violated. A female electrician for example recalls:

It's a fight as a woman. At the time when I started my training, people didn't know female electricians. That's why I encountered difficulties again and again. Each time I had to step up and say: 'I can do this, too!'

Similarly, a male nurse jokingly recounts how his brothers commented on his choice of profession with the remark that they had always wanted a sister. Furthermore, he reflects:

You feel it on a men's night out: You might have an IT specialist and a banker at the table and other such classic hierarchical male things. And there you come and say: 'I work as a nurse'. In these moments, none of the guys will say: 'Honestly? That's cool! Tell me more about it'. That will definitely not happen. In these situations you'll have to duck.

As these quotes exemplify, young people in gender atypical professions are marked as different. In the course of the interviews, they recall many instances in which they had to justify their professions. Mostly, they use the discourse of being

different and refer to their individual interests and talents to legitimize their atypical occupational choices. A young woman for instance states:

I've always been boyish rather than a girly.

Surprisingly, however, the interviewees do not recount these instances as discriminatory or unfair. On the contrary, they present them as matter-of-fact accounts of what is to be expected when entering a gender atypical occupational field. A male nurse for example explains:

(Being a nurse) It's unmanly. That's what I hear all the time. (...) But it's like that wherever you go. If you choose a male dominated field as a woman, it's the same thing. It's a widespread phenomenon. (...) That's just how it is. If you go into an exotic field, you're the minority. And as a minority you will always have to stand your ground.

The prejudices, the challenges to their occupational aptitude, and the comments and jokes are treated as given aspects that simply come with their job. The youths accept them as self-evident consequences of their minority status. In this sense, they do not frame such instances as inappropriate behavior of others, but as their own responsibility to deal with what naturally comes with their atypical professions. The unquestioned acceptance of being subjected to gendered stereotyping and discrimination shows how young adults link the perceived freedom of choice to an individualized responsibility for all consequences of their decisions, even if they are discriminatory. This reflects neoliberal thought, which conceptualizes individuals as solely responsible for their own destiny.

### **3.5 Young People's Self-Concepts: Finding Individual Solutions**

As shown in the above examples, the discourse of free choice with regards to biographical decisions dominates the self-concepts of the young adults. As a consequence of understanding themselves as active, independent managers of their life plans, the youths automatically feel responsible for all the consequences of their decisions. This section illustrates how this individualized responsibility is linked to the expectation that solutions for any difficulties must also be found by the individual alone.

A young woman from a single parent migrant family for example narrates how she was happy to have secured an apprenticeship as a doctor's assistant. However, the medical clinic was forced to close due to fraud before she finished her training period. In the following months, she tried to find a new medical clinic where she could finish her apprenticeship, but with no success. As the interviewee recalls, her mother did not have any money to spare for her education. Therefore, she decided to find a job to earn some money. During the following years, she worked in a number of occupations in factories, tourism, sales, and cleaning, several of which she lost because the businesses closed or downsized their staff. While she initially had no problems getting new jobs, she increasingly found herself in precarious, informal,

and temporary positions and grew used to juggling several occupations at once to make ends meet. At the time of the interview she has just signed a new contract for a job as an assistant in a nursing home. She hopes moving into this new occupational field will allow her to finally get some formal training, which she can later use when applying for other jobs in this field.

When she reflects on her educational and occupational trajectory, the interviewee does not blame any of her employers, who often only offer temporary and precarious positions and do not provide any opportunities for on-the-job training or further education. She also does not blame social services, which did not support her and her single mother in a way that would have allowed her to continue her education. She does not blame the government, which allows precarious employment to grow. And she does not blame discriminatory treatment due to her gender, social class, or migratory background, which might have prevented her from finding a replacement medical clinic. She frames it as her own free choice to have left her apprenticeship before completion and entered the labor market without formal training. As a consequence, she sees it as her own responsibility to catch up on her missed training in order to access better jobs in the future.

In a similar fashion, men and women in gender atypical professions anticipate difficulties with regards to their family plans. Several male nurses voice their concerns about earning enough to support a family. Again, they do not blame their employers or the government for not valuing care work appropriately. The comparatively low salaries are not discussed as discriminatory or unequal but as a simple fact that comes with the choice of entering an occupational field that is dominated by women. In order to secure higher pay, they plan to sign up for advanced training as paramedics, physiotherapists, or vocational instructors for nursing. One interviewee for instance states:

If you want to have a family as a nurse, you're obliged to get advanced training and make sure you get some more money.

In contrast, several women in gender atypical occupations are worried about being unable to keep their jobs when becoming mothers. A female electrician explains:

Once you're pregnant, you can't continue to work on building sites. That's clear. That's a huge decision, because it can't go on as before with children. It can't. It's not possible. Maybe, I'll be able to get a part-time job in a warehouse or an office.

This interviewee describes how the decision to have a child implies losing one's job. The statement of this electrician mirrors the narratives of other women in gender atypical professions. A gardener anticipates having to switch to a sales job in a garden center, while an economist expects that motherhood will entail less interesting appointments from small nonprofit organizations.

Just like the men, the women in gender atypical professions do not blame their employers for not offering family-friendly employment conditions. And they do not

blame the government for not offering affordable child care, which would allow mothers to continue their employment careers. They frame losing their jobs with the transition to motherhood as a self-evident consequence of their free choice of occupation and of their freely made decision to have a child. For example, with regard to reconciling employment and family work two young women state:

Work-family conflicts are conflicts you have with yourself. (. . .) If you can't reconcile the two, the problem is you.

I don't expect any work-family conflicts because I say to myself: you made your bed, now sleep in it. If there is a conflict, it's your job to solve it.

Both quotes assign the responsibility for reconciling the demands of work and family to the individual.

In sum – according to the young adults – life is about making “good choices or bad choices.” No matter what happens, the interviewees perceive the difficulties they encounter as matter-of-fact consequences of their biographical decisions. Accordingly, they expect others to bear the burden of their own respective biographical decisions, too. They would argue that the young woman mentioned above freely chose to discontinue her education. She must have known that having no formal degree would make it difficult to access secure employment. Furthermore, no one forced the young adults quoted above to go into gender atypical occupations. They must have known that feminized jobs do not pay well and masculinized jobs do not support motherhood. In the discursive logic of the young adults, it has been their decision – which means it is also their job to find a solution or live with the consequences.

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#### **4 Conclusion: Individualized Responsibility and the Privatization of Gendered Inequalities**

As the analysis of the interviews with these Swiss youths has shown, recent social and economic transformations do not only affect young adults from outside – forcing them to react and develop strategies to deal with increasingly uncertain transitions to adulthood. The neoliberal discourse of being different, of free choice, and of individual responsibility for the consequences of these choices also defines how the young adults understand themselves. It produces young adults as autonomous managers of their own biographies.

The above analysis focused primarily on educational and employment trajectories. However, the neoliberal logic also applies to other biographical decisions such as the transition to parenthood (cf. Schwiter 2011a) or the division of labor in the family (cf. Schwiter 2013). While the above analysis is limited to young adults from Switzerland, there exist a number of studies from other geographical locations that report similar findings. Harriet Bradley and Ranji Devadason (2008) for example analyzed labor market transitions of young adults in four neighborhoods in Bristol

(UK) and explored the attitudes of the respondents to their situations. They conclude that these youths show an “‘internalised flexibility’ across boundaries of class, gender and ethnicity” (Bradley and Devadason 2008, p. 133). Their paper illustrates how this particular generation has accepted living with employment insecurities. Youth regard it as a matter of course that they have to deal with shifting labor market demands and the necessity for life-long learning. Many even embrace the idea of continually moving on, adapting, and changing so that they will not be “stuck in a job for life.”

While Bristol represents a rather prosperous city in Southern England, Kathrin Hörschelmann (2008) interviewed youth in Leipzig, a city in what was formerly Eastern Germany, which suffers from a severe shortage of employment opportunities. Many of her respondents had experienced unemployment in their own families and were afraid of not finding a job themselves. Nevertheless, Hörschelmann observes that: “few of the young people that were interviewed questioned the structural causes of unemployment and economic decline. Instead, they focused on their own failings through lack of effort or ‘messing up’ at school” (2008, p. 153). Even in the face of a bleak labor market, she concludes, the discourse of the youths discloses an “individualistic rhetoric of self-governance” (2008, p. 156) and emphasizes the need for the individual to be flexible and to try harder.

Analyzing the aspirations of young people in secondary schools in Lesotho and Zimbabwe, Nicola Ansell (2004) finds that youth increasingly feel responsible for achieving the transition to a new version of adulthood, which is defined by the receipt of formal employment. Due to the limited number of jobs offered in the formal sector, only a small fraction of these young people will ever be able to secure formal paid employment. In spite of these poor chances, the youths individualize responsibility and perceive it as their personal failure if they cannot achieve this goal. In a similar vein, Nancy Abelmann et al. (2009) identify a strong discourse of self-development prevalent in the narratives of college students in South Korea. The discourse allows them to see their educational success as the outcome of individual choices, unfettered by structural inequalities.

Even though the studies mentioned above suggest that aspects of a neoliberal subjectivity are indeed prevalent in diverse geographic contexts, it is necessary to be cautious against overhasty generalizations. Firstly, the existing literature (in English) shows a strong bias towards the more affluent countries of the Global North. While several studies trace neoliberal subjectivities of European, North American, and Australian youth (cf. e.g., also Farrugia 2010 on Australia; Leccardi 2006 on Italy; and Orrange 2003 on the U.S.; O’Connor 2006 on Ireland; Hurrelmann et al. 2006 on Germany), there is less evidence from contexts in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Secondly, many studies draw special attention to the fact that young people’s self-concepts are strongly intertwined with geographic location (e.g., Geldens and Bourke 2008), class (e.g., McDowell 2002), gender (e.g., Ansell 2004), and other markers of inequality.

Nevertheless, the existing literature discloses common aspects in the self-concepts of young people that transcend the specific case of the young Swiss adults presented above. To an increasing extent, young people perceive themselves as

autonomous managers of their biographies. As part of this individualized self-concept, they adopt a new “form of responsabilisation” (Kelly 2006, p. 24) and feel accountable for all of the consequences of their biographical choices. Thus, they also first and foremost blame themselves for the circumstances in which they find themselves. In this sense, they have internalized the discourse “Your choice – your success or failure”.

Discussing this self-concept as neoliberal subjectivity shows that recent societal transformations have not freed young adults from norms and restrictions, but replaced previous forms of coercive control (e.g., the legal exclusion of women from certain occupations) by a new form of self-governance. This demand to manage one’s own life lies at the heart of what is termed neoliberal governmentality in reference to Foucault’s writings (cf. Foucault 1991, 2008; Lemke 2011; Kelly 2009). Foucault, however, does not content himself with simply describing discourses but always also asks about their effects. He analyses not only what they foreground but also what they silence (Waitt 2010).

With regard to the self-concepts of young adults, neoliberal subjectivity disregards that youth make their biographical decisions in very different contexts. It obscures the fact that the choices available to young people are highly dependent on their gender, class, race, sexuality, ability, and other markers of inequality. In this sense, neoliberal discourse negates the existence of discrimination and structural inequalities. From the perspective of the young adults, these unequal power relations have become all but invisible. And if they do appear, they are not primarily seen as societal problems but as the responsibility of the individual to deal with.

Secondly, the neoliberal foregrounding of choice hides the possibility that social realities can be changed. Continually evaluating the biographical options that present themselves in order to capitalize on important opportunities requires constant energy and attention. This leaves little scope for developing and reflecting on alternative visions of society. In this logic, the consequences of particular choices are perceived largely as given.

Thirdly, a neoliberal self-concept hinders young adults from forming alliances and challenging existing social realities as a collective. The perception of needs and aspirations as individually different obscures any common ground. Even though many young adults may encounter similar difficulties in their transitions to adulthood, the notion of individual difference supports the belief that their particular struggle is different from the struggles of others and that they have to find their own solutions. In consequence, collective problems are individualized.

With regard to the above example of gendered occupations, neoliberal subjectivization suggests that any discriminations and prejudices that young people in gender atypical occupations face must be accepted as expected consequences of their unconventional choices. It is the employee’s individual responsibility to deal with low pay in a feminized work place and lack of family friendliness in a masculinized profession. In the case of gender typical choices, gender is not explicitly referred to. In contrast to the reactions to gender atypical choices, this silence implicitly suggests that a chosen occupational field is deemed suitable for the respective gender. In this sense, the discourse of free choice contributes to constituting

gendered understandings of professions and (re)produces a gendered normalcy. As long as segregation in masculinized and feminized occupations is assumed as “natural,” there is little scope for visions of a society that does not make this distinction. In sum, gendered norms and inequalities are privatized: they are not seen as a problem that society as a whole has to address, but as a challenge the individual has to adjust to.

This chapter presented neoliberalism as a powerful discourse that does not only affect the lives of young people from an external source but also transforms how youth understand themselves. However, discourses are never without discrepancies and fractures. Craig Jeffrey (2012), for example, draws attention to the recent evolution of new collective alliances of young people. He discusses the important role of young people in the Tunisian uprisings that led to the Arab Spring and in the demonstrations and protest camps of the “Occupy” movement, which appeared in many cities around the world. Furthermore, recent studies indicate the potential of new information and communication technologies and social media to connect and mobilize young people across distance (e.g., Juris and Pleyers 2009). They explore how ICT and social media enable new kinds of alliances and new modes of political protests. Such findings may point to widening fractures in the discourse. It remains to be seen to what extent such movements and new technologies will challenge neoliberal subjectivity and offer young people alternative ways of understanding themselves. The future will show whether they allow for (re)building common identities, for example, as a generation of young people and can serve as starting points of a collective movement for change.

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# Masculinities and Generational Change Within the Irish Diaspora

# 5

Michael J. Richardson

## Contents

1	Introduction: Young Men as Gendered and Generational Subjects? .....	88
2	Relational Approaches to Gender and Generation .....	89
3	Justification of Case Study: Growing Up on Tyneside .....	94
4	Growing Up “Irish” .....	95
5	Conclusion .....	99
	References .....	99

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## Abstract

Through the use of participant narratives from the Tyneside Irish community, in the North East of England, this chapter explores how young men can grow up as “Irish subjects.” It highlights ways in which their identities become embodied and emplaced through the concepts of gender and generation. This chapter analyzes men in a diaspora context within the UK and highlights how they construct their national identities. The research is set within a broader set of literatures on the geographies of gender and generation, drawing in particular on the two concepts as social constructions. After an initial discussion of the nature of subjectivities for young men, this chapter explores the role of relational approaches to gendered and generational identities. Following this, empirical examples are drawn from research conducted with men of Irish descent. This research formed an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded studentship between 2010 and 2013. There are three main factors which particularly encourage the growing up as Irish: the first is visits to Ireland itself; the second is cultural participation in Irish activities on Tyneside; and the third is having relatives “back home” in Ireland.

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**Keywords**

Education • Gender and generation • Young men • Birth cohorts • Crisis in masculinity • Education • First generation • Generational differences • Inheritance of culture • Insider/outsider status • Intergenerational approach • Migrant integration • Postindustrial era • Psychodynamic approach • Second generation • Social gerontological approach • Structuralist approach • Third generation • Working class • Great famine • Irish diaspora, young men. *See* Gender and generation, young men • Psychoanalytic approach • Social mobility • Tyneside Irish community, young men. *See* Gender and generation, young men • White Irish

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## 1 Introduction: Young Men as Gendered and Generational Subjects?

In highlighting the ways in which identities can become embodied and emplaced, this chapter ultimately explains how young people can be affected by the concepts of gender and generation. This chapter primarily analyzes men in a diaspora context and explores how they construct their national identities. The research is set within a broader set of literatures on the nature of gender and age as social and geographical concerns. After an initial discussion of the nature of subjectivities, this chapter explores the role of relational approaches to identities and employs the Tyneside Irish community as a case study. The words of Wells (2014, p. 266) concisely outline the approach this chapter adopts to identities and subjectivities:

The actual practices through which we come to understand ourselves as people with a gender and an ethnicity are the clearest examples of the double-meaning of subjectivity. These practices subject us to the will of others and at the same time produce the subject – our gendered, racialised selves – who can then act from the position of being socially recognised persons.

It is important to note that the men of this research are “socially recognizable” as belonging to a Tyneside Irish community. Tyneside is the region to the North and South of the River Tyne, in the North East of England and the city of Newcastle upon Tyne acts as its regional capital. As individuals and in families, the men of the study are residents of this area; it is in their cultural practice that the identities of these men who live (and were mostly born) in England become “Irish.” In total, 38 men of Irish descent who were living, or had recently lived, on Tyneside were interviewed. This case study offers a partial yet empirically rich insight to the lives of young men who grow up as “Irish.” Further justification of the case study sample is provided in a later section.

The empirical work more broadly elucidates attitudes toward education, aspiration, and class. As Nayak and Kehily (2013, p. 51) identified, young men are often labeled “in crisis” because they have been “economically and culturally displaced.” Due to the diasporic nature of this research, the 38 men in my study come from

families which have been both economically as well as culturally displaced. Though like Nayak and Kehily “while recognising the widespread impact of global restructuring of gender relations our attention is drawn to the limitations and contradictions of these repertoires” (ibid). Of salience in my analysis are the performances of masculinity in a simultaneously postindustrial and postcolonial context. Education, for example, is seen as a route to social mobility for these men, and as “Irish” Geordies (“Geordie” is the colloquial name for people from the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and its surrounding areas. For more see Colls and Lancaster (2005) *Geordies: Roots of Regionalism.*), they do not suffer in the way other migrant men have (Mac an Ghaill 1994; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1996). This is significant as like other migrant men they have the chance to better their parents’ generation.

Crucially, McDowell (2003, p. 98) noted that the power of the “crisis in masculinity” narrative lies in its denial of social and spatial variation. Social and cultural geographers have however been “rethinking the dominant paradigm” (Nayak and Kehily 2013, p. 52) for some time. Since Clare’s (2001) important work, there have been more nuanced accounts of enriched, empirical understandings of young men (Whitehead 2002; Noble 2007; Hopkins and Noble 2009; Roberts 2014). It is important to stress that place matters. This is something I argue that more recent work in masculinities studies has failed to adequately acknowledge (in particular debates on changing masculinities, Anderson 2009; McCormack 2012).

The participants in this research are situated within their postindustrial and postcolonial context in order to analyze their “Irishness.” Ireland is once again being labeled as “in crisis” (Kearns et al. 2014), though this is not a new narrative for the country. For Kearns however, “this crash of speculative capitalism is an agent of a quite different modernity to that which has been unleashed earlier by colonialism and famine” (2014, p. 14). What has emerged is a sense of injustice among the young generation, and unlike previous incarnations of Irish national identity (which seemed to embody an acceptance of a predictable and inevitable lifecourse as emigrants), there is resistance. (A contemporary social movement is generating momentum across Ireland under the mantra of *We’re Not Leaving* which is motivated by notions of intergenerational justice (Vanderbeck and Worth 2015). Those involved bemoan the prospect of emigration as a forced consequence of an economic climate created by an older generation and are actively challenging the inescapability of the crisis discourse. See [www.werenotleaving.com](http://www.werenotleaving.com).) This is a novel occurrence for the “emigration state” (Gamlen 2008, p. 840) and has wider implications for global youth, as well as for young men in the Irish diaspora.

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## 2 Relational Approaches to Gender and Generation

Gender is socially constructed and is shaped spatially. Like the collections of Gorman-Murray and Hopkins (2014) and van Hoven and Horschelmann (2005), this research reveals some different ways in which men perform and construct gender roles. Equally, this chapter reveals how gender is conceptualized differently

by different generations. This section, like the work of Tarrant (2013), outlines how adopting an intergenerational approach to researching men's lives can contribute to critical geographies of gender. It does so by introducing a myriad of everyday practices and performances of masculinities.

As has been noted in earlier work "there is, however, no unitary maleness, and different men fit differently into different situations and places" (Vanderbeck 2005, p. 398; see also Richardson 2015a). Vanderbeck (2005) is rightfully pointing out that what type of man we are, or at least what type of man our participants' perceive us to be, matters greatly. All of these factors contribute to a presentation of self, to the performance of masculinity (Butler 1990). Sociocultural understandings of age may also influence an interview performance with the experience of growing old at times equating to knowledge (Bytheway 1995). Access to truth in this sense has also been argued on the grounds of insider/outsider status. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) have suggested though that insiders may miss what is taken for granted as a result of over rapport, while outsiders may fail to understand the experiences of the informants. Similar to *having age*, this line of thought suggests that *having experience* builds greater rapport and thus better access to data. Conversely, Mirza (1992) and Baca Zinn (1979) both talk of how their insider status did not guarantee them greater access. The insider status can also be problematic ethically with the concept of being too near to the research (Mannay 2010); in this vein, the researcher is so closely aligned to the participant that they already know the answers to questions they are asking (or at least think they do). The methodological dilemmas within this research have already been published elsewhere (Richardson 2015a, b).

As argued by Vincett et al. (2012, p. 278 *original emphasis*) "people tend to interpret *performance* to mean acting or illusion, implying that performance is not real or true"; and they propose instead that we should think of performance as embodying "the expressive dimension of the strategic articulation of practice" (Ibid). In responding to these calls in social and cultural geography, the empirical work goes beyond the imagined homogeneity of the Irish diaspora, of generational lineage, of family life and masculinities, to examine the performed and lived. As Butler (1990) argues, gender is performatively produced; it is inherently linked to the act of doing. Connell's (1995) seminal work helps develop this gendered perspective, explaining how masculinities are formed relationally with and against femininities but also with and against other masculinities. They change in time and context dependent on history and politics (Burrell and Hearn 1989), and they intersect with "variables such as race and ethnicity, class and age" (Robinson 2008, p. 59).

In its guise as a marker of social age (Pain 2001), we can see generation as three different theoretical conceptualizations: the psychodynamic, the structuralist, and the social gerontological (Biggs 2005):

It should be noted that the original psychodynamic formulation of generation was a highly 'nuclearised' one predicated on the underlying assumption that intergenerational relationships are symbolised by universal parent-child relations in the early years of a child's development. (Costanzo and Hoy 2007, p. 887)

Costanzo and Hoy continue in a critique of the psychodynamic approach as, in their words “it leaves many gaps in its portrayal of the meaning of ‘generation’” (Ibid). They base this on the observation that we live in a world where the structure of generations and their relationships is constantly changing – which leads us to the second of Biggs’ (2005) conceptualizations:

If psychoanalysis attempts to explain generation in the context of the individual change and inner experience, then the second, sociological tradition, starts by examining generations as structural relations in society, with a principal focus on the mechanisms of social change. It starts by examining generations in the public sphere and draws implications for the private. (Biggs 2005, p. 701)

Biggs is moving discussion from the “conflict-based” internalized psychodynamic approaches to looking externally and to extrafamilial influences on generations. This stance, then, may be useful in reading and remembering our personal identities, “our sense of efficacy, gender, emotional preferences etc.,” with the structural lens shedding light on social identities, “our shared peer values, social expectations, relationship guides etc.” (Costanzo and Hoy 2007, p. 888). Thirdly then, Biggs (2005) outlines the social gerontological approach to generation as combining both the “internal” and “external”:

Generation goes to the heart of a number of debates about the nature of contemporary society. It has biological roots through the family, where generations generally refer to successive parent-child bonds. There are psychological dimensions in the sense of belonging and identity that can arise, depending upon the stance that an individual takes toward the generation in question. Generation is also used to locate particular birth cohorts in specific historical and cultural circumstances, such as the “baby boomers”. It is a truly crossroads phenomena that links a number of different fields and levels of analysis. (Biggs 2005, p. 695)

There is value in the psychoanalytic approach, in particular the work of Jimenez and Walkerdine (2011), though it is the “mechanisms of social change” of the structuralist approach and the “birth cohorts” of the social gerontological approach that are most relevant to this research. As “mechanisms,” generations have acted as a force of change in the lives of young men “growing up Irish.” For example, growing up in the postindustrial era opens a prescribed set of opportunities: the rise in the service sector on Tyneside and the declining influence of institutional religion leading to more multi-faith experiences in schools. The concept of “birth cohorts” also has resonance with relational experience evidenced in the narratives with reference often made to the “greatest generation” (those who fought in the Second World War). Like McLeod and Thomson (2009), this chapter seeks to understand social change through an examination of the relationships between, and within, younger and older generations:

Periods of slow change may be characterised by a kind of “piety”, where young people look to their elders, possibly adopting their dress and values. During periods of fast social change the old will be more receptive to the young, sometimes even more so that the intermediate

generation between them who may experience themselves as being more “stuck.” (McLeod and Thomson 2009, p. 110)

There persists an idea with these approaches, that association with a specific “generation” gives individuals access to a specific range of experience, thus conditioning their values through a specific frame of reference. In citing the work of Mannheim (1952), I outline how this was not evident in identification with Irish nationality on Tyneside, yet across the research there is evidence of the “pious” nature of inheriting the “Irish” values of the elder generation. Mannheim’s work expands the boundaries of generation as he points out that the relationships between them form and then continually adapt and react to one another.

Considerations of “age” and “generation” vary. In this study, the men are labeled as being the first-, second-, third-, etc., generation Irish: to be the first generation, you must be Irish born; to be the second generation, you must be the son of a man born in Ireland; to be the third generation, you must be the grandson of a man born in Ireland; and so it continues. While these labels are assigned, they have not been used to shape the analysis. Existing literatures on the Irish in Britain *are* drawn as such, as are wider literatures on migration (Brannen 2012; Brannen et al. 2013, 2011). This departure in approach helps to account for continual sentiment from this sample where so few are Irish born.

The men can belong to multiple structured and social “generations.” For example, a second-generation Irishman could belong to the postwar “baby boomers” generation just as easily as a second-generation Irishman could be part of the post-millennium “digital generation.” There is no set pattern to how “Irish” a particular generation feels in this study, and due to multiple emigrations from Ireland since the major exodus of 1840–1880, the Irish generations are not age banded. The implications of this are that the participants are analyzed intergenerationally (Hopkins and Pain 2007).

In 1991 Jackson claimed that a “focus of the subjectivity of experience seems to be the most attractive feature of the phenomenological perspective for social geography” (301). Phenomenology cannot be used as an excuse for subjectivity and as cited by Jackson (1991, p. 301) “nor does it allow straightforward combinations with existing geographical concepts”; though the work of Tuan (1974) had tried to articulate some of these combinations. As Jackson explains (1991, p. 301), Tuan was “making the distinction between place and space, arguing that place cannot be completely understood from the “outside,” as an assemblage of facts, objects, and events. Knowledge of a place involved understanding the sentiments and meanings attached by the “insider””. The insiders of this study are the men of my research. In practical terms, this means the participant narratives are considered lived experiences. They do not represent truths about a community but instead offer rich insight to a spatial structure of social relations. The hierarchal systems of families, in particular the intergenerational relationship between these men of Irish descent, help explain generational differences. Summarized below are the conceptualizations of three key terms that feature within this chapter:



**Generation**

“Generation” is a contested term with multiple meanings; indeed, this research employs several interpretations. The term is primarily used as a marker of national identity; the men are labeled as belonging to a particular “generation” of Irish descent. A first-generation Irishman was born in Ireland, a second-generation Irishman is the son of a man born in Ireland, and so on down the years. Often however, the term is used to refer to an age defined social category in relation to a family structure (e.g., grandfather, father, son). It is in these conceptualizations where the intergenerational relations are analyzed and “generational differences” are elucidated

**Generational Differences**

This study reveals “generational differences” which act as forces of social change between the lives of the participants as grandfathers, fathers, and sons. The differences between generations are shaped by socioeconomic pressures such as social mobility, de-industrialization, and the declining influence of institutional religion. These pressures themselves are brought about by societal changes in levels of education and subsequent higher-skilled employment alongside economic factors within a global capitalist system

**Inheritance of Culture**

Of great interest to these men of Irish descent are the stories of continuity against the backdrop of “generational differences.” These transitions are labeled as “the inheritance of culture” (Richardson 2014), that is, the transmission of values and characteristics of a previous generation. The men claim to acquire these in different ways. They are at times learned, taught, and tacit. They are at times claimed to be unavoidable and inevitable. Ultimately, these behaviors are performed and embodied by men of Irish descent

Building on earlier work on the geographies of family life, which studied the gender performances of fathers as well as mothers and children in the everyday, I note Aitken’s remarks (1998, p. 195) that “it is important that we try to understand how these performances come together in a critical form of world making that is not constrained by myths.” Each of the participants in this study identified as being from traditionally working-class families. This is not to say that all the men are “working class,” more that they are associated with the identity marker through familial ties. According to Pimlott-Wilson (2011, p. 113), “the family continue to play a key role

in the reproduction of social class and class inequalities,” and this chapter extends the notion to national identity. Significantly, only 7 of the 38 men were born in Ireland. Indeed it is the family that shapes these “once-working-class” men as postindustrial and postcolonial men of Irish descent.

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### 3 Justification of Case Study: Growing Up on Tyneside

Presenting this research at conferences often provokes the same initial response “I didn’t know Tyneside had an Irish community.” This lack of recognition both nationally and internationally is explained perhaps by a more subdued presence of Tyneside’s Irish. Yes, Tyneside’s annual Irish Festival is over a quarter of a century old. Yes, it has a cultural and community center in the middle of Newcastle itself with additional social clubs across the region, but the research points to Tyneside as a host calling upon its unique economic, political, and religious composition to shed light on the region’s relationship with its Irish to reveal that they are to an extent, culturally mutual. For the men of Irish descent in this study, the region is as influential (if not more so) to their identity construction as their national heritage; as a result, men in my sample are less likely to be labeled as “Irish” by those from outside the region. This makes assimilation easier and concurrently facilitates a more rapidly declining community identity.

The modern history of Tyneside is one built upon the backbone of the industrial revolution, establishing itself at the forefront of heavy industry specializing in coal mining, shipbuilding, and chemical and metal works. The nineteenth century was a critical period for British national identities. Irish Catholics emerged as a significant other to the British public, carving a path to the very heart of the British workforce. The 1840s saw a huge exodus of Irish people mainly due to the Great Famine (also known as the Irish Potato famine). At this time, the Irish were part of a larger influx of people to the North East of England and were therefore not readily singled out as responsible for associated negative economic impacts surrounding the Irish elsewhere in Britain. There was a lack of occupational competition as the Irish who arrived in the region were mainly rural laborers, which was key to diminishing anti-Irishness that otherwise might have escalated in the region. For a comparative perspective, Ignatiev’s (1995) portrayal of *How the Irish Became White* in North America is useful.

Some commentators, such as Colls and Lancaster (1992) in their book *Geordies: Roots of Regionalism*, have argued though that it is the unique regional (as opposed to national) identity that helped ease the migrant integration of the Irish. The “Englishness” of the North East has long been uncertain, at least in part due to its historic and strategic importance as a border between Scotland and England, and before then, between the Roman Empire and the Northern Celts (see Younger 1992). Indeed the recent vote on Scottish independence in 2014 has stark implications for the identities of their Northern English neighbors. For many in the North East “Englishness” was – and some would argue still is – an abstract concept with little relation to their everyday lives. In the English language, with the persistence of strong regional dialects, there are differences not only in distinctive sounds but also

in vocabulary. Nayak (2006) points out that working-class Tyneside has already been accused of its own “not-quite-whiteness” from the “English” norm. The English national identity still remains invested in the South and Midlands of England. The Tyneside Irish, like Tynesiders more broadly, are culturally and politically distant as well as geographically distinct. Similar arguments have been made of Polish migrants in the UK (see the work of Datta 2008; Datta and Brickell 2009).

Citing Ahmed (2004), Noble (2011, p. 162) talks of a “multicultural love” and a “sticky patriotism” to describe the bond that brings groups of people together on a national scale. I put forward an adaptation of this on a regional scale – based on the assumption of the migrant’s integration with a simultaneous “gift of difference” (Ibid). Certainly, some of the literature to date is denigrated as parochial, that “it seems it is hard to ask serious questions about ‘good feelings’ without appearing hopelessly utopian or worse, politically naive!” (Noble 2011, p. 163). It is seen as confined to the local with a tendency to lack global perspective and to be too narrow in focus. But who and what Tyneside is depends upon who and what it is imagined to be (Anderson 1991). Anderson continues (2006, p. 6) “all communities larger than primordial villages of face to face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined.” Of salience here though is not as Gellner (1983) would posit, their existence under false pretenses, but the processes of creation. In the words of Colls and Lancaster (1992, p. xii) “regions, no less than nations, are imagined communities”; they equate the North East to a state of mind proclaiming that “Geordie identity has been under pressure for long enough to know that belonging is an act of affiliation and not of birth” (Colls and Lancaster 1992, p. xii). To belong to Tyneside then is to feel like a Tynesider. The identity becomes embodied and emplaced.

Tomaneý (2013, p. 1), in his defense of parochialism, argues that “we need more detailed studies of real local identities, which avoid a presumption of disdain.” Indeed, this study of the lives of 38 men of Irish descent gives invaluable insight to economic, political, and social conditions and a strong and stable nature of Tyneside. Not to be seen as a celebratory record of “Tyneside Irish experience,” the men’s narratives should instead reveal strong localized attachment with nevertheless, a great appreciation overall of Irish heritage.

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## 4 Growing Up “Irish”

While the region has proportionately the same levels of Irish Travellers as England as a whole (0.1 %), this is not the case with persons who are “White Irish.” According to the 2011 census “White Irish” account for 1.0 % of the population of England (517,001 people), whereas only 0.3 % (or 8,035 people) of the population of the North East identified as “White Irish.” Furthermore, numbers of people identifying as “White Irish” have fallen from the previous 2001 census where they represented 1.39 % of the region’s population (or 8,682 people; all data from Office for National Statistics 2013). Some of the above debates about growing up on Tyneside and the emergence of a regional identity help explain low levels of identification with Ireland on a statistical level. This could be seen as evidence of

the assimilation of the Irish in the region, indicative of newer changing intergenerational patterns of identification.

The words of one of my research participants, Bob (a pseudonym), epitomize the argument in this chapter through an articulation of the complex processes of identity formations. Furthermore there is an eloquent discussion of spatial practices of inclusion, exclusion, and contested representations:

If we all go back our great, great, great grandparents are all West African or something, you know? I've seen enough of nations to think, you know, they're all the same anyway. And who cares. . .we're all human beings at the end of the day.

But I believe that the Irish experience on Tyneside is important. Because again, we've had this conversation before, if we want to have a world where you can have economic expansion and growth and prosperity for everybody; and you have everybody with the ability to celebrate their own culture. . .whether they're from Senegal, South Africa, or Strathclyde. . .as long as they're allowed to do it without oppressing other people. I suppose it's back to the French Revolutionary ideal: of Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality. And again, if you have too much liberty, then you have no equality. If you have too much equality then you have no liberty. But you've got to have the fraternity in the middle. It's dead easy to define liberty and equality; you start to define fraternity and it's a difficult thing to do.

But I believe if you look at how Tyneside has been able to adapt to a huge infrastructure of people from Ireland; and yet basically not have many experiences of sectarianism or ghettos, or the kind of things that disfigure Glasgow for example today, that is the fraternity. Now whether it's because we drink a lot of beer; or we've got one football team rather than two; or we've got, you know – 'cos it's nothing to do with the innate things of the people, 'cos the people are all immigrants – it's just some means of how the local society and economy was created. Or whether it was created, imagined, you know, designed. . .I dunno? Certainly nobody's sat down with a blueprint and I think that's the reason why the Tyneside Irish are important (financial advisor, 42, 3rd generation Irish).

Bob claims that there is nothing “innate” about Tyneside’s relationship with its Irish. Yet as Yi-fu Tuan claimed in 1974 primal landscapes form part of people’s identities and affect their subsequent perceptions, attitudes, and values in later life (these are caused by a bond which develops within people to their childhood environments). While these processes of identity and belonging are not natural they can *feel* this way. As we move around as adults, we tend to consider new places in relation to this baseline landscape experience; hence we can feel it has always been thus. An interview with another one of my participants could be used as an example. On asking him about his connection to Ireland, Mark (not his real name) responded:

Well, like your sense of humour. Your sense of morality. Your sense of to me, fair play. . .I always remember as a kid growing up and me dad would say, obviously it was a slant at Kilkenny, but if you were a bad sportsman you were from Kilkenny, you know what I mean? To me, whatever game you played, whatever you participated in, you would always want to be seen as a fair playing sportsman. That's what I would see myself as. I mean I get on with everybody; I treat everybody the way I would want to be tret [treated]. How I would depict that, I don't know? (policeman, 48, 2nd generation Irish).

The researcher is very much present in the recital (“you know what I mean”) and is assumed to have prior knowledge of Irish towns (“obviously it was a slant at

Kilkenny”) and therefore the internal regional rivalries within Ireland. It is revealed that for this policeman being “Irish” encourages him to be a “fair playing sportsman,” though admittedly not one from Kilkenny! What this example serves to explain is the strength of childhood memories and in particular the narratives that can be carried with us as we grow older. We impose a tacit nature to our beliefs and values, which are in fact often taught to us through stories of childhood.

More broadly, identification as a contemporary man of Irish descent has seen the emergence of the term “Plastic Paddies” (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 2011); that is to say, individuals with Irish relatives and who would be classed as different generations of “Irish” (such as the labels attributed to my participants: second, third, fourth generation, etc.). The “plasticity” of the remark is meant derogatively, to suggest an artificially manufactured nature to the identity – a crudely constructed “Irishness.” There lies a parallel critique from within postcolonial writing and in particular debates around native informants (Spivak 1988). In drawing a comparison, recent generations of the Irish in Britain can be seen as representative of a postcolonial identity. Like Spivak though, this research is skeptical of the celebration of “marginality.” As Kapoor (2004, p. 631), commenting on Spivak, states: “the problem is that the native informant can too readily don ethnicity as a badge.” The concern is that by bearing the “badge” of ethnicity, your word is valued and unchallenged purely because you “belong” to this group and your word is therefore more “real.” It is this issue of authenticity that is particularly interesting throughout postcolonial critique; as Bhabha (1994) states, we can never be truly “real” as our work, at least in part, is a representation. This chapter does not tell a “real” story nor is the researcher a native informant, but through listening to participants, the research records and analyzes the lives of men that exist within families of Irish descent on Tyneside:

On the face of it, mapping the historical geography of nationalism in diasporic communities ought to be a misnomer; after all, the very essence of the term *diaspora*, as originally conceived at any rate, assumes tautologically the existence of an *entire group* of homesick, nostalgic, and fiercely patriotic international exiles. Everywhere ought to be a hotbed of nationalistic sentiment! (Boyle 2001, p. 433 *original emphasis*)

This yearning for an Irish past was not evidenced across the group of participants in this research. How “Irish” the men felt varied. Nevertheless, nationalistic sentiment can survive even among those who grow up as “English.” Through familial ties and cultural affiliation, young men of Irish descent can carry aspects of an embodied national identity with them. Often this is through the aforementioned inheritance of culture, but it can also be in more individualistic conceptualizations of “Irishness.” Declan (lecturer, 25, third-generation Irish) talks of an intersectional nature to his national identity and masculinity:

If I was to link [being a man] to the Irish thing and link it to that, there’s something about the Irish thing linked to the rebel idea of fighting off oppressors and fighting off oppression. And I think that comes into it as well. The idea of being ready. Being prepared.

What Declan's narrative reveals is how he draws on what has been coined as postmemory (Hirsch 1992). The notion of postmemory concerns how individuals are able to "remember" something which they did not experience firsthand. It is an important insight, which although developed to analyze the aftermath of Holocaust trauma has great traction in broader children and youth studies. This chapter has argued how early childhood experiences help embody and emplace feelings of identity and belonging, and the brief example of Declan highlights the significance of this. He has never been an Irish rebel though his relational identity construction harks back to an emotive discourse which he himself has only encountered through story and song.

Across the 38 participants, there was no set pattern of certain generations feeling more Irish than others, the most salient factor instead being family circumstance. That said, with most of the families, it was clear that the younger generations had a weaker sense of national identity. In fact, in all but three of the families, the younger the man was, the less Irish he felt. The intergenerational approach to researching men's lives contributes to an emerging field within the geographies of masculinities literature. It is one which investigates the relationship between age and masculinities, as well as the intersections of masculinity within family roles, such as son, father, and grandfather (Hopkins 2006; Tarrant 2010, 2013). According to Hobashi and Worley (2014), studies of children's political identification have conventionally taken places at the scales of parental, peer, and school interaction; in this study men were spoken with individually while maintaining the generational perspective both horizontally (within group/peer) and vertically (across group/parental).

White and Wyn (2008, p. 191) have claimed that identity "is always contingent upon immediate social circumstance, the weight of historical factors, and the agency of young people themselves." The extracts below help typify the complex nature to these levels of identification and belonging once age/generation is factored (Victor is Simon's grandfather, and Peter is Simon's father):

From point 1 way back in the 1800s in Ireland, which is about as far back as we could go in that field, there's something like 5 or 6 generations have elapsed and yet there is a feeling of feeling Irish, and Irish ancestry (Victor, retired engineer, 80, 5th generation Irish).

Occasionally, things from Ireland would rear their head. When we were visiting Ireland (me Dad's siblings are all older than him as he said) and their houses were furnished differently to his, which was only natural. But on one occasion, in me uncle's house, there was this thing that hung upon the wall – it looked like a crude tobacco pipe, mounted on a bit of wood "oh it's a shillelagh. . ." "what the hell's a shillelagh?" I still don't know, do you? (Peter, mechanic, 48, 6th generation Irish).

I've kind of watched my Granddad develop the family tree that he did and I was quite interested in that 'cos he started off with not a lot and he ended up going all the way back to like the 1820s and that was interesting and that's probably as far as it goes really. I don't feel particularly Irish. I've never been or anything, but yeah, it's definitely an Irish sounding name I suppose and that's about as far as it goes. In my daily kind of, day to day activities, it doesn't really affect me to be honest' (Simon, industrial chemist, 21, 7th generation Irish).

So we see three contrasting levels of engagement with an Irish identity from the family narrative. This is not surprising, but what it illustrates is the complexities of

intergenerational relations: while the grandfather believes that the feelings of “Irishness” still exist across the family, the grandson does not confirm this to be the case. Significantly, we see that while Victor took Peter on visits to family in Ireland, Simon has not benefitted from such experiences thereby creating more of a physical detachment from the “homeland.”

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## 5 Conclusion

In discussing the cultural fusion of the Irish diaspora and “indigenous” Tyneside, this chapter has introduced how some young men can “grow up Irish” in the North East of England. The narratives of the men chart how the legacies of family masculinities have changed over time. How “Irish” these men feel varies, but from the 38 participants, there is no set pattern of certain generations feeling more Irish than others. For individuals, the most salient factor is instead family circumstance. That said, as in Simon’s example above, it was clear with most of the families that the younger generations had a weaker sense of national identity. In fact, in all but three of the families, the younger the man was, the less Irish he felt. Perhaps though what these examples help elucidate is the importance of experience over age. An exposure to an Irish homeland through holiday and through family can help, along with cultural practice and participation in the diaspora can help foster nationalistic sentiment (Ni Laoire 2002).

Through this chapter, the work presents a new contribution to the literatures of children and young people. This research has studied young men who have mostly been born outside of Ireland yet claim to be “of Irish descent.” It is particular family circumstances that have proved to be more significant than generational collective identities. In sum, levels of attachment to, and identification with, Irish national identity were affected by three main components. Firstly, there was the influence that visits to Ireland have on the men. Secondly are levels of cultural participation and practice on Tyneside. Thirdly is having living relatives “back home” in Ireland. The prominence of any of these increased the likelihood of young men growing up Irish.

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# Transnational Processes of Identification and Belonging Among Children and Young People of Migrant Descent

# 6

Rosa Mas Giralt

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	104
2	Migration, Transnationalism, and Incorporation into Receiving Societies: Recognizing Children and Young People .....	105
3	The Transnational Practices of Young Children of Migrants .....	108
4	Transnational Families: Migrant and Later Generation Children's Roles and Experiences .....	109
5	The Emotional and Symbolic Transnationalism of Young Children of Migrant Descent .....	112
	5.1 Emotional Attachments to Transnational Family and Friends .....	113
	5.2 Later Generation Children's Lived Experiences of the Inherited Homeland .....	115
6	Conclusion .....	118
	References .....	119

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## Abstract

In order to recognize young people as independent social agents, a great deal of research has focused on developing understandings of their senses of identity and belonging outside of the realm of the family. As relevant and necessary as these contributions are, they do not allow for an exploration of the role that relationships within the family or across generations may play in young people's sense of self. Taking into account the relational context of the family is necessary to develop better understandings of the experiences and affiliations of children of migrant descent who may live embedded in transnational families and their extended social networks. The chapter starts by exploring the research which has foregrounded the roles of children and young people in processes of transmigration and incorporation into receiving societies, illuminating the ways in

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which they actively negotiate experiences of inclusion and exclusion. It then considers the contributions made by research on transnational families and emotional and symbolic transnationalism that aid our understanding of the cross-border connections of later generation young people. These contributions highlight the relevant roles that transnational family networks and their emotional circuits play in recreating attachments which may figure saliently in the senses of self of young children of migrants. Paying attention to the roles that emotional and symbolic transnational attachments play in the senses of identity and belonging of children of migrant descent can enrich conceptualizations of transnationalism and contribute to understandings of children's emotional and imaginative agency.

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**Keywords**

Children and young people of migrant descent • Later generation children and young people • Transnational families • Emotional transnationalism • Symbolic transnationalism • Identity • Belonging • Emotional landscapes • Emotional agency • Imaginative agency

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## 1 Introduction

This chapter explores existing scholarship on the transnationalism of the young children of migrants (also referred to as 1.5 and second generation) and reflects on the insights that can be gained from paying further attention to the roles that transnational relationships or attachments may play in their senses of identity and belonging. It seeks to consider relational aspects in the processes of identity formation of children and young people of migrant descent by focusing on the context of the family and its extended manifestations.

An examination of the relational context of the family is necessary in order to complement predominant accounts which, in the effort to recognize children as social subjects in their own right, have tended to consider them outside the realm of the family (Holt 2011, p. 3). This emphasis is understandable as scholars have been trying to compensate for former approaches which positioned young people as passive members of the familial unit. Nonetheless, as Scott (2007, p. 122) has argued, “[c]hildren are agents, but agency is not individual, it is relational. Children’s actions and choices are codependent on the lives of others, particularly their family members.” The relationality of agency is crucial when considering the frames of reference available to young people as they develop their senses of identity and belonging.

Socially constructed conceptualizations of identity (including childhood and youth) have also brought to the fore the ways in which identities develop and function in relation to other identities, have multiple expressions and may change over the life-course and according to social and geographical locations (e.g., Easthope 2009). In addition, research on notions of belonging both as personal sentiments of feeling at home or being in place and as political experience, that is

being recognized or not as being in place by others or institutional structures, has also foregrounded the multiplicity of scales and social locations to which it is possible to belong, the diverse expressions that belonging can take, and the constraints that social actors may face when trying to belong (Antonsich 2010). Increasingly, person-centered perspectives have been adopted to explore how migrants and ethnic minorities perceive and make sense of their multiply scaled and simultaneous senses of identity and belonging. These perspectives have increasingly paid attention to children and young people of migrant descent providing nuanced accounts of their subjectivities and their complex personal, social, and embodied lives.

It is important to note that conventional terms such as “descendants of migrants” and “1.5 or second generation” (to refer to children who migrated at an early age or to those who were born in the receiving society) are problematic as they do not reflect the often blurred boundaries between generations and may “other” young people by defining them primarily in terms of their familial migrant origins (e.g., Eckstein 2002; Gardner 2012). In this chapter, I use these conventional terms to facilitate engagement with existing literature and, following other scholars (e.g., Gardner 2012), I employ the expression “later generation” as a collective term to refer to children and young people who are the descendants of migrants (independently of their generational position). In order to simplify the narrative, I sometimes use the words children and young people interchangeably to refer to the experiences of social actors who are up to 18 years of age (by convention and due to the age range focus of most of the studies considered). Nonetheless, this does not imply an endorsement of a chronological definition of childhood or youth, which are complex and contested constructs, nor of an essentialist approach to this diverse group which includes a multiplicity of experiences.

The chapter starts by considering the lack of attention that migration and population studies have paid to the role of children and young people in processes of mobility and incorporation into receiving societies. It continues by considering the contributions made by scholarship on the senses of identity and belonging of children of migrant descent or minority ethnic young people and then introduces the perspectives and insights being progressively gained from a focus on familial, emotional, and symbolic transnational attachments. It closes with an evaluation of the achievements in this area of research and highlights the need to expand the geographies of children *within* (transnational) families.

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## 2 Migration, Transnationalism, and Incorporation into Receiving Societies: Recognizing Children and Young People

Migration research has been an area in which *adultist* approaches have neglected children’s and young people’s experiences and perspectives. Conventionally, children have been considered passive elements in the migration process, dependent on their parents or guardians, and a source of adult anxiety (Dobson 2009). Furthermore, in population geography generally, children have typically been

conceptualized as “an ‘object’ (a means to an end) rather than a ‘subject’ (worthy of interest in their own right/for their own sake)” (McKendrick 2001, p. 462). The introduction of transnational approaches to the study of migration and migrants’ lives, which have attempted to foreground the ways in which migrants and their descendants create and sustain simultaneous, multifarious, and multi-sited social fields and practices across borders (Basch et al. 1994), did not greatly disrupt this tendency to overlook the perspectives of children and young people in experiences of transmigration (White et al. 2011).

However, more recent accounts have come to recognize young people as agential actors in migration processes and, therefore, have drawn attention to the roles they play in family decisions to migrate, on their own mobilities or in transnational practices and orientations (Ní Laoire et al. 2010). For instance, a pioneering contribution to this literature came from Orellana et al. (2001), who undertook the task of bringing children to the forefront of the transnational experience. By looking at the case of Central American and Mexican families and Korean and Yemeni children residing in the USA, these authors aimed to start to address the gap in transnational families’ literature which, with few exceptions, had generally ignored children’s roles in processes of transmigration. These authors found that securing the wellbeing and future of children is often at the center of families’ migration decisions (e.g., who moves, who remains, and who is sent back), how they stay connected and the type of relationships they maintain across borders. Children have their own opinions about these migration decisions and find ways to assert their views (actively or passively); they may even take the lead to migrate, as in the case of Korean “parachute kids” who move on their own at an early age to study in the USA. These findings highlight that children can play important roles in families’ decisions and in how experiences of uprooting, re-rooting, and family organization are faced.

A similar *adultist* condition affected early research on the “integration” into receiving societies of immigrants and their descendants. Incorporation models such as assimilation or segmented assimilation rely on the children of immigrants as “agents of integration,” as they are based on the notion that subsequent generations will progressively become more adapted into their receiving society (Olwig 2003, pp. 218–219). Thus, children have again been an implicit *object* of research, “ever-present” in efforts to “profile a population” with socioeconomic indicators but “never really there” (McKendrick 2001, p. 466). However, the recognition of young people as social agents, who are actively engaged in creating their own sociocultural worlds, has contributed to the development of a “body of research which explores, from different perspectives, how children and young people form and negotiate their identities and belongings” (Ní Laoire, et al. 2010, p. 156). This work has provided deeper insights into children’s attitudes towards cultural and ethnic diversity and has enhanced understandings of their experiences of incorporation into receiving societies.

Scholarship on young people and ethnicity, for instance, has provided rich perspectives on how they are involved in everyday processes of othering and “racialization” or how they reproduce sameness, actively negotiating similarities and differences versus their peers and wider social relationships (e.g., Castro 2004).

These dynamics have both negative and positive expressions. On the one hand, they show the persisting incidence of racism and stereotyping in the lives of young people (e.g., Connolly 1998); on the other, they document the ability of children to navigate the visual regimes of ethno-“racial” difference which permeate their social worlds by resisting or subverting stereotyping or adopting “in/visibility” strategies (i.e., hiding or revealing differences) to affirm their senses of self (e.g., Mas Giralt 2011b).

In fact, the dynamic negotiations of difference and sameness and their entanglement with wider societal power have also been considered critical when trying to understand how young people experience processes of inclusion and exclusion in their everyday lives (e.g., Devine et al. 2008). Within this research, the social worlds of migrant and later generation children and their experiences of “integration” have captured the attention of researchers, who have started to document the development of identities among these young people as strategies to negotiate membership or to cope with the conditions they face in the receiving society (e.g., Griffiths 2002). For example, it has been shown that migrant and later generation young people in Western societies adopt trans-ethnic and trans-class identities in order to gain membership and protect themselves from “racial” or gender stereotyping and *alterity* (i.e., being othered or made the object of differential treatment, see for example Hazell 2009). This was the case for younger Somali refugees in Britain who adopted Black-Caribbean or working-class “laddish” cultural forms to renegotiate belonging in their localities (Griffiths 2002; Rutter 2006) and Latin American young people in the north of England who used their marked (but unknown) embodiments in relation to majority British young people to enact membership of non-Latin American minority ethnic groups (Mas Giralt 2011b). Muslim identity has also been found to be a relevant frame of reference for young refugees and descendants of migrants, who perceive their faith as a way to belong to a wider social group or as a main frame of reference for identification (e.g., Valentine et al. 2009).

Additional perspectives have considered notions of belonging of minority ethnic children, foregrounding the multiplicity of social locations that may figure prominently in their senses of self. For example, Olwig’s (2003) study focusing on the case of children from Caribbean backgrounds living in the USA, Canada, and Britain shows that these young people did not refer primarily to their ethnicity or ancestral homeland when considering their places of belonging but directed their attention instead to their everyday spaces and related spheres of social interaction.

The experiences of mobility and transnationalism of migrant children both in the majority and minority world have also received increased attention (e.g., White et al. 2011). For instance, research conducted in rural areas of the majority world has shown the relevance of young people’s work and family roles in their senses of identity and belonging (e.g., Ansell and Van Blerk 2007). Punch (2007) has highlighted how Bolivian children, who seasonally migrate to neighboring Argentina to work, share a “migrant identity” when back in their home community; an identity which socially empowers them through their increased personal independence and access to consumer products but also through their contribution to household maintenance and family livelihood. However, the integration experiences and senses of identity and belonging of later generation young people in receiving

societies of the majority world continues to be an underdeveloped area of study (existing research focuses mainly on access to education and within school experiences of immigrant and later generation children, e.g., Sánchez Bautista 2014).

In summary, although *adultist* approaches characterized earlier scholarship on migration, “integration,” and transnationalism, subsequent studies have brought to the fore migrant and later generation children’s active roles in transmigration and shown the agential ways in which they negotiate identifications and processes of inclusion and exclusion. In addition, a diversity of factors such as family and productive roles, peer and wider social relationships, and multiply scaled places and spaces have been found to be significant influences on how migrant and later generation young people construct their selfhood. These perspectives point towards the need to take into account the multiple frames of reference available to young migrants and later generation children when negotiating their own senses of identity and belonging, including (but not privileging) their potential transnational affiliations. The next section considers insights which have been gained through a transnational perspective.

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### 3 The Transnational Practices of Young Children of Migrants

There has been a long (and continuing) debate regarding the extent to which transnational activities and connections will be sustained by the descendants of contemporary transmigrants, that is in the second and subsequent generations (Levitt 2009). Research on the material transnational activities (e.g., visiting, remitting, and participation in kin networks) of the second generation in the USA has concluded that these practices are only pursued by a minority of the descendants of migrants and that involvement in these activities diminishes over time. For example, Rumbaut (2002) conducted a decade-long longitudinal study of the material and subjective transnational attachments among 1.5 and second generation young adults from Mexico, The Philippines, Vietnam, China, and other Latin American countries living in the USA. He concluded that the level of transnational activity of these groups was rather low, involving less than 10 % of individuals from all the groups studied – despite significant differences across groups (Rumbaut 2002, p. 89). However, scholars have become increasingly aware that conceptualizing generations as discrete population groups with common experiences and successive time frames does not capture the reality of living within transnational social fields. The constant cross-border mobilities that characterize these fields blur generational boundaries and the existence of “ethnified communities” in receiving societies may bring a diversity of cultural referents to the lives of later generation young people (e.g., Eckstein 2002). In this sense, Levitt (2009, p. 1226) argues that we should not ignore how growing up in households, families, and communities embedded in transnational social fields may affect the lives of the children of migrants.

Indeed, an alternative perspective relating to the transnational orientations of later generation youth has come from research focusing on the increasingly ethnified communities that can be found in the cities of Western immigrant receiving



countries. It has been pointed out that the children of migrants may be developing transnational identifications which do not rely on their parents' homelands but instead on the ethnocultural specific environments (e.g., localities with numerous cultural and ethnic specific shops, businesses, restaurants, cultural, and religious institutions) in which they are growing up and on global cultural flows (e.g., Gowricharn 2009). This perspective provides a more complex picture of the potential transnationalism of second and subsequent generations, drawing attention to the importance of local ethnocultural infrastructures in fomenting transnational orientations and behaviors.

Although there has been more interest in the adult second generations when studying transnational practices amongst the descendants of migrants, a growing number of studies have also focused on children and young people with immigrant backgrounds (Gardner 2012). Increasingly, scholars are highlighting that transnational practices and perspectives have salient roles for young people's everyday lives and may become important sites of identification and belonging for their present or future lives (Gardner 2012; Haikkola 2011; Mas Giral and Bailey 2010). In many of these accounts, the relational context of the transnational family has been considered as one of the main everyday social spaces through which children and young people experience their lives. The next two sections continue exploring the knowledge gained through a focus on the transnationalism of later generation young people. They do so by paying attention, firstly, to the context of the transnational family and, secondly, to the emotional and symbolic transnational attachments of the young children of migrants. The emphasis in these two sections is on contributions that bring to the fore the perspectives of children within transnational families and the potential relevance of transnational attachments for the senses of identity and belonging of later generation young people.

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#### **4 Transnational Families: Migrant and Later Generation Children's Roles and Experiences**

Bryceson and Vuorela describe transnational families as those "that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely 'familyhood', even across national borders" (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002, p. 3). These authors have explored in depth the configuration of families organized in this manner and emphasized their relational nature. They propose using the concept of "relativizing", "to refer to the variety of ways individuals establish, maintain or curtail relational ties with specific family members" (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002, p. 14). In this sense, the physical absence or proximity of some members and not of others dictates the reconstruction and transformation of family relationships and dynamics; furthermore, individuals must continually revise their own roles and family identity through their life cycle. Importantly, considering the relational dimensions of transnational families also brings to the fore the simultaneous nature of "living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in destination country

and transnationally” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, p. 1003). It has been suggested that there are several instances in which such simultaneity of relations may have significant impacts on the senses of identity and belonging of transnational family members (Ariza 2002). One is the tension between processes of assimilation and belonging, for instance, in the “hybridization” dynamics (i.e., merging of cultures or identities, Bhabha 2004) that may underpin transnational belongings. Another instance can be found in the increasing heterogeneity of identities which may characterize the members of transnational families; for example, the adoption of fluid identities as a defensive response to the difficulties of social integration and pressures of segregation (Ariza 2002).

An additional aspect of these identity struggles comes from potential intergenerational tensions when migrants try to transfer homeland cultural values to their children who are growing up in the receiving societies. Examples of these tensions can be observed in the changes in family and gender roles caused by a transnational configuration of the family and in the ways in which intergenerational family relationships are recomposed by the need to undertake social and cultural reproduction across borders. For instance, a prolific scholarship has focused on how the transnational organization of the family redefines family and gender roles. Transnational motherhood has received a great deal of attention with studies highlighting how the role of “breadwinner” has been added to the traditional caring and nurturing roles of many women who leave their children behind and migrate in search of better livelihoods. This situation has been found to have significant impacts on both mothers’ and children’s emotional wellbeing, intergenerational bonding, and relationships (e.g., Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parreñas 2005). Similarly, in the case of transnational fatherhood, scholars have explored how men renegotiate their father and/or partner roles in response to their migration circumstances (e.g., low-skilled jobs) which may erode traditional sources of identity and masculinity (e.g., Pribilsky 2001, 2004).

In many of these accounts, however, children have continued to be ever-present but rarely have their perspectives been considered alongside those of their parents. An exception is Pribilsky’s (2001) study on children’s lives in the Ecuadorian Andes. The author explored how the migration of parents and the changes introduced in the family by their absences impacted negatively children’s opportunities to perform reproductive roles within the household and to meet their parents’ expectations. In fact, a growing scholarship is foregrounding children’s and young people’s perspectives of being left behind, of their own responsibilities within their transnational families, or of their own transmigration for labor or educational reasons, and how all these processes may impact on their family roles and wider social identities (e.g., Ansell and Van Blerk 2007; Punch 2007; White et al. 2011).

In addition, intergenerational perspectives have started to deepen our understanding of the extended nature of family and kin obligations and the provision of care within transnational families (e.g., Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Nesteruk and Marks 2009). These contributions are significant due to the insights they provide into the practices and activities that migrant parents undertake to maintain and transfer transnational kin relationships and cultural and social heritage to their children.

For instance, Nesteruk and Marks (2009) explore how middle-class Eastern European immigrants in the USA bring their own parents to spend time with their children to provide the younger generation with the possibility to develop relationships with their extended family and inherited culture and, at the same time, maintain traditional models of intergenerational childrearing and family obligations.

Other documented common activities among migrant families are regular return visits to sending countries through which parents hope to socialize their children into their family values and society of origin. The basic aims of these visits are for children and young people to nurture their own family relationships, learn cultural rules of behavior and intergenerational hierarchies, and create their own senses of belonging to the family and inherited society (e.g., Vathi and King 2011; Zeitlyn 2012). However, it has been shown that return visits are experienced in a multiplicity of ways by later generation children and young people and can have mixed outcomes for their senses of identity and belonging both in relation to sending and receiving societies. For instance, Zeitlyn (2012) explores the reactions and experiences of British Bangladeshi children during visits to their parents' homeland. He shows the diversity of ways in which some of these children may resist or even reject socialization in Bangladesh, experiences which instead assert their senses of belonging to London.

Furthermore, research focusing on "the emotional complexities of transnational family life" provides insights into the practices which aim to sustain a cross-border sense of familyhood and into the ways in which transnational intergenerational relationships may be reproduced (Skrbiš 2008, p. 236). By taking into account this transnational emotional dimension, scholars are acknowledging "the existence of emotional ties that inevitably link individuals to families" (positive or negative) and contemplating the emotional connotations of the process of migration, e.g., separation from family, friends, and social referents (Skrbiš 2008, p. 236). Thus, a growing literature focuses on the emotional dimensions of transnational relations. For example, the ways in which physically distant family members negotiate possibilities of co-presence through communications (i.e., being together virtually, physically, by proxy, or through imagination) has attracted a great deal of attention, as well as how family members continue to provide moral and emotional support and care for their relatives across borders by "staying in touch" via long distance communication routines and by negotiating feelings of absence and longing (Baldassar 2008). Children and young people in transnational families participate in these communication routines and "celebrations" of special dates to different degrees and their involvement is often mediated by their parents' own practices, sometimes with negative consequences when children feel "forced" to take part in these activities (e.g., Mand 2010; Orellana et al. 2001). However, other accounts have shown that children and young people may also establish their own independent connections with family and kin through the possibilities offered by communication technologies and their greater affordability in some countries, particularly those provided by mobile phone technologies and social media applications (e.g., Haikkola 2011). Regular and routine communications allow the recreation of familyhood across borders and the maintenance of emotional and caring relationships (Baldassar 2008).

For some later generation children and young people, these communications may enhance their sense of connection to absent family and nurture their bonds with cousins or other relatives in the sending country, relationships that, as I will discuss in the next section, may underpin a sense of belonging to the family and, by extension, to the inherited homeland.

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## **5 The Emotional and Symbolic Transnationalism of Young Children of Migrant Descent**

Early contributions to the study of the transnationalism of the second and subsequent generations highlighted the relevance of emotional and symbolic perspectives to deepen our understanding of the types of transnational bonds and orientations that may characterize the lives of the young descendants of migrants. For example, Le Espiritu and Tran (2002) proposed thinking of transnationalism not only in the literal sense but also at the symbolic level through their research with second generation Vietnamese American university students in San Diego (USA). These authors suggest that memories, idealized images of the homeland, and imagined returns can act as powerful symbols through which the second generations develop their own transnational attachments. In addition, Wolf (2002) conducted research with second generation Filipino youth in California who live embedded in different cultural frames of reference provided both by their present home but also by the homeland values of their parents and grandparents, frames of reference that can easily be conflictive. She proposes the concept of “emotional transnationalism” to describe the transnational emotional obligations which characterized her young participants’ lives. She advocates “a cultural transnationalism that plays itself out in the realm of emotions” (Wolf 2002, p. 279), which despite being located in one geographical setting has transnational emotional dimensions.

Subsequent scholarship in this area has started to elaborate on the meanings and experiences of these emotional and symbolic dimensions and how they may manifest themselves in the transnational attachments of children and young people of migrant descent. For instance, Gardner (2012, p. 905) has argued that movements are intrinsically physical and emotional experiences and when trying to understand children and young people’s perspectives, it is necessary to pay attention to the feelings that they attach to these experiences. An emerging literature provides significant insights into two particular areas in which emotions and imaginings illuminate the transnational perspectives of later generation young people. The first area relates to the emotional bonds that, as was discussed in the previous section, connect children to their relatives (and sometimes friends) in the inherited homeland, and the second area refers to the physical events, resulting feelings, and related imaginings that shape children’s experiences of spending time with their relatives in the environments of sending societies. These two dimensions, which are interrelated, are explored in the next subsections.

## 5.1 Emotional Attachments to Transnational Family and Friends

In the case of later generation children and young people, transnational orientations are often mediated by the social bonds and family relationships that connect them to places or societies of origin (e.g., Haikkola 2011). These family connections may become evident through the ways in which some later generation children and young people express notions of belonging to sending and receiving societies simultaneously or of being part of transnational social fields with family members/homes in more than one geographical location (e.g., Gardner and Mand 2012; Olwig 2003). An example of simultaneous belonging can be found in the account provided by 8-year-old Constanza (pseudonym), a young participant in a study which I conducted with Latin American and Latino-British families in the north of England. When talking about the places and people who were meaningful for her, Constanza displayed a rich imaginary of home which included all the cities, activities, environments, and people that figured in her everyday life. She did not privilege one geographical location, instead she represented in her drawings everything that made her happy or that she missed in the places that were part of her everyday life, places which included both spaces in Mexico, where she had been born, and the UK, where she was residing with her parents and sibling at the time (see Fig. 1). Constanza's parents maintained daily communications with their family back in Mexico by using mobile and computer communications. Taking part in these communications, Constanza often played "hide and seek" and other games via video-call with her



**Fig. 1** Constanza's maps activity

cousins, activities that nurtured her own independent relationships to relatives in Mexico and recreated her sense of transnational familyhood on an ordinary basis.

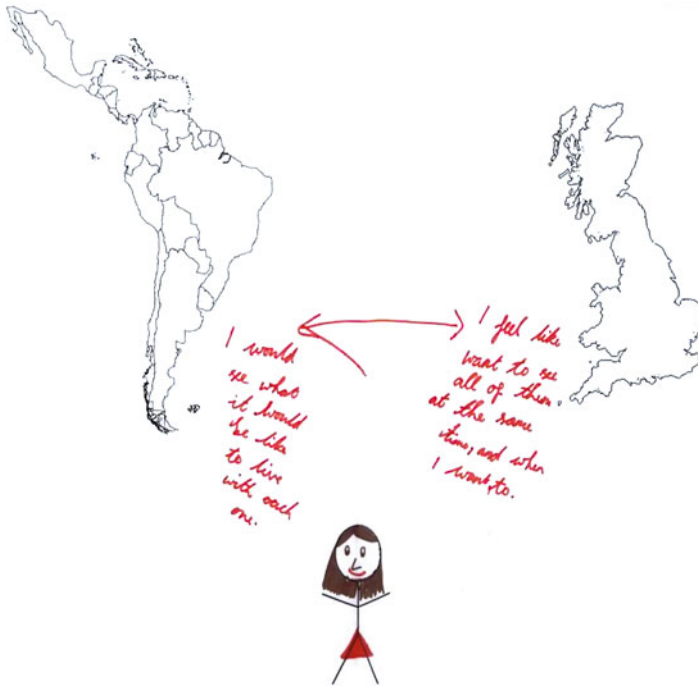
Constanza's case can be seen as a paradigmatic example of leading a life embedded in highly active transnational fields (facilitated by modern communication and travel technologies) which fomented her sense of everyday connection to her transnational family. Regular visits to Mexico and the positive experiences of spending time with her cousins and other relatives with whom she was in regular communication cemented her feeling of belonging to the transnational family and to the familiar places where her relatives lived. The relevance of places as "pockets of familiarity" was also evident in Haikkola's (2011, p. 1213) second generation young participants (12–16 years of age) in Helsinki, who felt connected to places where relatives lived by having gained "experimental knowledge" through these family relationships and visits.

Nonetheless, these positive views of transnational family belonging can be contrasted with the experiences of other children and young people of migrant descent who feel disconnected from transnational relationships and experiences due to a lack of communication with relatives or visits to the inherited homeland. Another example from my study with Latin American and Latino-British families in the north of England provides an insight into this type of situation (see also Mas Giralt 2011a). In this case, 9-year-old Anglo-Bolivian Sally (pseudonym) expressed an inability to feel strongly connected to Bolivia as she had not had many opportunities to experience her father's homeland first hand:

SALLY. Um I just, I feel more, I feel connected to Bolivia, as in relatives there but I don't really go there much 'cause I've only been there three times. Um but I've lived in England all my, all of my life and so... (...) I just don't feel that close to Bol-, Bolivia as much as England 'cause I don't really know Bolivia well. Apart from facts from reading that book or just looking them up online and ask Mum and Dad so I would like to get to know about that more so I can feel more tied to it.

In contrast to Constanza's case, Sally's father did not maintain constant communication with his transnational relatives who were geographically dispersed between Bolivia and the USA. Sally, as she describes above, had only been to Bolivia three times and mainly when she was still very young. Despite this sense of unfamiliarity, she expressed a wish to improve her knowledge of her father's homeland but also a longing to establish closer relationships with her relatives. This wish to bring all her family together, to be able to "live with each of them," was expressed through her drawing and writing in the maps activity that she completed for the research (see Fig. 2).

Research has also highlighted that later generation or returnee children may face challenging or negative social situations when visiting or starting a life in their inherited homelands. These children and young people may find their senses of local identity and belonging disallowed by peers or young relatives in sending societies, when they are found not to conform local expectations or due to the "difference" of having been born or socialized in the receiving society (e.g., Ní Laoire 2011; Sun 2013). These negative experiences, which may have alienating consequences or may reinforce senses of belonging to receiving societies, highlight the complex identity



**Fig. 2** Sally’s maps activity – Sally wrote: “I feel like [I] want to see all of them at the same time, and when I want to” and “I would see what it would be like to live with each one”

and belonging negotiations that these young people face in their multiply located social lives (e.g., Sun 2013). Next, I consider the ways in which the lived experiences of the inherited homeland mediate later generation children’s emotional attachments to transnational family and places.

## 5.2 Later Generation Children’s Lived Experiences of the Inherited Homeland

A second area of emerging research on the emotional and symbolic transnational attachments of later generation children and young people focuses on what can be described as expressions of “emotional landscapes.” Christou and King (2010, p. 638) suggest the term “emotional landscapes” to signify the imagined environments evoked by their participant second generation Greek-German adult returnees to Greece. For their participants, these landscapes brought together imaginings of kin and family connections, places, and islands of ancestral origin with an idealized connection to Greece and its way of life. In a similar way, children and young people of migrant descent have also been found to present rich idealized imaginings which



fuse natural environments and enjoyment with family when reporting their experiences of their inherited homeland (e.g., Gardner 2012).

Studies focusing on visits to the inherited homeland have highlighted that later generation children and young people often provide rich emotional accounts of these visits including both positive experiences of nature, freedom, and enjoyment and negative feelings of boredom, fear, or disgust at unfamiliar environments, animals, or living conditions (e.g., Vathi and King 2011; Zeitlyn 2012). These accounts often find continuity in children's representations of their inherited homelands. Research conducted using non-textual methods such as drawings, diagrams, and artwork, and the verbal explanations that accompany them, have provided insights into the diversity of emotions that later generation children and young people attach to transnational people and places (e.g., Mas Giralt 2011b; Zeitlyn and Mand 2012). For instance, in the study mentioned above which I conducted with children of Latin American descent and their families in the north of England, young participants presented idealized "emotional landscapes" that fused physical experiences of natural environments in their inherited homelands (i.e., play, leisure, and adventure) with the positive emotions of being with their transnational families and relatives. This is illustrated, for example, by 9-year-old Anglo-Mexican Tomas (pseudonym), who highlighted the sun and the beach in Mexico, an environment to which he felt connected (and which contrasted with that of England) in part by the presence of his cousins with whom he played and spent time when visiting (see Fig. 3). He explained:

TOMAS. Well, when I see the beach it kind of represents Mexico because I don't normally see it in England so I'm in Mexico. The lovely sun, hot, when I see the sun really shining, when I see my cousins it feels like Mexico a lot.

Independently of whether later generation children and young people act on their transnational attachments and develop more material connections and identifications to kin and homeland in the future, emotional bonds and landscapes play important roles in how they articulate their senses of self in the present and may provide significant insights into their eventual motivations to continue to engage (or not) in transnational practices (e.g., Haikkola 2011; Mas Giralt 2011b). In this sense, attachments to transnational families and the places where relatives live have also been conceptualized as forms of social capital which may provide resources and information which can be activated by later generation children as they grow up (Gardner 2012; Haikkola 2011).

However, as was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, emotional and symbolic transnational attachments are also already significant for many later generation children and young people who adopt identifications related to the "national," ethnic, or religious identities of their parents in their receiving societies in order to navigate the politics of identity and belonging that they encounter in their everyday lives (e.g., Louie 2006). For example, the children and young people of Latin American descent who participated in my research displayed strategies of in/visibility to subvert dominant ways of seeing and to enact belonging to peer





**Fig. 3** Extract from maps activity with Tomas

groups and to the multicultural localities where they lived (Mas Giralt 2011b). One of their visibility strategies consisted of making public their Latin American identity to peers and making use of the “rarity” of this panethnicity in the north of England, where the Latin American population is small and sparse, to claim uniqueness and individuality (Mas Giralt 2011b, p. 340). At the same time, this allowed them to project their own perceptions of themselves and their cultural heritage and still “fit” within the lived multiculturalism that they considered defined the places where they resided. As mentioned earlier, sometimes these “national,” ethnic, or religious identifications are further underpinned by the “ethnified” local environments in which these young people live in the receiving societies (Gowricharn 2009), but also by images of “fashionable” or “cool” ethnic identities which are transmitted by global media flows. These may include, for example, cultural referents such as pop music and its related identity traits or “exotic” imaginaries which can be operationalized to claim distinctiveness or uniqueness (e.g., Griffiths 2002; Mas Giralt 2011b).

Later generation children and young people negotiate senses of identity and belonging within existing social structures and visual (and other) regimes of difference and sameness in both sending and receiving societies and these structures have direct impacts on the range of social identities which they can claim and inhabit (mediated by their embodiments and other personal characteristics). Despite these social constraints, they make use of the multiple social locations and connections which characterize their everyday lives to negotiate local and translocal forms of identification and belonging. As the studies of the transnationalism of later generation children and young people have started to show, emotional and symbolic transnational attachments emerge as important contexts in these social locations and connections.

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## 6 Conclusion

Despite the adultist perspective which has traditionally influenced studies of migration, processes of incorporation into receiving societies, and experiences of transnationalism and transmigration, scholars have progressed significantly in bringing to the fore the insights to be gained by researching the experiences and perspectives of migrant and later generation children and young people in these diverse social and spatial processes. As in many other areas of social research, the recognition of children and young people as agential subjects, who are actively engaged in creating their social worlds and in negotiating their own senses of self, has underpinned scholars' efforts to develop child-centered approaches to the study of processes of incorporation in receiving societies. Such approaches have provided rich accounts of how young migrants and later generation children understand these processes and how they negotiate their own senses of identity and belonging in relation to multiply scaled social and geographical locations and within diverse social contexts. In the effort to recognize children and young people as social subjects in their own right, scholars have tended to prioritize "individualized" perspectives of their senses of identity and belonging, paying less attention to their processes of identification *within* the family.

The scholarship considered in this chapter, however, highlights the need to continue expanding the geographies of children *within* (transnational) families. As has been discussed, the context of the (transnational) family takes particular relevance for studies focusing on the transnationalism of migrant and later generation young people. In work undertaken in the majority world, for example, the family and reproductive roles of transmigrant children, or of children of migrants living in sending societies, have been revealed as important sources of identification and belonging for these young people. Unfortunately, the experiences and transnational practices or attachments of children of migrant descent growing up in receiving societies in the majority world continue to be underresearched.

Although accounts examining the transnational material practices (e.g., remitting, visiting, and political participation) of (adult) children of migrants living in receiving societies in the minority world conclude that these practices are only pursued by a

minority, subsequent contributions have provided more nuanced understandings of the transnational attachments and orientations which may characterize the lives of young children of migrants who are growing up in receiving societies although embedded in transnational social fields. These contributions have emphasized the significance that forms of emotional and symbolic transnationalism may have for the transnational orientations and affiliations of young later generations.

Emerging studies have highlighted that, in the case of children and young people, transnational orientations are often mediated by cross-border family and kin relationships and lived experiences of the inherited homeland (e.g., through visits and regular communication). In fact, young members of transnational families present rich accounts of the emotional and symbolic meanings of these embodied lived experiences and relationships. Imaginings of these relationships and of the places where transnational relatives live become important sites of familiarity which may translate into senses of belonging to the family (and by extension to the inherited homeland) or may provide the basis for transnational identifications when negotiating identities and belonging in the receiving society. The ways in which young people express their own understandings of transnational attachments or orientations through emotional accounts or symbolic landscapes also point towards the need to pay more attention to the multidimensionality of children's agency, including its emotional and imaginative manifestations.

A focus on the family (adults and young people) and not the free-floating individual also helps to develop more nuanced conceptualizations of transnational ways of living, providing, for example, insights into the motivations of adult migrants to maintain transnational relationships and reproduce senses of familyhood for their children. Furthermore, the meanings and values attached to transnational relationships and activities during childhood may provide important insights into the emotional disposition which may lead later generation individuals to undertake "return" migration or increase (or not) their involvement with their inherited homeland.

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Miri Song

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	123
2	The Importance of “Ethnic Options” .....	125
3	Study of “Mixed Race” Young People in Britain .....	127
4	How Young Mixed Participants Identified Themselves .....	129
4.1	Those Who Were Racially Assigned as Non-White .....	130
4.2	Those Who Were Seen as White .....	132
4.3	Those Who Looked Racially Ambiguous .....	133
5	Conclusion .....	135
	References .....	138

## Keywords

Mixed race • Ethnic options • Identification • Young people • Britain • Race • White • Non-White • Physical appearance

## 1 Introduction

In recent years, there has been a great deal of both media and academic attention given to the growth of “mixed race” people in Britain – individuals who have parents with distinct “racial” ancestries, such as Black and White, South Asian and White, or East Asian and Black (to name just some possible mixed backgrounds). Not only was this evident in the London 2012 Olympic opening ceremony, in which a multiracial family was depicted as a typical British family, with a Black father and White mother and their children, but “mixed” sports stars (e.g., Lewis Hamilton, Jessica Ennis) and celebrities (e.g., Gok Wan) are increasingly public about their

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mixed ancestries. Accompanying this major demographic shift and awareness is also the growth of websites aimed at mixed people and families in Britain, such as People in Harmony ([www.pih.org.uk](http://www.pih.org.uk)), Intermix ([www.intermixonline.com](http://www.intermixonline.com)), and Mix'd ([www.mix-d.org](http://www.mix-d.org)). Especially in urban contexts, being mixed or in a mixed family is becoming increasingly ordinary, as “cultures of mixing” proliferate in a variety of ways, and not only in relation to race and ethnicity but also in religion and other modes of belonging and identification (see Caballero et al. 2008).

The population of the UK is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity, race, religion, and national identity (Aspinall 2003). One major demographic development is the growth of mixed race young people in Britain. For the first time, the growth in mixed people was officially recognized by the inclusion of a “mixed” group in the 2001 UK census, in which about 677,000 people were identified as mixed. In the 2011 census, official estimates found that about 2.2 % of the population identified as mixed – though this is certainly an undercount, because the UK Household Longitudinal Study found that about three times as many people actually have mixed ancestry (see Nandi and Platt 2012). Demographers have identified the mixed group as one of the fastest growing of all ethnic groups. For instance, one model predicts annual growth rates of almost 4 % in 2006–2031 (Coleman 2010).

Furthermore, the rates of intermarriage are notable, especially among the Black Caribbean and White Britons and among Chinese and White Britons (Song 2009; Muttarak and Heath 2010). Various analysts have argued that in many parts of metropolitan Britain, being mixed and the everyday interactions between disparate groups are increasingly ordinary (Back 1996).

Yet despite its growing importance in demographic terms and its entry into official data collection, relatively little is known about the life experiences of so-called mixed people, or how this new population grouping does or does not identify in ethnic and racial terms. Exploring the racial identifications of mixed people in the contemporary context is important in a period marked by debates and contestation about the marking of ethnic and racial difference and the relevance of “race” more generally (Anthias 2002). The emergence of mixed people also confronts us with the presumption that there exist distinct, “pure” races until such races become mixed (Parker and Song 2001).

In the last two decades in particular, studies of “multiracial” people have grown substantially in the USA, in particular, and have addressed the distinctive and varied experiences of such people over time (see the volumes by Root 1992, 1996; Spickard 1989; Zack 1993). While much of the scholarship in the USA has been based upon people with part-Black heritage (see Rockquemore and Brunnsma 2002; Dalmage 2000), a broader consciousness and identification as “multiracial” has emerged in many parts of the country, especially on university campuses (DaCosta 2007). By comparison, the scholarship on “mixed” people in Britain is still relatively nascent and, in the rest of Europe, very scarce.

In Britain there is a growing body of work on mixed children and adolescents (see Tizard and Phoenix 1993; Wilson 1987; Ali 2003; Okitikpi 2005; Barn 1999) and on how parents negotiate the issue of difference in their families (Twine 2004;

Olumide 2002; Caballero et al. 2008; Luke and Luke 1998). It is increasingly clear that “the” mixed race population does not comprise a unified group in itself but rather a wide variety of mixes and day-to-day experiences (Song 2010; Mahtani 2002). In fact, the socioeconomic backgrounds of mixed people are diverse, depending upon their type of “mix” and their regional location (Bradford 2006).

I use the terms “mixed race”, “mixed”, and “multiracial” interchangeably throughout this chapter. There is no one terminology which is agreed upon among scholars (or among “ordinary” people). What many scholars do agree upon is that these terms, like “race”, are all socially constructed, employed multifariously in a variety of discursive interactions, and subject to interpretation in particular ways and in particular societies. Who is considered to be mixed race or multiracial in the first place is by no means obvious and depends on the specific racial classification systems operating in a specific society (Song 2009; Morning 2000). As DaCosta (2007) notes, the use of multiple terms also signals a heterogeneous group in the making, rather than a group in any fixed sense.

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## 2 The Importance of “Ethnic Options”

Historically, many multiracial people were pathologized as marginal, fragmented, and troubled, as they were not seen as belonging wholly in any one racial group (Stonequist 1937). One well-known convention used in the USA was the “one drop” rule of hypodescent, whereby non-White minorities (most typically applied to the African origin slave population and their descendants) were racially assigned to the lower status racial group. Such a convention operated to protect the boundaries and privileges of Whiteness, by designating anyone who was only part of White as a member of a denigrated racial minority.

While such legal conventions never applied in the UK (and no longer formally apply in the USA), various studies have shown that many mixed people (still) feel pressure to identify in relation to only one race (Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002; Parker and Song 2001; Root 1996). However, there is increasing evidence that a significant proportion of mixed people, including Black/White mixed people, may be asserting multiracial identities [in the USA, see Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002), Roth (2005), Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005), and in Britain, see Song (2010), Ifekwunigwe (1999), Tizard and Phoenix (1993), and Ali (2003)].

Nevertheless, because most studies of multiracial people in Britain (and elsewhere) have focused on Black/White individuals, we still know very little about the identifications and experiences of other types of mixed people, or how disparate types of mixed people may possess a variable range of ethnic options (Waters 1990; Song 2003). Ethnic options are the identity choices that people are able to exercise.

The literature on ethnic options often invokes the concept of “agency,” which enables the person to conceive and pursue projects, plans, and values. To exercise “options” requires an awareness of one’s options. This core idea connects to debates about structure and agency: there has, in the first place, to be an availability of options and the possibility that such options can be validated by others (Song 2003).



But of course, our identity options are in fact both constrained and constituted by social practices. As Charles Taylor puts it, a self only exists and an identity only emerges within “webs of interlocution” (Taylor 1994), that is, our actions belong to the practices that shape them and endow them with meaning. For example, individuals from disadvantaged social backgrounds may not perceive the same range of ethnic options to be available to them as someone with the privilege of material advantage (Fhagen-Smith 2010). Or a person living in an area with a high concentration of coethnics may be constrained in choosing an ethnic identity that diverges from the norm within that area (Holloway et al. 2012). In such ways the options that we are able to freely exercise are fundamentally shaped by the social matrix in which we live.

Mary Waters (1990) has argued that non-White people’s options are constrained by racial discourses and conventions which may categorize minority individuals in ways which do not reflect their own identifications and experiences. However, some analysts have since argued that ethnic minorities can and do exercise a range of ethnic options, though these can be constrained (Song 2003). Therefore, the question of how multiracial young people may exercise their ethnic options is especially interesting, as they have ethnic and racial ancestries in more than one group. In addition to the issue of individual agency, the ethnic options of disparate mixed groups matter because they tend to reflect racial fault lines (including the social distance between specific groups) and the differential values and meanings associated with disparate “races.”

Furthermore, an examination of ethnic options is important because it can reveal evidence of a disjuncture between expressed (and/or internal) and observed identifications among mixed race individuals (see Aspinall and Song 2013). This disjuncture between how one sees oneself, in racial terms, and how others perceive that person, can become problematic, because how one sees oneself may not be validated by others. The issue of validation is, for many, fundamental, because without validation of one’s own racial identity by others, one cannot easily assert and “own” that identity (Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002). Identity denial by others can be not only distressing, but can involve persistent efforts to assert a desired (and validated) identity in the wider society.

Little is yet known about the racialized experiences of multiracial people especially outside of North America. Some emerging studies suggest that it would be overly simplistic to assume that multiracial people are straightforwardly less subject to racial prejudice and discrimination than are monoracial minorities. For instance, Herman (2004) found that part-Black biracial adolescents in the USA *perceived* just as much discrimination as their monoracial (Black) counterparts; she suggests that they may experience as much discrimination without benefiting from the acceptance and membership in a monoracial minority group. Herman concludes: “Thus, it seems that biracials, particularly those with some Black heritage, experienced the disadvantages but not the protective benefits of minority group membership” (738).

In fact, some recent research suggests that we need to broaden the ways in which we assess the racialized experiences of mixed race people. What is not known is

whether the racial discrimination reported by mixed race individuals is qualitatively similar, or somehow distinctive, to that reported by their monoracial counterparts, and such information is not easily discerned in large-scale surveys.

An investigation of the racial identifications of young mixed people in Britain may tell us a great deal about how mixed young people navigate their interactions in various social contexts. How these young people identify themselves is likely to be connected with their social relationships with others, especially in terms of peer groups at schools and universities, where often unwritten rules about the racialized nature of social networking and boundaries can apply. As in studies of how racial meanings and stereotypes can structure pupils' aspirations (and friendships) in schools (see Kao 2000), or in studies of how children are subject to, and negotiate racial labels in schools (see Troyna and Hatcher 1992), young mixed people in contemporary Britain can understand and respond to their racial assignment by others in highly varied ways.

A study of different types of young mixed people is increasingly important, because it is clear that there is no one "mixed" experience or consciousness that exemplifies mixed people in Britain (Song 2010). Furthermore, a focus on young mixed people (mostly under the age of 25) is especially pertinent, because while mixed people are not new in Britain (as shown in the historical television series "Mixed Britannia"), being a mixed young person in Britain today is a very different experience than it would have been for older cohorts of mixed people, as Britain, even across regional differences, is a much more global and cosmopolitan country than it was just a few decades ago.

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### 3 Study of "Mixed Race" Young People in Britain

The findings discussed here are drawn from an ESRC-funded project on the ethnic options of mixed race young people in Britain (with the PI Peter Aspinall and Ferhana Hashem) which examines the racial identifications and experiences of disparate types of mixed young people in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Britain.

We adopted a cross-sectional study design, with the use of a semi-structured online survey, followed by in-depth interviews with a subset of these survey respondents. Young adults between 18 and 25 years were recruited from universities and colleges of further education across England (but primarily from London). A stratified sample (based on location and size of the mixed race student population) was drawn from a sampling frame that integrated ethnically coded data for students in universities and colleges supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency and the Learning and Skills Council. Participating institutions hosted a weblink to the online survey and these institutions sent out an e-mail advertising our research to its student body.

Of the roughly 500 surveys we received, only 326 met our sample specifications (258 women and 68 men). Many of those who were excluded were either too old or had not been resident in the UK for the entirety of their secondary schooling (which

usually begins at age 11 or 12) – a requirement for inclusion in the study. The female bias has been reported in other research on mixed race and is a reflection of response bias in answering questionnaires on this topic (see Lopez 2003). Out of the survey respondents, we recruited a subsample of 65 respondents for the in-depth interviews, with most interviews in duration from 1.5 to 3 h, and took place in a variety of settings, such as university cafes and restaurants and, less frequently, in students' homes. All of the interviews were recorded and then transcribed.

Our interview participants were comprised of 65 respondents (27 men, 38 women):

Black/White: 17 (4 men, 13 women)

South Asian/White: 10 (7 men, 3 women)

East Asian/White: 16 (7 men, 9 women)

Minority mix: 7 (2 men, 5 women)

Arab/White: 15 (7 men, 8 women)

In this chapter, I focus upon the ways in which various types of mixed individuals described and identified themselves, as well as whether they believed their asserted identifications were validated by others. I discuss the particular importance of young people's physical appearance in their ability to assert their desired identification, and the societal norms underlying the perception of ethnic and racial difference. How participants (including those who were racially categorized in similar ways) experienced and responded to others' perceptions of them, however, could vary considerably.

I adopt a social constructionist view of race, based on the understanding that individuals can possess multiple racial (and other) identities across different contexts (Cornell and Hartmann 1998; Song 2003). The categories ticked in most large-scale surveys cannot tell us about the centrality or salience of particular ethnic and racial identities, or the variable meanings and everyday practices associated with particular categories or terms, so that two people who may have ticked the exact same box (or boxes) may differ considerably in terms of what that ticked identity means in lived experience (Saenz et al. 1995).

I especially focus upon comparing the experiences of Black/White mixed young people (who were most numerous in the study) with those of other types of mixed participants, because various US surveys have tended to contrast the identifications of part-Black people with that of part Asian people, with part Asian people said to possess a greater set of identity options (see Tashiro 2002; Harris and Sim 2002; Herman 2004). Although we find some differences between part-Black young people and other non-Black mixed young people in our British sample, we argue that these differences are not as definitive as those found in the studies from the USA.

While I cannot provide a comprehensive picture of how multiracial respondents thought about and experienced their mixedness, given the small and unrepresentative nature of the sample, these cases are meant to illustrate not only variability in how mixed young people perceive and exercise their ethnic options but also the relatively fluid and contingent nature of racial identifications.

## 4 How Young Mixed Participants Identified Themselves

Respondents were first asked to fill in an unprompted, open-ended question in the online surveys: *Please describe your racial/ethnic identity in your own words below.*

Overall, 60 % of the respondents named two groups, such as “Indian and English,” “White British mixed with Black African,” while 20 % of our respondents named three or more groups. For example, one respondent wrote “half British, three-eighths Vietnamese, one-eighth French.” Some young people provided even more detail about their physical appearance: “My father is white Irish and my mother is mixed black Antiguan and white British. I call myself a mixed race even though my skin is white.”

The specificity and detail of many of these open-ended survey responses alone attest to our mixed participants’ wish to describe themselves in particular, as opposed to more generic ways, though as discussed below, one’s ethnic and racial background, or being multiracial, was not necessarily of importance to all our participants. Almost all of the survey respondents understood this question to refer to a factual description of their parental heritage, and most respondents wrote down each parent’s ethnic and/or racial backgrounds. On the basis of the responses to this open-ended survey question, one might take these responses at face value and conclude that these written descriptions actually reflected the racial identifications of the respondents. In some cases, these open-ended responses did mesh with the ways in which respondents saw themselves.

However, in the interviews which followed, it became evident that many of the respondents were quite clear that their parents’ ethnic/racial backgrounds did *not* necessarily reflect the way in which they saw themselves. As Berthoud (1998) has cogently argued, we must not conflate actual parental heritage with one’s identification, as the two may not be the same.

Furthermore, prior studies of “race” and multiracial people in the USA have tended to assume (and often, with reason) that being seen as White (or light skinned) by the wider society afforded such individuals more privileges and benefits than people who were immediately visible as non-White (see Herring et al. 2004). However, as we discuss below, being seen as White, non-White (e.g., Black), or racially ambiguous for our multiracial young people could be experienced in a variety of ways, so that there was no uniform, positive, or negative response to being racially assigned in each of the three ways above – though being racially assigned as monoracially Black for Black/White respondents was more consistently reported in a negative way than than for the other types of mixed participants (in relation to their minority heritages). In the remainder of this chapter, I draw upon interview excerpts to illustrate the diverse ways in which our young people perceived and experienced others’ perceptions of them and their sense of their identity options. In what follows, I discuss three different ways in which our participants were seen by others, the varied ways in which young people within each of those categories experienced, and responded to, others’ perceptions of them.

#### 4.1 Those Who Were Racially Assigned as Non-White

One respondent, Carrie, had a Black African mother and White English father and saw herself as being mixed race. Yet she felt that her mixed identity was rarely validated, by either Black or White people: *“It annoys me, because I can’t control it. Black people want me to say I’m black and if I don’t, I’m supposedly ashamed to be Black. Some White people will just say I’m Black, without thinking also. I hate being generalized, and it gets harder I think as you get older.”*

Because few people validated her mixed identity, Carrie felt annoyed and constrained by other peoples’ insistence that she was Black. And although she did not see herself as White, she was bothered by the fact that being White was clearly off limits to her. The reported inaccessibility of either a White or a “mixed” identity for Black/White individuals like Carrie was pronounced.

Like Carrie, Tina (Black/White) also struggled with how others saw her: *“For instance one of my friend’s friends that I met, he was like, ‘oh where do you come from?’ I was like, ‘Oh, I’m mixed race.’ He was like, ‘Oh, so you’re Black?’ I was like, ‘No, I’m mixed race.’ And it was like you’re kind of just telling me what race I am. . . . Yeah, and I’ve found a lot of people have done that but it doesn’t, it doesn’t define for me who I am. . .”*

In comparison with Carrie, who objected to how other people automatically saw her as Black (and not Black and White, mixed race), Patricia did not mind being seen as monoracially Black by others. She explained that while she knew she was actually of mixed parentage, she effectively lived her life as a Black woman and was comfortable with other people seeing her as a Black person: *“I feel accepted by this group, and I have most in common with them.”* Patricia noted that most of her friends at the university were Black people and that she did not think that most Black university students really distinguished between “pure” Black people and mixed race people were who were part Black.

Keith was very clear about feeling Black. Keith, who described himself as “White British and Black Jamaican,” acknowledged his mixed heritage but saw himself primarily as Black and as a “minority.” Although he had been raised solely by his White mother and had had little contact with his father, he had a strong sense of being Black. He reported that most White people saw him as Black and he was aware of the negative social value associated with being Black: *“I don’t feel as if black people judge me on my skin tone, I feel more comfortable around other black people or ethnic minorities.”* So while he was comfortable with being seen as Black, Keith (unlike Patricia, above) felt constrained by others’ perception of him as a Black man – a perception which was not value neutral and which made him feel devalued and self-conscious in certain social situations around White people.

Tara, one of our “minority mix” respondents, also objected to others’ (both White and Black people’s) perception of her as Black, and the expected script of behavior this racial assignment entailed. Tara had an African father and a Southeast Asian mother, and she considered herself to be “mixed race” and “Afro-Asian” – a hybrid identification recognizing both sides of her heritage. Because she grew up in

a middle class, predominantly White suburb of London, she reported that she was very comfortable around White people, and that she did not think about being different in most contexts. Yet Tara was aware that most White people saw her as Black, and she felt constrained by other people's expectations that she behaves in a particular way: "*My [White] friends say I'm the Whitest Black person they know.*" Although she was simply being herself, her White friends at the university perceived her as acting against type – since she was seen primarily as a Black person. Tara was also upset by some Black peoples' expectations that she acts more "Black." All of these respondents objected to what they perceived as a negation of their individuality – they were simply perceived as racial types.

In comparison with many Black/White participants, many of our East Asian/White participants were seen as racially ambiguous (see below), though some, like George, were consistently seen as "Chinese" or East Asian. George, who had a Chinese mother and a White English father, reported that despite the fact that he most identified with White British culture and norms, and felt very English, he was always treated like a foreigner on the basis of his "Chinese" appearance. As George explained ruefully, "*I'm one of the most patriotic people you'll ever meet.*" But because of his physical appearance, his claim to Britishness was constantly questioned. Thus the physical appearance of Eurasian people, such as George, was fundamental in constraining the identity options that they possessed (Song 2003). Furthermore, George's frustration at not being seen as British was compounded by the fact that he felt stigmatized by others' perception of him as a non-White minority – others' perception of him as "different" was not experienced as a positive attribution of "difference."

Thus, while not all Black/White participants found it problematic to be seen as Black, as opposed to mixed, these accounts illustrate these participants' awareness of the societal convention of seeing mixed Black/White people as Black (unless someone was particularly light skinned, which may alert people to the possibility that they were mixed). But even people with Black/White parentage could exhibit a great deal of variability in physical features, including what we understand to be racially specific features, such as hair texture or the shape of the nose or lips.

While in the minority in this study, some individuals who were seen as non-White reported that they did not care how other people saw them. This lack of concern derived from the fact that their "race" was not particularly central to their sense of selves and/or the fact that their race was less salient than their overriding sense of Britishness, their religion, studies, or regional identification (e.g., as a Londoner) (see Aspinall and Song 2013). This derogation of racial difference was typically mentioned in terms of everyday life in large urban centers like London. As one South Asian/White respondent, Ben, puts it, "*You don't really expect people to be White in London!*" Or as Kareem (South Asian and Arab) observed, "*I am what I am. . . I'm just technically another person just walking.*" Nor did they think that their peers paid much attention to their exact parental heritage, given their common upbringing as British.

## 4.2 Those Who Were Seen as White

For those who were seen as White, there were a variety of feelings and responses to being seen in this way. A number of participants who looked White to others acknowledged the benefits of being seen as White, because there was no racial stigma associated with Whiteness. One Chinese and English respondent, Nick, described himself in the survey in this way: *“An ambiguous citizen of the world, white most of the time.”* Yet in the interview, it was revealed that he was extremely invested in his Chinese heritage, with a wide social network of Chinese friends, including a British Chinese girlfriend and a strong interest in China and Chinese culture. He revealed that while many (though not all) people assumed that he was White, based upon his physical appearance, he did not see himself as a (racially) White person. For Nick, being “white most of the time” meant that his primary cultural references and upbringing, including his neighborhood and schooling, had been mostly White. Importantly, for Nick, there was no stigma attached to how he was seen by others, and he felt able to identify as part Chinese in terms of his social network and interests without feeling that his affiliation to his Chinese heritage was challenged.

Nira (Arab/White) reported that most of time she was assumed to be a Mediterranean, such as Spanish, and this suited her because she wished to distance herself from her father’s Arab culture and the negative discourses associated with being Muslim and Arab: *“With Islam, my dad, it’s very male dominated. And I just feel that it’s not right. And inequalities. That sort of area, where I think I’m very Westernized. I mean, you have inequalities in the workplace [in the UK], and stuff like that. But women have more chances. And obviously, I don’t believe in terrorism [laughs ruefully].”*

Nira, like some other part Arab and part South Asian participants, was all too aware of the negative images and stereotypes which were often attributed to people who were thought to be Muslim in the post-9/11 and 7/7 world. Her remark about not believing in terrorism makes it clear that she wishes to distance herself from any association with radical extremism, and of being culturally and religiously “different.” In this way, people who looked White (whether Northern or Southern European) could “pass” and avoid a stigmatized status in many situations.

This was the case for Jane (South Asian/White) who sheepishly admitted that she identified as “White” in most social situations and did not reveal that her mother was Indian, unless she got to know someone better: *“When I was younger, I would probably not have gone for White, I liked being different. . . . But I was actually discussing with my mum recently, I actually highlighted things like a lot of the racial tensions that have occurred because of 9/11 and 7/7, that I think there’s a bit of stigma attached to being identified as Asian, which probably influences me, and I think in a way, people, and it’s awful to say, but people would treat you differently if people would identify you as White rather than as Asian. This is a sad reflection of society.”*

Like Nira above, most people saw Jane as a White British woman, and she had Anglo first and family names. In these cases, invoking Whiteness afforded them not

only protection from stigma, but also a sense of normalcy which White people tended to enjoy.

However, it is important to remember that not all mixed people want to be seen as White. Some participants were troubled by the fact that they were *only* seen as White, as in Anna's case (Black/White), because she had a predominantly White appearance:

*If I say I'm mixed race everyone, black and white, wants an explanation which I do not want to give. Black people sometimes think I am 'trying to be black' and white people find it 'exotic'. I think of myself as a mixed race person with white skin but usually, in order to not have to explain myself, I will just be whatever anyone wants to see me as.*

In another case, Miriam, who had a Palestinian mother and White Belgian father, was blonde and blue-eyed, and this made her assertion of Arab identity very difficult not only in relation to the public but also with her Arab relatives:

*... It's also very difficult in a family to not look the same [as others], to not be seen as an Arab fully. ... it does play a big role in how I identify myself and why I choose to call myself an Arab. It's more to say, well, I am here too, you know, I do count.*

Others' refusal to legitimate Miriam's identification as Arab was painful for her, because she had been raised by her mother and her mother's Arab family; in fact, she reported that even some of her Arab relatives did not seem to regard her as authentically Arab. Her physical appearance (as well as their knowledge of her father's European ancestry) seemed to constantly disrupt their perception of her as "one of them."

These respondents encountered outright incredulity (and sometimes hostility) when they claimed their minority ancestries. Because they felt a very strong attachment to their minority backgrounds, others' skepticism about their minority ancestry was often troubling and frustrating. Thus although they were not insensitive to the privileges they enjoyed as a result of a White appearance, racial misclassification as White was distressing to these respondents.

### 4.3 Those Who Looked Racially Ambiguous

While many Black/White respondents reported that they were seen as "just" Black, there was variability in how East Asian/White (and to a lesser extent, South Asian/White) respondents were seen (see cases of Nick and George, above), so that while some people looked White to others (according to prevailing social norms), others looked physically indeterminate, "different" or foreign. Interestingly, while being seen as physically indeterminate could be experienced in a positive way for some participants, it could be experienced in a wholly negative way for others. While many factors could mediate young people's differential experiences as positive or negative (and whether it even mattered), one's social class background and the



locality/region where one grew up and/or lived in could be significant in these processes (see Fhagen-Smith 2010; Caballero et al. 2008).

For a number of participants, an attribution of racial ambiguity was not a positive experience and could make individuals feel compelled to have to explain their ethnic origins, or “where they were from.” One Chinese/White respondent, Alison, noted, “*I’m often asked where I’m from – this implicitly denies me the right to be British because of the way I look.*” Because people were unable to place her appearance, and because she did not look White, many people assumed that she was foreign and not British.

For Chris, being seen as racially ambiguous interfered with his ability to be seen in the way he wanted. For example, Chris (Arab and White English) was often assumed to be “different,” based upon his ambiguous appearance. The fact that he was often assumed to be different or foreign regularly jarred with Chris, who felt no connection with (or knowledge of) his Arab ancestry. This curiosity about his background was problematic for Chris, who identified, simply, as “British”:

Int: *How do others respond to the knowledge that you’re part Arab?*

Chris: *I think in this day and age it’s not really an issue. I do wish sometimes that I could erase it and be British, British, British.*

Int: *Why’s that?*

Chris: *I just think it’s type casting me. It’s labeling me as something that I feel sometimes I’m not. . . I don’t think my race really makes too much difference.*

However, being seen as somehow racially indeterminate was positive for some individuals. Daniel, who was raised mostly by this Black Barbadian mother, described himself in this way: “*Barbados from my mother’s mother’s family, India from my mother’s father, Wales and England from my father’s family.*” Although he was especially interested in his mother’s ancestry, he claimed that he did not identify along racial lines and that his primary sense of identification was regional: as someone from Manchester. When asked about how other people perceived him in racial terms, Daniel said:

*Well, it’s confusing but I kind of like it because it means that if I meet somebody before I’ve talked to them, the first thing when somebody looks at you . . . I don’t think people know what to think when they see me. But I like it . . . it keeps it open for me.*

Unlike some of the other part-Black respondents in the study, Daniel did not feel automatically pigeonholed into a “Black” category, and as a result, others’ uncertainty about how to “place” him afforded him a sense of freedom about how to identify – “it keeps it open for me.”

As conveyed by Daniel, how he experienced others’ curiosity about him did not make him feel stigmatized; rather, it made him feel rather special and distinctive, and he could enjoy the initial interactions with people, as they tried to figure out “who he was.” Like Daniel, some part East Asian and South Asian women in our study reported that they enjoyed attributions of “exotic” beauty or allure from others; these attributions from others were regarded as wholly positive, with no

“downside.” As another Indian and English participant, Hari, puts it, “The girls love it!” Rosa (South Asian/White) reported that she benefited from being rather distinctive, but in an entirely positive way:

*Like if I look in the mirror or something I don't think I look more Indian or more white. I'm sort of like in the middle. Like when I moved schools people thought I was Brazilian. . . I don't take offence to it at all but. . . I like. . . I like the fact that I'm like not white. I don't. . . No offence to white people whatsoever but I like having a colour and I like not being too dark, so it's sort of like the all year round tan that everyone envies sort of thing, you know?*

Like Kareem, above, Richard (South Asian/White) reported that he was not particularly affected by how others saw him because he did not identify along racial lines: “I'm just me. . . I mean, no ones cares.” When asked about his cultural upbringing in London, it became evident that Richard's parents had de-emphasized the idea of ethnic or racial difference in their family:

*So they just raised me as neutral, which is British really. . . I just don't think they were that bothered about it. I think my parents have the attitude that your nationality doesn't really define you as a person, which is the way I see it really.*

Not identifying along racial lines was, by definition, a derogation of the importance of race or ethnic difference for these individuals. This did not mean, though, that their ethnic or cultural attachment to one or both ancestries was unimportant, but that racial and ethnic signifiers of difference, per se, did not mean very much to these respondents. However, it was highly unlikely that those who reported that they did not care how others saw them were individuals who felt that they were subject to racial denigration or marginalization. While it was theoretically possible that someone who was racially victimized could inure themselves from the injuries of such denigration, most mixed young people who experienced forms of racism did not appear to be so offhand about how they were racially perceived by others.

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## 5 Conclusion

As shown by the introduction of a “mixed” category in the 2001 British census, racial taxonomies and the enumeration of ethnic and racial difference is a politicized and historically variable process. In an era of identity politics, the assertion and validation of one's desired identification is, for many, of personal (and collective) importance and an affirmation of their membership in specific groups. The growing identification as “mixed race” for many mixed young people in Britain is evidence of their assertion of their ethnic options, though these individuals felt differentially able to exercise their identity options. Nor did the ways in which others validate (or not) their identifications matter to the same degree.

The particular ways in which our multiracial young people were identified by others, and their sense of their ethnic options, could vary considerably. Whether they were seen as White, racially ambiguous, or non-White, respondents could feel

that they possessed identity options which were validated or that others saw them in ways which did not match their sense of selves, thus resulting in a problematic sense of mismatch between their self identification and others' perceptions of them.

Generally speaking, however, those who were seen consistently as White benefited from a lack of racial stigma, or attributions of foreignness, and they (like Nick, above) could exercise a symbolic ethnic option (as Chinese, in his case), when it suited them (cf. Waters 1990). However, some people who were seen as White found this highly problematic, because their identifications (and membership) in relation to an ethnic minority group could be refuted, on the basis of their appearance (as in Miriam's case above). Furthermore, those individuals who were racially categorized as Black reported consistently that this could be problematic, in that this attribution of Blackness felt racially stigmatizing. On the basis of our small British sample, our findings confirm some of the US findings about the more limited ethnic options of Black/White individuals in comparison with part Asian individuals.

However, it is important to qualify this finding: while fewer East Asian and South Asian/White individuals were consistently racially assigned as East Asian or South Asian (and more of them could pass as White), part Asian people exhibited significant physical variation, so that some of them could be seen as racially ambiguous, or even as non-White minorities. And as shown above, being seen as racially ambiguous was not only potentially negative, but it could also mean feeling that such individuals were unable to assert their desired identifications or have them validated.

For those individuals who felt misrecognized by others, they strongly objected to the ways in which they were seen, and the lack of validation of their desired identities. Regardless of whether they were consistently pigeonholed into one racial category, or whether they were seen as physically indeterminate and "different," these respondents were often distressed or irritated by the fact that they were reduced to a racial type or objectified as an odd looking foreign person.

Another possibility was that some individuals, though in the minority, reported that they simply did not care what others thought, and that they were not very invested in their ethnic or racial identities. In fact, the meanings and significance of race, and of their mixed heritage, were quite variable across our sample of interviewees: while race and/or being mixed race was said to be entirely unimportant (or a mere afterthought) for some respondents, others talked about the ways in which race and being mixed shaped their identifications and/or lives more generally. For some respondents, being mixed was central to how they saw themselves. Yet for others being mixed was relatively unimportant in relation to being British, or when compared with one's religion or one's area of study. Understanding of why some mixed people who are racially perceived in particular ways experience these interactions in a negative way, while others may report such interactions as mostly positive experiences, cannot be explained by any one factor, but is likely to be based upon a great many variables, including their upbringing by their parents and their home and school lives. It may be, too, that class privilege among middle-class

mixed individuals affords them some protection and self-esteem (see Fhagen-Smith 2010).

Despite the often cited idea that racial identities are socially constructed and potentially changeable across contexts, much public policy is still based on surveys which elicit only one measure of racial identity (Perlmann and Waters 2002; Spickard 1992). Many official categories used in surveys of mixed people do not necessarily capture the complexity of the meanings and lived experiences or the salience of ethnic and racial identifications. Thus the use of racial terms, such as mixed, White, Black, and Asian (to name only a few), needs to be interpreted in contextually specific ways, rather than regarded as terms that convey stable and predictable meanings and experiences by those who employ these terms. Ethnic and racial terms therefore (whether used in officialdom or in colleges) need to be *interpreted* and not just taken at face value.

In an increasingly multiethnic society in which being mixed is likely to be less and less uncommon, and where “super-diversity” is evident (Vertorec 2007), it is important that public policy is informed by research that captures the complexity and variability among multiracial individuals who may use a variety of ethnic, racial, religious, national, and regional terms to describe themselves. Of course, ethnic and racial labels in common usage still carry a lot of weight across many contexts, but the heretofore dominant meanings which are associated with particular terms and categories are not impervious to change. In particular, we need to be aware of the fact that for many multiracial young people (including a considerable number of part-Black individuals), one’s race may not always be of consequence in all settings. Specific identifications can vary over time, to become “thicker” or “thinner,” depending on a variety of factors; identifications can be manipulated for particular ends, but at the same time, they may also be experienced as seemingly innate (Cornell and Hartmann 1998).

Furthermore, a British identity could take precedence in some social situations, since they grew up in Britain, surrounded by British norms and cultural practices. Most of these young people did not feel that they could claim an ethnically authentic affiliation with some distant ancestral culture, for instance, in Hong Kong or Pakistan. This discourse of national belonging may also be gaining currency at a time when numbers of young people may question the legitimacy of racial ideologies and categories in their everyday lives.

Future research needs to address the interactions between the racial identifications of mixed young people and variables such as gender, class, and region. Increasingly, it is clear that there is no single multiracial experience in Britain. Multiracial experiences can differ across disparate types of mixed groups, but I would also stress that there is considerable variation *within* groups.

As the mixed population in Britain continues to grow, what it means to be mixed will be increasingly commonplace in highly diverse places like London, while mixed people who grow up and live in predominantly White areas will be subject to more pressure to engage with dominant discourses of ethnic and racial differences. The participants who lived in more cosmopolitan and metropolitan areas

were afforded both more anonymity and space to define themselves in ways which did not automatically privilege their ethnic and racial backgrounds. Given the very significant growth of mixed people and relationships throughout Britain, their presence in studies of schools, or in particular neighborhoods (see Les Back's 1996 study of South London), will increasingly shape the ways in which scholars conceive of social divisions and contestations around place and belonging.

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## Contents

1	Introduction .....	142
2	Setting the Stage .....	143
3	Play as a Site Where Subjectivities Are Lived and Negotiated .....	144
3.1	Play Is Part of, Not Outside of, the Quotidian World .....	145
3.2	Beyond Socialization: Making Subjectivities and Socio-spatial Relations .....	146
3.3	Beyond Play: The Import and Impact of Play .....	149
4	Geographies of Play Subjectivities .....	150
4.1	Generationing the Time-Space of Play .....	150
4.2	Play Territories and Subjectivities .....	153
4.3	Play as Embodied Action .....	156
5	Conclusion .....	158
	References .....	159

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## Abstract

This chapter provides a review of scholarship which considers play as a site where children's subjectivities are lived and negotiated. Focusing on research about young children in early childhood settings in advanced capitalist Scandinavian and Anglophone countries, the chapter highlights the connection between class, race, gender, and generational subjectivities made in and through play and their relationship to broader social inequities. Key premises of this scholarship are discussed including the recognition that play is not a natural, imitative, or trivial act, but a site and means by which children, even the very young, make subjectivities, socio-spatial relations, and social orders. The chapter also explores the geographies of play subjectivities, attending to the generationing

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of play spaces, the significance of boundaries and territories for socio-spatial relations, and play's embodied and inter-corporeal characteristics. Debates within the literature are discussed including the extent to which play can be viewed as a decisive site of children's agency as opposed to a highly constrained site of action and the degree to which play reproduces relations of domination or can be understood as emancipatory.

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**Keywords**

Early childhood • Imaginative play • Embodiment • Inequities • Boundaries • Generation

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## 1 Introduction

Despite significant moves within childhood studies to resuscitate children and young people's social action and agency from invisibility, and even impossibility, early childhood remains on the fringes of this literature (McNamee and Seymour 2012). In public discourse, pedagogical approaches, and a significant portion of academic literature, the youngest children continue to be viewed primarily in developmental terms. The debate over the relative impact of "nature" or "nurture" and popular terms such as "gender development" or "ethnic and cultural socialization" are indicative of these approaches to young children's subjectivities. Here, young children continue to be consigned to a largely passive role in negotiating subject positions and associated practices and are viewed as existing in a pre-political realm separate from the inequities which these negotiations are often undertaken within and productive of.

As a number of childhood scholars began pointing out in the late 1980s (Corsaro 1985; Davies 1989; Walkerdine 1990), such assertions rest on a series of faulty assumptions. Firstly, they present adults as social actors, actively negotiating identities, while children are consigned as "adults in the making" (Thorne 1993, p. 3), little more than *objects* of competing discourses and adult practices. Secondly, they imply that those adult practices to which children are subjected have predictable outcomes. Finally, they rest on the presumption that identities themselves are stable, coherent, and simply mapped onto biologically based differences, unchanged by political, economic, and social turbulence and change throughout any individual's life course.

A small but significant body of literature has grown out of these critiques. This scholarship examines the ways in which coherent identities are neither simply foisted on to young children nor are they taken up in straightforward ways. Given the diverse and contradictory character of subject positions children encounter and the way these change over time and place, choices (conscious or not) must be made between often conflicting positioned practices in order to act in the world. Indeed, this literature suggests that not only do children negotiate subject positions



operating within the broader (adult) social order, but they contribute to the changing nature of subjectivities themselves.

Within this scholarship, imaginative play is recognized as a key site where young children's identity negotiations take place. It is significant that much of this research has taken place in early childhood settings in advanced capitalist countries, particularly in the Scandinavian and Anglophone countries, where play and early childhood have become virtually coterminous (as the chapter will go on to discuss). The suggestion here is not that this is the only, or even primary, space where young children negotiate subjectivities but that social and historical factors that render it are a highly relevant site for consideration. It is here that this chapter will focus.

The chapter will begin by setting the stage, outlining the conceptualization of childhood and subjectivity underpinning the discussion. Next, the chapter will review the key premises of scholarship examining young children's play as a site of subject formation and negotiation, highlighting the varying emphasis placed on generation and other forms of social ordering. The final section will take up the geographies of play subjectivities, underscoring the relationship between generation, territory, and embodiment. In conclusion, the chapter will consider a tension running through the literature over the potentialities attributed to play, as a site where reified subject positions and inequitable socio-spatial relations are either maintained or transformed.

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## 2 Setting the Stage

*The central question remains, exactly what turns children into 'children'? (Honig 2011, p. 73)*

This chapter sets out from a few basic premises about subjectivity, childhood, and inequities. First, identity is not understood as an ontological fact, called up to reference what a person *is*, but is used here to reference those interactive practices through which people orient and position themselves and others. Conceptualized in this way, identity – or subjectivity – is understood as people's lived experiences within multiple subject positions (Walkerdine 1999). This distinction indicates the necessity of considering both abstracted subject positions, or reified identities, and the ways these positions are taken up and negotiated in people's everyday lives. Different subject positions are made intelligible and considered desirable, or rendered impossible, as a result of changing political, economic, and social conditions. While subjectivities are implicated in the "grinding stability and exploitative continuity" (Blackman et al. 2008, p. 19) of inequitable socio-spatial relations, they are not exhausted by control and domination. Subjectivity is also lived and made through inter-corporeal interactions based on reciprocity and interdependence where time, energy, and dispositions may be relationally focused "with and for others" as opposed to being "invested in the self, or extracted in the interests of capital" (Skeggs 2011, p. 509).

Second, “young children” and “early childhood” are not used here on the assumptions that such categories simply refer to a given set of biological, maturational, or chronological characteristics. As Archard (2004, p. 26) points out, childhood “does not simply carve nature at her joints or follow the physical world’s given boundaries.” Just as concepts of a gendered social order have been helpful in deconstructing the category “women” and understanding gender inequities, the concept of generation is similarly helpful in relation to childhood. Following Alanen (2011), this chapter is premised on a relational understanding of generation where “the child” is constituted in its difference from “the adult” and childhood and adulthood are not primarily understood as phases of life but as elements of a generational social order. Childhood and adulthood are interdependent and reciprocal: changes in the constitution of one result in changes in the other. Indeed, childhood studies have sought to unsettle fixed categorizations of “the child,” interrogating the practices and forms of knowing which constitute particular humans as children (Honig 2011), as well as normative assumptions and social status accorded to the position of being a child.

Adult-child relations are often asymmetrical. As Liebel (2014, p.124) points out, those positioned as children can be understood as an oppressed social group: subject to punitive treatment for practices which are “tolerated or seen as normal in adults,” for example, the use of corporal punishment as a form of correction for children’s undesired behavior which remains legal in many countries; denied rights, goods, institutions, and services available to adults, solely on the basis of being children; and being excluded from decision-making and full citizenship rights. Not all adults are equal, however, and rather than setting up a simplistic and oppositional relationship between adults and children, it is necessary to consider the way that generation intersects with processes of gendering and racialization in and between classed societies. Thus, the final premise of this chapter is that “(early) childhood” does not refer to a homogenous group of people, undifferentiated by other crosscutting socio-spatial relations. From this perspective, childhood is not only impacted by the generational order, but it is also differentiated, based on the way that racism, sexism, and global capitalism impact the construction, organization, and status of childhood and, indeed, children’s lived experiences.

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### **3 Play as a Site Where Subjectivities Are Lived and Negotiated**

*Children’s interactions are not preparation for life; they are life itself.* (Thorne 1993, p. 3)

As an inter-corporeal and intersubjective form of action with both real and imagined others, play is a space in which meanings are held up for collective interrogation, contestation, and reformulation. “To play,” as the sociologist Henricks (2006, p. 185) puts it, “is to take on the world, to take it apart, and

frequently to build it anew.” As such, a small, but significant, body of literature within childhood studies and the “reconceptualist” early childhood scholarship have turned its attention to young children’s play as a site where subjectivities are lived and negotiated. Although traversing different disciplinary fields and paradigmatic assumptions, this literature shares three general assumptions.

### 3.1 Play Is Part of, Not Outside of, the Quotidian World

This literature counters a view of play as a pre-social space of unsullied childhood innocence with a conceptualization of play as deeply situated within the quotidian world. Childhood scholars critique the consignment of play to a “romanticized” (Ailwood 2003) and segregated world of childhood, a time where a child should be able to just “be a child,” free from what is considered to be the pressures and corrupting influences of adult society. Treating both play and the “the child” as “natural” in this way masks the way that play varies across different contexts and hegemonic ideas shape what is considered “natural” (Grieshaber and McArdle 2010). These scholars draw attention to the relationship between play themes, characters, and characteristics and changing sociopolitical and economic contexts. Cross-cultural studies have consistently noted differences in children’s play which is linked to the organization of production and consumption in a given social milieu (e.g., see Göncü and Gaskins 2006). In reevaluating data from a comparison of children’s play in six countries in the 1950s to 1970s, for instance, Edwards (2005) points out that cross-cultural differences are in large part based on the way that daily provisioning activities are organized. Compared with children in the five other countries, child research participants from Okinawa, Japan, engaged in the most “role-play,” a play categorized as imitating the activity of adults in their environment. These children were not expected to engage in “work” alongside adults. Children in Nyansongo, Kenya, on the other hand, engaged in the least amount of “role-play.” This was, as Edwards (2005, p. 19) suggests, “probably because children there participated earliest and most heavily in real adult work and therefore did not need to practice through acting out.”

This scholarship has also focused on the ways in which play is deeply embedded within gendered and generational – and to a lesser extent racialized and classed – social orders as it is encountered and enacted in micro, face-to-face practices. Saltmarsh (2009), for example, examines the way that young children in an Australian early childhood setting made use of their knowledge of popular culture icons such as Spider-Man, claims of ownership of related consumer products, and the playful embodiment of these characters in an attempt to ensure success in negotiating unequal power relations with both peers and adults. This success, she argues, relies on the emergence of neoliberal “economic subjectivities” where consumptive practices are equated with identities and where producing the recognizable self increasingly takes place “within the normative terms of the market” (Saltmarsh 2009, p. 52).

### 3.2 Beyond Socialization: Making Subjectivities and Socio-spatial Relations

At the same time as highlighting the highly situated and socially structured nature of play, a second shared assumption in this recent scholarship is that young children are not just passively molded by broader social forces or the more immediate adults in their lives. No longer is play viewed as an act of imitation or simulation of the adult world, a space of preparation for the “real” social world. Instead, play is viewed as “one of the means of making [the social world]. . .and operating in it” and is viewed as a “(communicative) resource for participation in everyday life” (Standell 1997, p. 448). Through their play, young children actively negotiate (often unequal) socio-spatial relations, including by enacting, policing, and resisting reified identities. In these accounts, play is viewed as both a site of subjection and social action, with varying degrees of agency and transformation attributed to both children’s acts and the nature of play itself (a point returned to in the conclusion).

The work of William Corsaro (1985, 2009) is seminal in this shifting view of young children’s play, particularly in the context of early childhood settings. Corsaro has developed the concept of “interpretive reproduction” to highlight children’s creative and productive participation in society, including through playful activity, in contrast to deterministic perspectives which view children as adults in the making and consign children to internalize existing culture. Interpretive reproduction refers to the process whereby children take ideas and information from the “adult world,” and in the process of answering their own questions and concerns, they make these understandings their own (interpretation). Crucially here, this notion shifts the attention away from individual development and toward group practices among and between groups of children as they “make” socio-spatial relations and subjectivities.

Scholarship concerned with the relationship between injustice and subjectivities points to three interrelated processes of interpretive reproduction. First, reified identities in the quotidian world are called upon to place limits on the imagined characters and narratives individual children can play at. For instance, Skattebol’s (2005, p. 193) action research in an early childhood center in Australia demonstrates the way that a group of boys established group cohesion “through the naming of outsiders as a common enemy.” In the case of play involving themes with “goodies” and “baddies,” she points to the way that being a “goodie” in the play narrative became associated with Whiteness; boys of color were positioned as “baddies,” risking rejection from the play if they refused such positioning. Löfdahl and Hägglund’s (2006a) Swedish research highlighted similar findings in relation to generationed markers such as age and size.

These examples point to the ways in which reified identities in the quotidian world may be used as the constitutive limit for possible play characters. Reified identities have also been found to limit participation in particular play narratives, a second aspect of children’s peer culture productions of socio-spatial relations in play. For instance, narratives of home and domesticity are often limited to those

positioned as feminine and superhero play to those positioned as masculine (e.g., see Browne 2004; Davies 1989; Giugni 2006). Where these gendered categorizations of play narratives are transgressed, for instance, when boys enter the home corner, they are often positioned in “masculine” roles as fathers and provider as opposed to shifting naturalized gendered assumptions about care and domestic labor.

A third aspect relates to the limitations and possibilities for what play characters symbolize or can do within play scripts. Scholars point to the ways in which characters themselves are ascribed to particular abilities and dispositions based on hegemonic discourses operating beyond play, despite the fantastical nature of play in which one acts in the “enacted subjunctive” (Sutton-Smith 1997, p. 29) of possibility and an “as if” or “what if” attitude (Edmiston 2008). As a girl in Blaise’s (2005a, p. 101) study of an American kindergarten commented, she liked to play as being a brother in the playhouse because: “I can be um, be stronger and do more things. You get to do more stuff, be cool, and it’s easier.” Similarly, arguments over the coveted role of “mother” often erupt highlighting the operations of heteronormativity which, even within play, constrain the possibilities of having “two mommies” or challenging traditional and dichotomized gender roles within the family (Taylor and Richardson 2005).

Madrid and Kantor’s (2009) ethnographic research in an early childhood setting in an American preschool exemplifies the relationship between these three aspects of negotiating subjectivities within peer culture play. They document the emergence of recurrent play theme of “kitties” among a group of five girls, noting the ways in which being “kitty” became a highly gendered role only possible to be played by those positioned as girls in the setting. Boys who sought to join this play were allowed to be “dogs” or the savior of the kitties, never a kitten themselves. The kitty play narratives often included highly gendered activity including domestic encounters and attention to appearance and beauty. In this way characters and narrative possibilities were informed by reified identities in the quotidian world. When the girls, as kitty, tried to enter other children’s play, their gendered form framed the types of actions the character engaged in, particularly when enacted in relation to play which was gendered as masculine. For instance, when the kitties attempted to join the superhero play of a group of boys in the setting, they became “trapped” or “lost” kitties to be “owned,” protected, and saved, thus enacting a traditional form of passive femininity. This was not merely a position of powerlessness, however; the researchers document how some of the girls used the vulnerable kitty role to maintain the narrative, for instance, not allowing themselves to be saved which would have brought the play to an end. Albeit that this kitty play reproduced normative ideas about gender as a dichotomized position with naturalized dispositions and capabilities, children in this setting created a complex set of associations between animals and gender underscoring Corsaro’s (2005) argument that children’s peer culture activities are culturally innovative.

Indeed, over the past three decades, childhood scholars have documented the ways in which children not only reproduce social orders but also use play as a site to resist, question, and transgress reified identities and the inequities these are

produced by and productive of. Taylor and Richardson (2005), for instance, explore the ways in which children in an Australian preschool not only enacted but occasionally subverted heteronormativity. They note, for example, the ways in which child players moved fluidly between being princesses, horses, ponies, and “real” selves “unfettered by the constraints of gender or species alignments” with their reified ascriptions of dispositions and capacities (Taylor and Richardson 2005, p. 170). For these scholars, the playful movement between characters was transformative in that it countered a sense of subjectivity as stable with only binary options available.

Central to claims that play can be a site of transformation, and even emancipation, is the nature of ludic activity. Play is often cited as a site where children are able to exercise a great deal of agency because existing social and physical rules do not necessarily apply and because of its unpredictability which necessarily means that responses cannot be preplanned or prepared. As a result, Edmiston (2008) argues that play – and his focus is on adult-child “mythic play” – is a context for exploring ethical issues and, by extension, constructing ethical identities. Such identities, according to Edmiston (2008, p. 20), are “frameworks for evaluating how they [children] ought to identify with other people and act in the world.” He suggests that because mythic play is often emotionally intense and involves “stark choices” and extreme consequences, players are compelled to consider timeless questions about the nature of life and death, right and wrong, and good and evil. As play characters, children can be evil, brutal, or dominating (or not) in imagined worlds, allowing ethical exploration of the consequences of their actions on other characters in the play.

Other scholars attend to the way that children’s negotiations of subject positions challenge sedimented relations of power. Nowhere is this more strongly identified than in terms of generation where children’s play is viewed as actively resisting asymmetrical adult-child socio-spatial relations (Löfdahl and Hägglund 2006b; Standell 1997; Sutton-Smith 1997). Such scholarship is often inspired by Corsaro’s (1985) argument that in peer culture play, children attempt to gain control over their lives, where authority is largely exercised by adults, through producing a shared identity as children. He argues that children accomplish this via a number of means including collectively evading or overturning adult rules in such a way that their actions become routinely accepted by adults, evidence of both children’s active contributions to the social world and challenges to adult-child power relations. He notes, for example, that although toys from home are often banned in early childhood settings, children often smuggle them in to play with, collectively concealing the toys from the educators’ view. As a result, in his American research, even when educators saw these banned toys, they did not confiscate them because the children’s collaboration to evade notice meant the toys were no longer the source of fights between children – the original cause of the ban. Effectively then, the children’s collective action challenged the setting rules and adults as the sole decision-makers.

### 3.3 Beyond Play: The Import and Impact of Play

A final assumption shared by this recent childhood literature is that what happens in play does not remain locked inside imagined worlds. Playing is understood as participating in, contributing to, and influencing the quotidian world including young children's subjectivities beyond singular play episodes. As Davies (1989, p. 18) contends in her seminal work on gender and young children's play, what is made possible in play becomes possible in the quotidian, with both imagined and everyday selves "lending meaning to the other." The characters and narratives children play are a part of their inter-corporeal and intersubjective experiences in the world and are experienced as a "cultural reality" (Edmiston 2008). Play is a site where socio-spatial relations are made.

Through the negotiations undertaken in play, such as those discussed above, players collectively develop ideas about who can do and be what and work to organize their social worlds on this basis. In this way, the frame of play is used to negotiate and produce consequential ideas about gender, sexuality, and aggression as well as other sets of socio-spatial relations. In what Thorne (1993) refers to as "borderwork" and Davies (1989) terms "category maintenance work," children often strive to strengthen the boundaries between seemingly opposite and antagonistic subject positions. MacNaughton (2000) argues, for example, that boys often use physical prowess and playful acts of aggression to impress each other and make friends, thereby forming play groupings which reiterate particular forms of hegemonic masculinity by marking difference or distance from those themes, dispositions, and actions coded as feminine. Category maintenance work also happens when children are rebuffed or excluded because they play at characters which are seemingly in opposition to their bodily markers or their characters' attempt to engage in activity which violates ascribed characteristics. In this way, children produce a sense of the "correct" ways to be as well as the potential consequences of their violation.

Power struggles within play also have impact beyond the internal play episodes. Childhood research has noted how children draw on both their extra-play positioning and attempting to use the status of their ludic characters to exert influence such as who is included or who makes decisions about play narratives (e.g., Grieshaber and McArdle 2010; Löfdahl 2006; MacNaughton 2000). In her study of Australian preschools, Blaise (2005), for instance, notes the way that children often choose to be particular characters in play because of the power and status represented by the character. Through playing children also construct ideas about the types of authority particular characters can assume and the influence they can effect. Blaise documents the way that girls in the setting spent a great deal of time playing at "getting ready," putting on dresses, jewelry, and makeup to make themselves "beautiful." These actions were recognized by both peers and adults: girls who engaged in such play were praised as well as included in and influential over others' play. Those who did not, or played at gender differently, were often ignored or

excluded from play. Childhood scholars point out that these decisions within play contexts impact on children's subjectivities beyond play, as children experience and enact conventions about the ways in which different subject positions impact on the possibilities for recognition, decision-making, inclusion, and participation.

Finally, childhood research has drawn attention to the ways in which the characters children play may become "fixed" onto them beyond play, inscribed as essentialized aspects of their personhood when they coincide with reified assumptions about the raced, classed, and gendered body. Rosen (2015c), for instance, demonstrates the way that the enactment of monster characters in play was interpreted, coded, and valued in racialized ways in an English early childhood setting. Being a monster in play was treated as a skillful and creative act by two White boys, while two Black boys were discursively linked to the monstrous characters they enacted in play, despite the fact that there were not consistent and continuous qualitative differences in the four boys' play. She argues that the inscription of the monstrous characters relates to the racialization of Black, working class masculinity as monstrous other. Play, then, is no trivial matter; it is implicated in the organization of the situated social orders of early childhood settings and often shores up reified identities beyond play.

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## 4 Geographies of Play Subjectivities

*Playing is both constitutive of and performed within a range of space-times* (Harker 2005, p. 59)

The previous section examined young children's play as a site where subjectivities are lived and made through players' collective actions. In turning to the geographies of such play, the following section will underscore the relationship between space-time, territory, and the body with young children's subjectivities. It will review recent childhood scholarship that considers what the spaces of play make possible (or impossible), how material spaces are conscripted into and shaped by play, as well as the implications for negotiations of subject positions and socio-spatial relations.

### 4.1 Generationing the Time-Space of Play

Since the end of the nineteenth century in advanced capitalist countries, play has increasingly been constituted as a central, if not primary, activity of early childhood. Aries (1962) documents the way that children and adults generally partook in and enjoyed the same games, toys, and playful activities in the Middle Ages in Europe, but by the late seventeenth century, this began to change. Aries (1962, p. 71) contends that "childhood was becoming the repository of customs abandoned by the adults" with increasing distinctions made between playful activities that had earlier been common across age and class.



These changes relate to increasing demographic shifts and industrialization (Gillis 2011; Qvortrup 1995) as well as shifting public sentiments, with childhood increasingly sacralized as a time to be protected at all costs (Zelizer 1994). In this context, play began to be viewed as a “character-building enterprise” (Saltmarsh 2015, p. 96), strongly linked to a rhetoric of “play as progress” which has achieved a particularly hegemonic status since the late nineteenth century (Sutton-Smith 1997). In the progress rhetoric, play often becomes conflated with childhood and indeed is viewed as a preeminent mode of learning and development for children in areas as far ranging as literacy and problem-solving, peer relations, as well as national and civic “virtues.” For instance, Norcia (2004, p. 309) documents the way that domestic games and play served as “an important role for initiating [British] children into their imperial responsibilities.” Play was also viewed as a “moral corrective” (Saltmarsh 2015, p. 96) for working class and immigrant children as part of a larger child-saving movement. For example, Frost (2010, p. 69) documents middle-class attempts to “rescue,” both physically and morally children who were living in severe and hazardous conditions in American cities from the mid-1800s; the creation of play spaces in schools, nurseries, and public playgrounds through philanthropic activity was viewed as “provid[ing] play for delinquents and homeless children who had no safe outlets for their natural ‘animal’ energy.” Such playgrounds were also highly gendered spaces designed to produce the “ideal citizen,” argues Gagen (2000, p. 219); in segregated spaces boys were encouraged to play sports to learn discipline and how to obey authority, while “girls were prepared for domestic duty” through sewing and other crafts for doll play.

In the contemporary, play, argue Pellegrini and Boyd (1993, p. 105), has become “an almost hallowed concept for teachers of young children.” The point here is that young children’s play in early childhood settings takes place within highly structured settings, largely designed and ordered by adults in order to achieve certain instrumental ends (Ailwood 2003). In the neoliberal era, pedagogies of play are concerned with producing certain types of human capital: “school-ready” learners and employment-ready future adults (Dahlberg and Moss 2005). The provision of particular types of resources, often those considered to be age and “developmentally appropriate,” and scheduling for “adult-led” or “free play” time are examples of spatial-temporal disciplining which requires children to be, as Holloway and Valentine (2000, p. 772) argue, “in the right place, at the right time, to learn the right things.” This pedagogization of play, argues Bernstein (1975, p. 24), “gives rise to a total – but invisible – surveillance of the child, because it relates his [sic] inner dispositions to all his external acts.” Indeed, surveillance is a central part of spatial-temporal disciplining in early childhood settings in the Anglophone North. Settings often employ an open plan style allowing for virtually unobstructed observation. Combined with the extensive use of checklists and assessment forms evaluating children’s play in relation to various typologies, children’s lives – including their play – are subjected to scrutiny, regulation, and normalizing efforts (e.g., Ailwood 2003; Dahlberg and Moss 2005; Holligan 2000).

Childhood scholars draw attention to contradictions within the rhetoric of “play as progress” and point to a number of implications for generational relations and

subjectivities. While play has been increasingly constructed as fundamentally a space of learning and of childhood, “good play” – namely, that which meets predetermined learning outcomes – is seen to require training by adults or at very least their regulatory presence in order to maximize the learning potential (e.g., see Smilansky 1990 on “play tutoring”). Rogers and Lapping (2012) point out another paradox in relation to dominant framings of play as an unsullied space of childhood fun, innocence, and learning upon which progress narratives are built. In contrast, pedagogies of play, they argue, offer adults the hope of “taming” play that is viewed as incoherent, disruptive, or transgressive, as well as play that “gets stuck” (Rosen 2015a) in seemingly purposeless or repetitive action. Overall, the progress rhetoric, argues Sutton-Smith (1997, p. 49), “provide[s] rationalization for the adult control of children’s play.”

Through the provision of age-segregated spaces, filled with resources and materials which connote “play” and “pretend,” early childhood settings are examples of generationed time-spaces. They create particular subject positions for young child – namely, as “natural” and “good” (or “bad”) players and by extension learners – oppositional to and segregated from the world of adulthood (Ailwood 2003; Standell 1997). The corollary here is that children who do not play in expected ways are viewed as unchildlike or a deficit in some manner. Brooker’s (2010, p. 49) study of children’s family and institutional experiences of a diverse group of children in an early childhood setting in England considers the implications of contrasts between play-based educational curriculum and home “learning cultures.” In contrast to active participation in family life and successful participation in explicit tuition at home in the evenings, a young Bangladeshi child was evaluated by educators in the setting as “unresponsive” to adult invitations to play or “choose” and therefore “unready” for learning opportunities on offer.

Many childhood scholars are not content, however, to leave the constitution of space solely to adults and consider the ways in which children, alongside other children and adults, are involved in producing play territories. They point to the ways in which generationed spaces created through spatial-temporal disciplining are subject to incursions, border crossings, and reconfigurations. Based on research about toddlers in a Scottish early childhood setting, Gallacher (2005) demonstrates that although the nursery was a site of control and regulation of young children, it was also a space which young children reconfigure including through peer culture play. Children in the setting were classified and separated into age groupings by both physical boundaries and schedules which ensured that different aged groupings were never in shared spaces at the same time. Despite its open plan, the toddler room was also classified by adults into different areas of activity through subtle indicators, such as area carpets. Notwithstanding the permeable boundaries between these spaces, there were marked expectations for activities within them: particular areas were designated for “messy play” and others for quiet activities such as reading and napping. These areas were closely monitored by adult educators when children used them for other purposes. Gallacher notes, however, that the toddlers in the center developed an “underlife” which reconfigured this adult-controlled space. Often when children were doing what was considered

“good-quality” imaginative play, they were able to transgress the spatial-temporal disciplining. For instance, they were able to play in spaces that were normally considered off-limits, including the kitchens but also spaces which were ostensibly open but had been designated as “nonplay” areas such as the snack, book, and music areas. In some cases, these child players were even supported by educators in continuing such “transgressive activity” (Gallacher 2005, p. 260), for example, when adults joined the play.

Given the extent of adult control over where, when, and how children are expected to play in early childhood settings, it is not unsurprising that many studies have documented the ways in which children find or make hidden spaces to play in away from adult surveillance. Here, children make use of the physical affordances of spaces which limit the presence of larger (typically adult) bodies. For instance, Corsaro (1985) found that high spaces were favored in play as a way to gain temporary control away from adults, and Gallacher (2005) documents the ways in which toddlers used a plastic house with restricted sight lines as a place to engage in types of play which were generally disapproved of in the setting. The use of hidden spaces has particularly been noted in relation to play that is forbidden or tightly monitored, such as play about themes of sexuality (Robinson and Davies 2010; Tobin 1997), play which violates setting rules that “anyone can join” (Skanfors et al. 2009), and weapon and superhero play (Holland 2003; Jordan 1995). In some cases such play is not explicitly banned, but children may be well aware of its controversial status. For instance, in Galbraith’s (2007) ethnographic study in an American preschool, children often engaged in superhero play in hidden spaces despite the fact that such play was not banned in the setting. In using hidden spaces, children may collectively resist adult authority; however, they also involved in reproducing generationed spaces and subjectivities where adulthood and childhood are constituted as dichotomous and separate spheres, the former related to authority and the latter to play.

## 4.2 Play Territories and Subjectivities

Scholars of early childhood geographies draw attention to the implications of such spatial configurations and reconfigurations in play for young children’s subjectivities, including but not limited to processes of generationing. Scholarship focuses on affordances (conceptualized in post-humanist accounts as the “agency” of materiality) and cultural coding of spaces and objects, the processes of boundary making, and aspects of embodiment.

Although play can be understood as an activity which “transforms” the world (Henricks 2006), rather than being trapped within its material and social constraints, particular territories and objects within early childhood settings have affordances which make themselves felt within play. Spaces which evoke culturally embedded meanings are often particularly constraining. The “home corner” is often cited as a particularly coded space in early childhood settings, “with its decidedly straight, white, and middle-class aesthetic” (Taylor and Richardson 2005, p. 166).

This coding can help to explain findings in other studies whereby the “home corner” becomes primarily the domain of girls’ play, where the enactment of the adult status of motherhood in a space reified as a woman’s domain is employed as a way to try and exercise power over others (Walkerdine 1990). It can also help to explain why such spaces are often avoided by boys (Blaise 2005), with boys allowed in if they take on roles which enact traditional forms of masculinity (Browne 2004; Davies 1989).

Änggård (2011) points out that spaces which are less culturally coded in relation to particular play themes may afford less traditional narratives or open up character possibilities. In her study of play in a natural outside area of a Swedish preschool, she documents the ways in which family play themes were more open to boys in the setting and family narratives were less circumscribed by dichotomous gendered roles or even the gendering of characters (e.g., girls played as “fathers” in the play). In contrast, in “war and superhero” play in the outdoors, children maintained rigid enactments of gender, and girls’ participation in such play was heavily policed, neither desired nor permitted. She contends that the forested area where the children played was less inscribed by social conventions about the family and therefore afforded more possibilities for pushing at or transgressing norms in these narratives, while the area – with its expansive terrain as well as natural hiding and vantage points – was easily assimilated into the aggressive, loud, and physical masculinity associated with war and superhero narratives.

Toys, clothing, furniture, and other objects also become culturally coded, potentially affording influence and power for the children who use them. In Davies’ (1989) research, for example, when children were challenged or faced aggression from others in play, they often put on clothing coded as “masculine” as a way to defend, protect, and assert themselves. Löfdahl (2006) argues, however, that although resources do become status laden, they do not, on their own, accord the player with more influence or power. In her study of a Swedish early childhood setting, claiming high status props or characters did not have the same result for all children. While being king and wearing a crown was a coveted position and a marker of authority beyond the setting in the preschool – where age was a significant marker of hierarchy – a king could be accorded low status if the role was assigned to or taken up by a younger child.

Play not only acquires particular boundaries, forms, and meanings within situated time-space, but it also creates time-space (Harker 2005). This happens, for example, when players develop narratives of growth, temporality, and change with their own play internal rules for the pace and progression of time. Players also carve out and produce imagined worlds using pillows, blocks, sheets, furniture, and other resources. These imagined worlds exist simultaneously with the quotidian world, and therefore, play itself requires a particular boundary to distinguish it, what Bateson (1973) refers to as a “play frame” created by meta-communicative efforts of the players, for example, through laughter or stylized exhibits such as the “play face.” Albeit that the boundaries between play and the quotidian are fragile and uncertain, perhaps best understood as a “tension-filled space” (Henricks 2006, p. 218) where play and imagined worlds are experienced simultaneously and only

very porously bounded, scholars agree that play is only possible if someone or something responds and interprets actions within a “play frame”; otherwise the play space itself fractures.

Thomson and Philo (2004, p. 117) point out that while children may, to a large extent, have play spaces imposed on them which are “over coded with adult values,” children themselves are involved in the production of bounded play territories. These boundaries may be both physical and social. This has been discussed above in terms of the generationing of space and subjectivity, but it is also taken up by childhood scholars in relation to the diversities of and inequities between children. Danby and Baker (1998), for instance, note the way that a local version of masculinity was constructed through boundary making, incursions, and exclusions in the “block play area” in an Australian preschool. Noting that the block area is coded as a masculine area in many early childhood settings (e.g., MacNaughton 1997), given its affordances for building and demonstrations of strength and physical prowess, they document a “ritual” that was enacted as older boys excluded younger ones from the play space. Using both the physical boundaries around the area and the use of verbal, sonic, and physical means – including the presence of bodies, displays of strength and size, demolition of block constructions, and pushing – the older boys denied the younger boys access to the space. In the immediate term, this effected the exclusion of the young boys, but Danby and Baker (1998, p. 158) argue that in the longer term these borders shifted; over time, some of the younger boys used these same rituals of hegemonic masculinity to exclude others.

The boundaries of play territories are also established and policed via access to and displays of forms of knowledge which achieve status in the high-stakes negotiations of peer cultures. Giugni (2006, p. 101), in her Australian study, documents the way a group of boys in an early childhood setting used knowledge of valued cultural icons as ways of impressing each other, gaining entry into the peer group and, simultaneously, “creat[ing] each other as powerful and knowing.” For instance, in the midst of a playful discussion and enactment of superheroes, one child introduced Jesus. Although causing an “epistemological stutter” for those children who were not as familiar with Christianity, by endowing Jesus with sufficiently “super” characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity, he was able to maintain his place in the friendship group and play territory.

These examples, where knowledge displays act as a form of boundary making around peer groups, highlight that the creation of play territories can be understood as productive of subjectivities of belonging and participation at the same time as being productive of reified, and inequitable, identities in highly stratified spaces. Corsaro (1985) stresses the importance of boundaries in terms of children’s efforts at belonging, arguing that actions which are often considered by adults to violate important rules of sharing and inclusion are better understood as children’s efforts to protect interactive spaces. Given the fragility of play, as well as the difficulty of gaining acceptance to friendship groups, the entry of others can be potentially disruptive to the (relatively more predictable) shared interactions already under way.

Childhood scholars also point to the incursions and transgressions of boundaries, highlighting that where boundaries are maintained this is the result of sustained social action as well as a positionality which, within the peer culture, authorizes the making and sustaining of such borders. It has been noted, for example, that control over space and its partitioning is linked to class, gender, and race with implications for children's negotiations of play territories. Like others (e.g., Thorne 1993), Rogers and Evans (2008, p. 103) found that across three English early childhood settings, boys tended to use larger spaces for imaginative play, while girls tended to play within educator-designated boundaries. They also document the "colonization" of space in ways which reproduced active, expansive, and physical forms of masculinity, documenting the ways in which certain boys "invaded" and "deliberatively [disrupted]" spaces where girls were playing. In some cases, this was done in an attempt to join the pre-existing play, and at other times it had the effect, if not the intention, of taking over the play territory. Despite protests, the boundaries which had been enacted by girls did not serve to protect the interactive space in these instances but were notably transfigured through the enactment of gendered power relations. Having a sense of entitlement or the right to own, occupy, and control space is not only a manifestation of gendered socio-spatial relations, Skattebol (2005, p. 192) argues, but of "Whiteness," generated through a history of colonialism. She documents the ways in which children in an early childhood setting in Australia – both in storytelling and play narratives – demonstrated varying levels of such entitlement with children whose families "held considerable power bureaucratically or academically and were generally 'white'" and most able to position themselves in order to colonize play territories.

### 4.3 Play as Embodied Action

This chapter has already highlighted the ways in which children's bodies are both read as and inscribed with reified dispositions, abilities, and characteristics with real material consequences, notably the way that bodily markers are used as means for character assignment, exclusion, and practices of belonging. Scholars point out that the body is also something people "do," including in and around play. In some cases, children do the body in an attempt to position themselves in ways which might gain them access to play or influence the play space. Not all aspects of corporeality are equally malleable, however. Efforts to do the body do not literally affect somatic growth nor are all efforts to do the body equally recognizable given the reification of bodily markers. However, James (2000, p. 35) suggests that the body can be "temporarily" at least "controlled" through the act of presentation. For example, in her Australian research, Skattebol (2006) notes the way a boy who was new to the setting made verbal claims to male exclusivity such as "boys don't play with girls" or "only boys play with trucks and cars." However, the culture of the setting, with its emphasis on gender equity, meant that this strategy was not successful. After some time, the child was able to form a group of boys to play with by "doing" his body in a way that conveyed high status attributes of age and

maturity: by lounging, looking disinterested, and “hanging out,” he enacted a particular form of masculine “teenage culture” and “butch masculinity” which appealed to some of the other boys in the setting.

In other cases children do the body within play as part of their enactment of ludic characters with repercussions beyond singular play episodes. Browne (2004, p. 90) draws on her study of English early childhood settings to argue that the use of embodied movement demonstrative of virility and strength, colonization of vast spaces, and pretend physical aggression was:

... a potent signifier of gender and as such not only influences how others begin to position the boys but also develops the boys’ understanding of what their bodies have the potential to do and what their bodies can and should do to reflect their positioning as ‘masculine’.

The repercussions of these embodied acts in play, she argues, are that “while the boys are experiencing power the girls and women are experiencing being dominated” (Browne 2004, p. 92).

Scholars have also noted the ways in which children use play to use their bodies to evade setting rules or challenge setting expectations. Hellman et al.’s (2014) study of two Swedish preschools highlights the intersections of competence, age, and gender and documents the ways in which the term “baby” became a key signifier for lack of capability and low status. While children generally made significant efforts to avoid being labeled a baby by other children or teachers, in some cases they attempted to use this to their advantage. By playfully embodying “babyhood” – through crying, whining, and thumb-sucking – some children attempted to win the advantages they associated with being small such as avoiding responsibility for cleaning up.

Play is also a deeply embodied experience involving somatic engagement between bodies. Play, to varying degrees, involves movement, stasis, and close proximity where entangled bodies in close spaces make breath, scent, sound, and touch central to the experience. However, as Harker (2005) points out, the sensuous materiality of bodies is often omitted from play scholarship, in part because of the difficulties of representation. Renold and Mellor (2013, p. 25) make such an attempt. In working with Deleuze and Guattari, they draw attention to the “sounds and silences” of a Welsh early childhood setting to argue that subjectivity can best be understood as a “collective and connected affective assemblage of other bodies and things” including the acoustic. They draw attention, for example, to the gendered sounds of “clip-clopping” high-heeled shoes, the “swishing of princess dresses,” and the sound of hammering to the tune of “Bob the Builder” which reconstitute gendered assumptions when experienced in connection with the visual. For example, the “swishing” sound was “deterritorialized” when one boy slipped by in a princess dress, highlighting not just the multiple subject positions but the “multiplicities,” both human and otherwise, that exist in every moment. Standell (1997) and Rosen (2015b) also consider the importance of the sonic in children’s playful negotiations of subjectivity. Both point to the ways in which soundscapes of early childhood settings are sites of generational struggle, highlighting examples



where children's sonic reverberations in play move between and around their bodies with the intense resonances building a sense of collective subjectivity through an amplification of group emotion and embodied relationality.

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## 5 Conclusion

This chapter has offered a review of scholarship within childhood studies which considers play as a site where children's subjectivities are lived and negotiated. A significant tension running through the chapter relates to questions of social justice and equity. Childhood scholarship varies on the extent to which play is viewed as a decisive site of children's agency as opposed to a highly constrained site of action and the degree to which play reproduces relations of domination or can be understood as emancipatory. Two factors seem noteworthy in terms of the degree to which scholars place themselves closer to one end of this continuum than the other.

Firstly, those who emphasize the generational order and adult-child relations tend to place more stress on play as a space where children are able to develop collective identities of resistance; as a result, they present a more emancipatory vision of play. Scholars who attend to differences *between* children and negotiations of other types of socio-spatial relations (e.g., gender and race) tend to emphasize play as embedded within and reproductive of inequitable socio-spatial relations.

Secondly, the nature of the relationship posited between play and the quotidian is significant. To the extent that scholars underscore play as a space of open possibility, the ludic can be understood as a realm particularly suited to the reimagining and remaking of socio-spatial relations. Those who stress the time-space situatedness of play stress its role in reconstituting inequitable socio-spatial relations. Relatedly, the extent to which scholars emphasize the distinction or continuity between play and quotidian subjectivities has an effect. Scholars who stress the continuities tend to argue that playing at characters which are violent, aggressive, and/or denigrate to others has similar effects in the imaginary and quotidian, serving to reproduce inequities. Scholars who underscore the distinctiveness of the ludic lean toward a view of play as an emancipatory space suggesting, for instance, that playing at and with such characters and narratives allows players to consider the political and ethical impact of their characters' actions and ways to resist reified identities and social injustice.

In seeking to move beyond this impasse, future research could benefit from intersectional approaches which provide a framework for foregrounding the relationship of generational orders with those of class, race, and gender (notwithstanding the need for further interrogation of children's negotiations of race and class subjectivities and socio-spatial relations in play). Such an approach might provide a more nuanced account of the interplay between generationing and other stratifications of the time-space of play where, paradoxically, the conflation of childhood and play makes play a site of expertise and collectivity for children, the *relative* openness of play



compared to more rehearsed and sedimented practices in the quotidian, and play's potential for holding up and questioning the taken for granted – the recognition that players can make different socio-spatial relations, selves, and worlds in play is suggestive of the social constitution of the everyday world (Katz 2004). Secondly, scholarship might seek to account for times when play tips from reiterations of the status quo to more transformative actions, as well as when and how such potentials traverse from play into the quotidian world, theorizing the complexity of factors in which the emancipatory potentials of ludic activity might be realized. To this end, recent scholarship attending to the materiality of bodies in play – and their interconnections with the sensuous as well as symbolic world – offers some important lines of exploration, if only because this work points to the limitations of any attempt to analyze subjectivity, socio-spatial relations, and the possibilities of social transformation that does not take into account the “more than social” (Kraftl 2013).

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# Bus Stops and Toilets: identifying Spaces and Spaces of Identity for Indonesian Street Children

# 9

Harriot Beazley

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	164
2	Social and Spatial Apartheid .....	166
3	Survival Strategies .....	167
4	Time and Space .....	169
4.1	Street Children's Perceptions of Place and Use of Space .....	170
5	Mental Maps .....	171
6	Places as Pivotal Points .....	178
6.1	The Train Station .....	178
6.2	Malioboro .....	179
6.3	The Toilet .....	180
6.4	Alun- Alun .....	182
6.5	Surgawong: The "Paradise People" .....	183
6.6	Gerbong: "The Sex Place" .....	185
7	Meanings of Places .....	186
8	Conclusion .....	187
	References .....	188

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## Abstract

This chapter is an examination of the lives of street children in Yogyakarta, Indonesia during the era of the dictator President Soeharto (1966-1998). The children who participated in this research lived on the edge of society, facing multiple forms of social and spatial exclusion in their everyday lives. Strict state control resulted in rigorously controlled urban landscapes through a 'spatial apartheid' (White, 1996) and the capitalist 'colonisation' of public space as commercial or leisure space (Harvey, 1996). Homeless street children were

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perceived to be ‘out of place’, and to be committing a social violation by transgressing what was considered to be appropriate behaviour for children. In the eyes of state authorities and mainstream society, such an offense justified the ‘cleansing’ of street children from the streets, arrests, imprisonment and in some cases torture and extermination. Public space, however, is an essential means of survival for street children, and during the time of this research it was vital to their very existence that the children found spaces in the city in which they could survive, even if it was a marginal place like a bus stop or public toilet. The chapter describes how despite their subordination and stigmatisation, homeless street boys constructed alternative geographies by appropriating spaces in the city in which they were able to earn money, sleep, feel safe and form a community. Specifically, the chapter examines the spatial expressions of the street children subculture, the *Tekyan*, exploring their territorial issues; how they identified with particular areas for different activities; and how their identities, including their sexual identities, shifted in relation to their social and spatial settings. The chapter reveals how the ‘fluidity’ of these spaces, and the flexibility of the children to shift from one place to another at a moment’s notice, ensured their survival (Massey, 1994, Pile, 1997).

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**Keywords**

Leisure activities • Mental maps • Street children • Indonesia • Jalan Malioboro • Mental maps • Social and spatial apartheid • Survival strategies • Time and space • Yogyakarta

If we are to understand the process by which resistance is developed and codified, the analysis of off stage social spaces becomes a vital task. Only by specifying how such social spaces are made up and defended is it possible to move from the individual resisting subject- an abstract fiction- to the socialization of resistant practices and discourses. (Scott 1990: 118–119)

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## 1 Introduction

This chapter is based on a PhD research conducted during the 1990s with homeless street children and youth, in the city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The chapter draws on work published elsewhere (see Beazley (2000) in Bridge and Watson (2000): 472–488). The research was conducted during the reign of the dictator President Soeharto (1966–1998) and explored the lives of homeless street boys and youth in Yogyakarta as a subculture, who called themselves the *Tekyan* (Beazley 2003a, b). (The name *Tekyan* came from the Javanese “*sedikit tapi lumayan*” meaning “a little but enough.”) The research found that the *Tekyan* were both spatially and socially oppressed by the state and mainstream society through multiple forms of social control, marginalization, and powerlessness and that everyday life for them was like living in enemy territory (Beazley 2003a). In spite of their marginalization,

however, public space was also a means of survival for street children, as it was where they could access resources in order to survive. Indeed it was vital to their very existence that they found spaces in the city to exist, even if it was a marginal space like a public toilet or a bus stop. Such appropriation of space by subordinate groups has been described as the “carving out” and the “chiseling away” of spaces of control from the margins of power (Sibley 1995; Scott 1990; Huang and Yeoh 1996). In the quotation above, Scott observes how the creation of a “hidden transcript” or subculture needs space in which to evolve. This is because it is through space that everyday experiences and identities are constructed, articulated, and enacted (Keith and Pile 1993:2). Similarly, Sibley (1995: 76) has pointed out that:

Control by dominating agents may be seen as complete, but there is always the possibility of subversion. We cannot understand the role of space in the reproduction of social relations without recognizing that the relatively powerless still have enough power to carve out spaces of control in respect of their day-to-day lives.

Spatialities are, therefore, essential not only to domination but also to resistance, as “resistance occurs in spaces beyond those defined by power relations” (Pile 1997: 26): in what Scott (1990: 118) refers to as “off-stage social spaces.” Thus, in order to understand the street children community during field work, it was vital to appreciate the social spaces that were won, created, and defended “in the teeth” of the Soeharto regime’s power.

Accordingly, this chapter explains the processes through which street children were socially and spatially excluded by the state and mainstream society and the spatial expressions of the street children’s subculture, including the ways in which their lives, experiences, attitudes, and earning opportunities were socially and spatially structured. It shows how, in response to their subordination, street children developed a repertoire of strategies which contributed to the formation of street children’s cultural space, the *Tekyan*, which included “actual room on the street” in which they could survive (Clarke et al. 1976: 45). These were spaces for coping that the children negotiated and constructed for themselves, within the marginal existence imposed on them by the state and mainstream society.

By exploring street children’s production and use of space as “geographies of resistance” (Pile and Keith 1997), this chapter identifies the spaces which street children in Yogyakarta “won” for their everyday survival, as their own specific urban niches in the city. This chapter demonstrates how street children’s geographies are transient and how their relationships with different spaces are complex as they interact with, negotiate around, and react against different social groups and outside forces. The children and youth who participated in the research were all homeless boys, aged between 9 and 17 years old. In order to understand their lives from their own perspective, a participatory research approach was adopted (see, e.g., Boyden and Ennew 1997; Punch 2002; van Blerk and Kesby 2008). Such an approach aimed to focus on children’s own perspectives of living on the streets, positioning the discussion within the discipline of the geographies of children and young people, a field that increasingly highlights the multiple identities and realities

that exist for children in the majority of the world (see Ansell (2005), who uses this term to redress the imbalance of perceptions held of children and young people in the “First” and “Third World,” by referring to these world areas as the “minority world” and “majority world.”) (Ansell 2005; van Blerk and Ansell 2006; Ansell and van Blerk 2007; Beazley 2003a; Punch 2007; Chakraborty 2009).

In this chapter, selected accounts of street children’s spatial stories are examined to map the spaces they occupied and to understand the various settings of their subculture. The investigation includes territory issues, how street children identify with particular areas for different activities, how their identities shift in relation to their spatial settings (Smith and Katz 1993), and the fluctuation of their activities through time and space. The analysis is achieved by examining street children’s “mental maps” which were collected as a participatory research exercise (Matthews 1986, 1992). The maps illustrate how the children’s social marginality was reflected in the places that they occupied and documents the images the children had of the city, in the context of their work, leisure, and other street associations. Informal interviews and poems written by the children that were published in a zine “*Jejal*” produced by the street children NGO *Girli* are also drawn on. Specific places which are symbolically rich in the children’s maps and drawings are explained as “pivotal points” which were essential to their identity formation, survival, and emotional well-being (Matthews 1992).

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## 2 Social and Spatial Apartheid

It is first important to appreciate the context in which street children lived during Soeharto’s regime and how the spaces which they occupied were severely restricted by multiple forms of social and spatial control. It can then be understood how the cultural spaces of street boys in Yogyakarta were created by their relations with authority (police, security guards, and army) and other groups on the street.

During Soeharto’s regime, social control and efforts to intervene in civil society were through the operation of surveillance systems, including the obligation to have an identity card (KTP). A KTP requires a birth certificate, a family register card, and a family address which most homeless children do not have. When children have no parents or family registration card, they are outside of the state-controlled system and officially do not exist. As a result, they are effectively “stateless” as they cannot enjoy the benefits of state acceptance such as the right to an identity, an education, a home, health care, or any other basic rights specified by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and ratified by Indonesia in 1990.

Street children in this study were also marginalized by the negative perceptions held by mainstream society, who viewed them as a social pariah infesting the city streets. Public spaces such as shopping centers were constructed as commercial spaces, where the new middle class did not wish to be confronted by poverty and dirty homeless children. Their presence was also perceived as a threat to national development, as it contradicted the desired image of a developing, modern nation, which the government and big businessmen wished to portray to potential foreign investors.



Through a discourse of deviance, street boys were presented by the state and the media as a defilement of public space, an underclass which needed to be eradicated, and as “criminal.” The construction of this criminal image was exemplified by the use of labels in the press such as *preman* (“hoodlum”) and GALI (*gabungan anak liar*, “gangs of wild children”) (see, e.g., Bouchier 1990).

Public spaces in the city of Yogyakarta were controlled in a way that has been described elsewhere by White (1996: 39) as “spatial apartheid based upon socio-economic status.” In Indonesia, street boys were frequently evicted from public places and faced the daily threat of violence and abuse by agencies of the state during their national ‘cleansing operations’. These operations were used as a means to “discipline and educate” street social life and to “eradicate street hooliganism and restore the public’s sense of security” in major cities. The children had their own word for these street raids: *garukan*. Police were responsible for confiscating and destroying street children’s means of livelihood (musical instruments and goods to sell) and for verbal abuse, severe beatings, torture in custody, and other mistreatment. “Cleansing” campaigns were often focused on bus terminals, train stations, shopping centers, and other public places commonly occupied by street boys, who were often caught in the “sweep” operations.

During the 1990s, detentions by police after “cleansing operations” sometimes resulted in death, and cases were documented where “suspected criminals” were shot attempting to flee from police (Bouchier 1990). It was reported that the police shot and killed hundreds of *suspected* criminals in major cities during anti-crime campaigns, including in Yogyakarta, and street children were shot in such crusades (Amnesty International 1995).

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### 3 Survival Strategies

Having established the context of their social and spatial exclusion, it is important to also gain a clear understanding of homeless street children’s daily lives and their activities on the street. By using the children’s survival strategies as an investigative device, their everyday practices and relationships to space can be revealed. The activities for street boys in Yogyakarta can be divided into three groups: working, looking for entertainment, and resting. Their behavior was linked to the children’s shifting identities as they moved around the city, which changed depending on who they were with, which spatial setting they were in, and the activity they were involved in. The children assumed a very different identity, for example, when they were trying to earn money on a bus or from tourists as a “street kid” or asking for free food from a food stall holder to when they were hanging out with their friends or having sex with a street girl, prostitute, or a transvestite.

With regard to work, there were distinct hierarchical levels and codes of ethics attached to all street children’s income-earning activities. The lowest level of work was seen to be begging. This was viewed by the children as lowly and shaming, as it did not conform to the *Tekyan* value of being independent (Beazley 2003b). Also seen as low status – although a higher status than begging – was scavenging for

recyclable materials. Shoeshining was the most common income-earning activity among younger street boys (aged 7–12) and was highly lucrative, especially for younger boys who played on the fact that they looked “cute.” Despite its high returns, however, shoeshining was considered to be only for young prepubescent boys, and they would stop shoeshining once they reached puberty and felt too old to do so. Other professions the boys engaged in were making and selling jewelry and busking. The most common instrument to busk with was a guitar, although the smaller children also busked with drums, tambourines, and *celek-celek* (a *celek-celek* is a small stick with metal bottle tops nailed in to it, like a rattle. Older boys refused to use them as they were seen as being no different to begging). Older boys were too shy to busk with anything other than a guitar. They busked at night in twos or threes along the main street, Malioboro, serenading people eating at the numerous night food stalls. In the daytime, they gathered at particular bus stops, waiting to board the buses to busk on board. The boys boarded the bus in pairs, introduced themselves as street children (*anak jalanan*) to the passengers, and one sung while the other collected money. Another way of busking on the buses was to board a mobile bus and travel with it for a few stops, on particular bus routes across the city.

*Tekyan* had their own internal rules for busking which included being polite, neat, and tidy and not being drunk or displaying their tattoos, because they wanted the passengers to feel sorry for them as street children and not to think they were thugs. Sometimes they became angry if one of them was visibly out of it on drugs or alcohol while busking on buses or at traffic lights, as they felt it was giving the rest of them a bad name. Almost all the boys took mild doses of drugs, however, in order to get over feelings of fear and shyness of singing in public.

Children also busked at various traffic light intersections around the city, which is where younger boys also begged. Some hid their legs in their trousers to make it look as though they were disabled (which they called *buntung-buntungan*), thereby promoting sympathy in drivers as they crawled between the cars. Any sort of income-earning activity at the traffic lights was greatly restricted by the police, and traffic light intersections were the most common place to be picked up or “fined” by police. If children did not pay a fine to the police, they were taken to the police station, where they would most likely be beaten and their money and possessions confiscated.

Children’s leisure activities included playing pool and video games, going to the cheap cinema, playing cards, gambling, taking drugs, and drinking. Other leisure activities included looking for and having sex with prostitutes, street girls, or transvestites. The *Tekyan* often went in groups to the areas where the transvestites (*banci*) and street girls (*rendan*) hung out in the city at night. The resting patterns of the children included eating and sleeping. Looking for and eating leftover food (*hoyen*) was one of the most important and identifying feature element of the *Tekyan* subculture. If a boy had not experienced eating *hoyen*, he was not considered to be a proper vagrant (*kere*) by the other boys.

At night, street children slept in groups of two or three for safety and would spend time looking for a safe place to sleep. Most had a favorite place where they felt safe and where they went regularly to sleep. During the time of the research,

children slept on the main street Malioboro, at the public toilet, in shop doorways, in empty *becak* (cycle rickshaws), under bridges, at the train and bus stations, in the main square, in *shopping* (the traditional market), and at the street children NGO's open house. Due to external factors, including weather, threats, and other disturbances, the children often needed to sleep in several different places during any night. Those sleeping on Malioboro were woken up at about 5 a.m. by the market stall owners who needed to set up their stalls. The children also had to move if it was raining, if they were moved on by police or security guards, or when they were in danger. Owing to these disturbed patterns, they also had various hidden places around the city where they could sleep during the day.

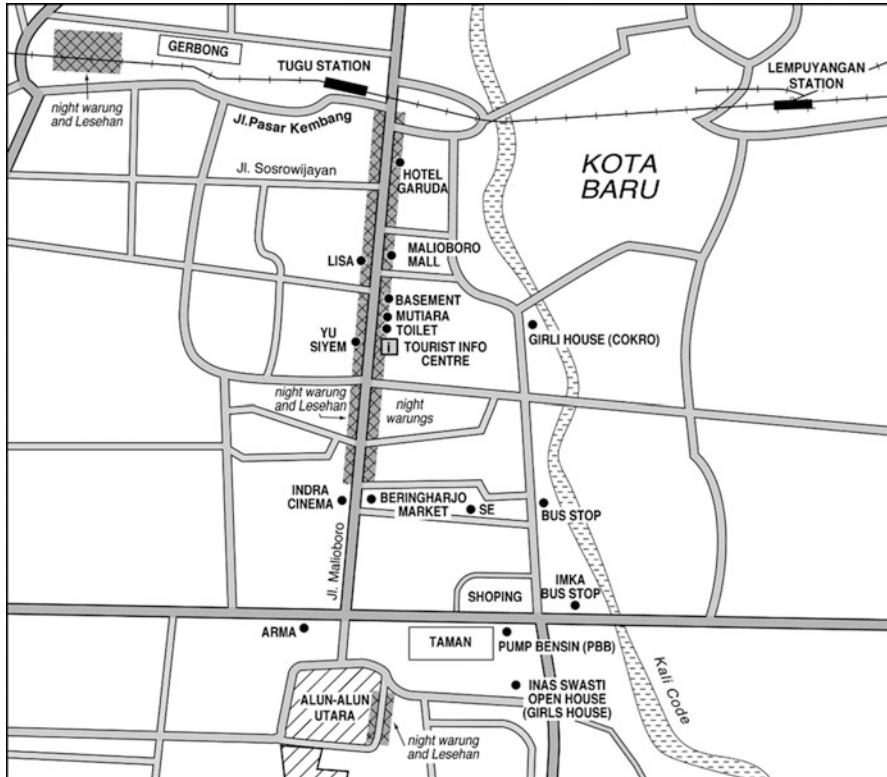
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#### 4 Time and Space

Massey (1994: 269) perceives space as being created out of social relations and as a complex web of relations of domination, subordination, solidarity, and cooperation and that "the spatial is social relations stretched out." Further, Smith and Katz (1993: 77) state that "multiple identities. . . margins and escape from space are all in different ways a response to the political inviability of absolute location." These assertions relate well to the situation of street children in Yogyakarta, in respect to how their spatial areas were created by their relations with authority (police, security guards, government), society, and other groups on the street.

Central to Massey's argument is that space must be perceived integrally with time and that one should always think in terms of space-time. It is important, therefore, to view the children's social relations with regard to time and how they used it as well as space. Time is important as it had a sometimes crucial relationship to which space/place the street child occupied. This was not only over a period of a day but also a month and a year, such as the "old and young dates" which related to the time of the month and whether people in mainstream society (such as government and university workers) had been paid. Public servants and academic staff were paid every 4 weeks, toward the end of the month. An "old date" was when people had not been paid. A "new date" meant that people had been paid and had money to spend. This obviously impacted street children's income-earning possibilities. Different seasons (wet and dry) also greatly affected children's income-earning abilities and which spaces they occupied in the city. During the wet season, very few children were able to shoeshine, because wet leather will not shine. Also, fewer people went out when it was raining as most people in Yogyakarta traveled on motorbikes.

During the wet season, therefore, the children had to change their income-earning activities and find alternative avenues for survival, which often meant moving to a different city. Conversely, during the hot season, many of the children who worked in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, came to Yogyakarta where it was considered cooler. Over the religious festival following the fasting month, *Lebaran*, however, Yogyakarta was deserted, and the children traveled to Jakarta to work. *Lebaran* or *Idul Fitri* is the celebration of the end of the fasting month *Ramadan* or



**Fig. 1** Central Yogyakarta

*Puasa.* During *Puasa*, the children found it very hard to earn money as there were no food stalls and very few people out and about during the day.

#### **4.1 Street Children's Perceptions of Place and Use of Space**

The search for emancipation from social control instills the desire, the longing and in some cases even the practices of searching for a space 'outside' of hegemonic social relations and valuations. Spaces 'on the margin' become valued spaces, for those who seek to establish differences. (Harvey 1996: 230)

Street children identified each other individually by the town or region they came from. When a new child first arrived in Yogyakarta, the initial question he/she was asked was "where are you from?" From then on, the child was identified with that place: for example, a boy from Blera in Central Java was known as "Blera" or Supri from Surabaya was known as Supri Surabaya. At the same time, the children claimed a collective identity, recognizing different groups of street children by the places they occupied in Yogyakarta for working and hanging out. These groups had

constructed what Arantes (1996: 86) terms “cocoon in public space,” the symbolic walls of “home” which were invisible to outsiders. Street boys who occupied the center of the city were known as the Malioboro kids (*anak Malioboro*) after the main street where they worked, slept, and hung out. At night, these boys gathered outside the public toilet in the middle of Malioboro (Fig. 1).

At the time of the research, different working groups of street boys included the *Janti* and *Korem* boys, named after the bus stops where they operated, the *Surgawong* kids (*anak Surgawong*) who lived underneath a bridge to the north of the city, the city square kids (*anak Alun-Alun*), the traditional local market kids (*anak shopping*), the train station kids (*anak stasiun*), and the bus station boys (*anak terminal*). Groups of street boys also congregated at various traffic light intersections and at other bus stops around the city. Many homeless street boys also identified themselves with the street children NGO *Girli* (*anak Girli*), which had an open house in the center of the city. The Alun-Alun boys and the bus terminal boys, however, did not identify themselves with *Girli*. The Alun-Alun boys worked at the nearby traffic lights, and the bus terminal boys were either shoeshining in the terminal or traveling on the buses to and from the terminal, busking with a *celek-celek*. There were also groups of street girls who lived and operated around the city park (*Taman*) to the south of Malioboro. The geographies and survival strategies of these street girls are discussed elsewhere (Beazley 2002, 2008).

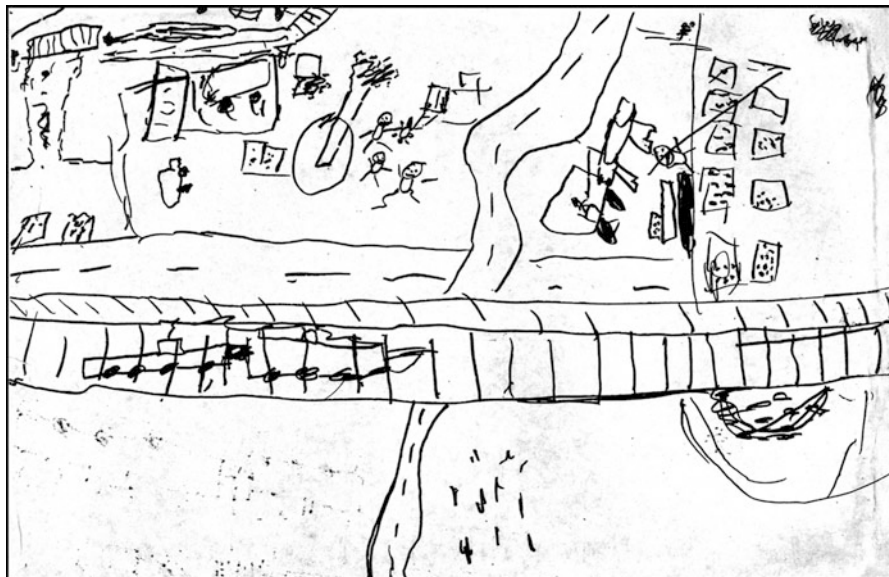
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## 5 Mental Maps

We should recognise that geographical reality is first of all the place where someone is, and perhaps the places and landscapes which they remember- formal concepts of location, region or landforms, are subsequent. It follows from this that geographical space is not uniform and homogenous, but has its own name and is directly experienced as something substantial or comforting or perhaps menacing. (Relph 1976: 5)

As a participatory research exercise, “cognitive” or “mental maps” drawn by the children were collected to view the city from the street children’s perspective (Gould and White 2012; Matthews 1980, 1986, 1992; Young and Barrett 2001; Beazley 2000; Travlou et al. 2008; den Besten 2010). These maps were used to understand the “geographical reality” of the children’s everyday experiences and to better understand their geographies of emotions (Relph 1976: 5–6; den Besten 2010; Kraftl 2013; Blazek and Windram-Geddes 2013). The children were asked to draw a map or “picture” of the city and to mark the places where they spent most of their time or that were important to them and which they knew best, thus revealing their relationships to space in their daily lives.

Cognitive maps indicated how the urban public space was culturally managed, arranged, used, and represented by different children in the same group. This approach was an attempt to “give voice” to children’s everyday realities and to identify the range of places or “activity nodes” which were tied to various aspects of their lives (Matthews 1992). As well as enabling a view of the city from the child’s



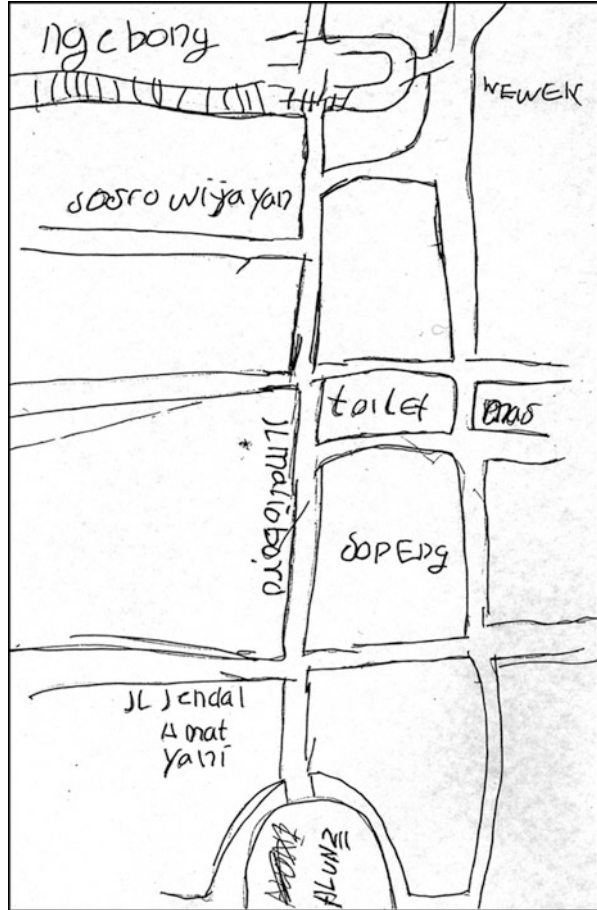
**Fig. 2** Sorio's (10) map of Yogyakarta

perspective, the maps proved a great tool for stimulating conversation, helping the children to articulate their experiences in different places. Once the maps were drawn, time was spent discussing them, which inevitably stimulated longer conversations, drawing out more information about the children's lives, their attitudes and emotions, and their diverse experiences on the street. There were some children who were confused by the concept as they were unfamiliar with using pencils and paper and found it almost impossible to draw any form of map. The majority, however, had spent some time in school and was able to draw maps of the places important to them.

As with the findings of both Gould and White's study (2012) in Sweden and Matthews' (1980, 1986, 1992) in Britain, the geographical knowledge of the children in Yogyakarta appeared to grow outward from well-known places as they got older, and a more complete mental image of the environment developed over time (Matthews 1986: 125). The majority of the younger children's maps, for example, suggested that they felt at home in a restricted area – the immediate vicinity of the toilet area on *Malioboro* – the meeting and hanging out place for *Tekyan* and center of gravity for many children.

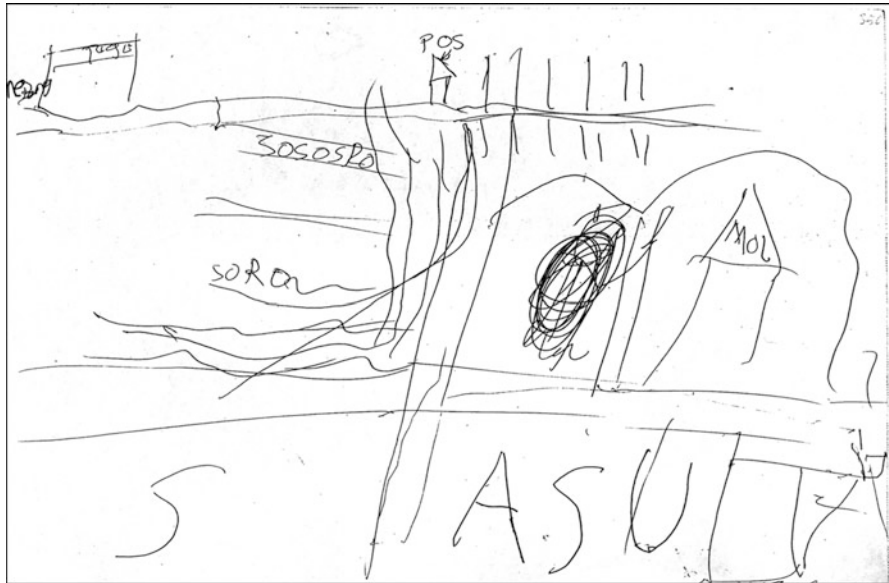
The younger boys' pictures also gave more attention to detail than the older boys' maps, and they personalized their accounts by drawing friends and particular features which they saw as significant, which older boys did not, including shoeshine boxes, traffic lights, water pumps, plant boxes, street lamps, and shops on *Malioboro*. This accords with Matthews' (1992) findings who noted the child's concern with the minute and the incidental as compared to the adult world.

**Fig. 3** Bambang's (13) map of Malioboro



Ten-year-old Sorio (in order to protect their identity, the names of the children have been changed) drew a map of Yogyakarta after being there for only 2 weeks (Fig. 2). The main street Malioboro runs through the center of the picture. He was able to show the main areas, starting from the train station to the right of the picture. Sorio personalized his account by drawing the train tracks and the train on which he arrived from Jakarta. He also drew the numerous food stalls (*lesehan*), which are identifiable by their square rattan mats on which customers sat along Malioboro, a satay cart, and a horse-drawn cart (*andong*). To the left of his map, he drew the public toilet area, where street children gathered in the evening in between working. Beside the toilet, he included the tree under which the children sat on a rattan mat. There are three other children playing under the tree on Malioboro (one of them has a tambourine in his hand) and a parked *becak*. Other people he has drawn include the *andong* driver and the woman who owns the *lesehan*, opposite the toilet where the children eat at night.





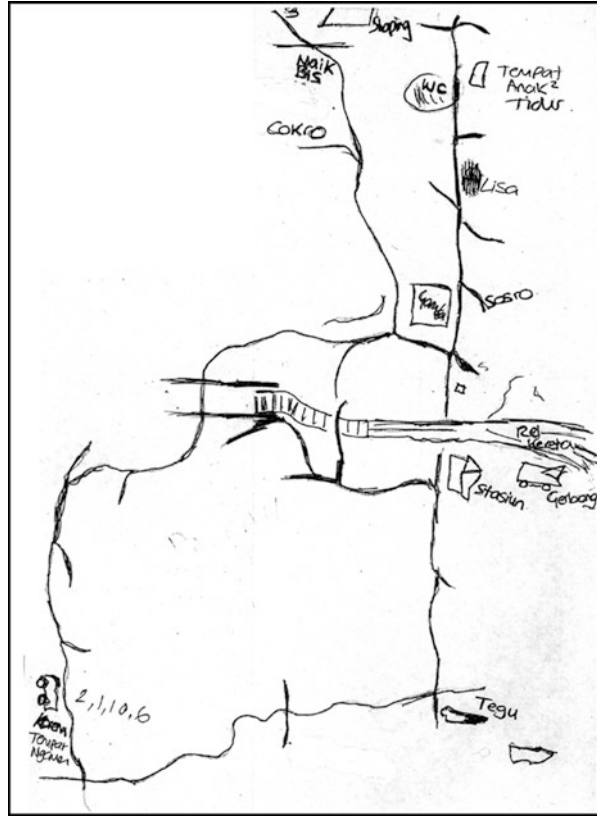
**Fig. 4** Idrus' (11) map of Malioboro, the mall, and the toilet area

In Bambang's map (Fig. 3), focus is on the Malioboro and toilet area, *Sosrowijayan*, *sopeng* (*shopping*), *Alun-Alun*, and *Mas* (a gold shop) are also marked. *Sosrowijayan* is a tourist area. It was often considered off limits by the boys as it was a place where Western men approached the boys for sex. The children were also afraid to go into this area as white tourists (*bule* or *londo* in Javanese) scared them. The map also features railway tracks and *ngebong* (*gerbong*) behind the train station, an area where *banci* (transvestites) and prostitutes worked and a place that the children went to have sex at night (Beazley 2003b). It was called *gerbong* as it is where the train carriages (*gerbong*) were stored at night and where the *banci* and prostitutes received their "guests." *Sopeng* was the local, traditional market where street boys hung out, play video games, pickpocket, or steal fruit to resell. It was also where many of the children went to when they first arrived in Yogyakarta. In *shopping*, the children slept in the book market, on top of the closed boxes of books, or in empty *becak*.

In Fig. 4, Idrus (11) has drawn in the *Mal*, and the squiggle on the map represents the movement of children playing outside the mall. The mall was left out by many of the children as it was a space where they were not welcome; if they tried to enter, they were evicted by security guards. The "ASU" scrawled across the bottom of this map is a strong swear word in Javanese meaning "dog." An appropriate translation is "bullshit," which is what he thought of the children's exclusion from the mall. Significantly, therefore, the children drew "psychological barriers" into their maps because of the meanings which they attached to certain places; the *Sosro*, *gerbong*, and mall areas were sometimes left blank because they were seen as "off limits,"



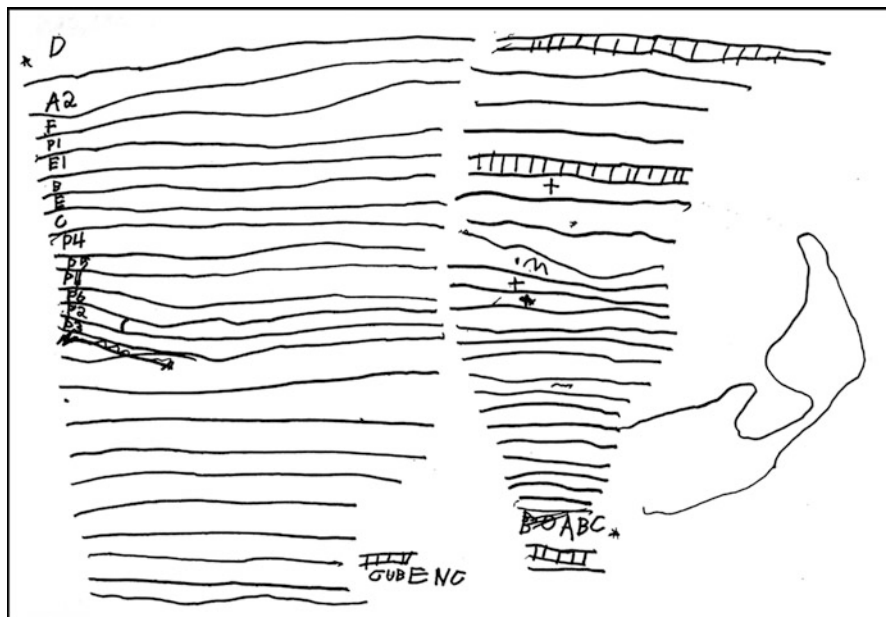
**Fig. 5** Ari's (15) map of Yogyakarta



either for the boys or for the (female) researcher (Gould and White 2012: 100). The WC, or toilet where the children hang out at night, is located on the bottom right-hand corner of Idrus' map. Idrus also drew the railway tracks and the police post (*pos*) at the top of Malioboro which was significant as he needed to know when the police were there. Idrus has also drawn in *Tugu* railway station with the *ngerbong* (*gerbong*) area behind it.

The mental images that the boys built up of Yogyakarta reflected not only their surroundings but many aspects of their lives, with the patterns of information they used to define their environment varying depending on their age and how long they had been in the city. The older boys' maps indicated a much broader mental territory, as a result of a widening experience from the central area. They incorporated not only the Malioboro area but other places they visited at night, as well as places they went busking during the daytime.

In his map, Ari (15) drew the spots where the older boys busked in the daytime; where the children slept at night, "children's sleeping place" (*tempat anak tidur*); and *lesehan Lisa*, a food stall where the children ate (Fig. 5). The roads on the map relate to the bus routes he followed when busking on the buses. *Korem*, the



**Fig. 6** Agus' (12) map. The letters and numbers relate to the numbered bays at the bus terminal, and the lines are the bus routes running through the city

“busking place” (*tempat ngamen*), is where he got on and off the buses, which are numbered on the map. *Tugu* is a monument and a major landmark in Yogyakarta. *Cokro* is the NGO *Girli's* open house. WC is the toilet. *Garuda* is an expensive five-star hotel at the top of Malioboro. *Rel kereta* are the train tracks. *Gerbong* is illustrated by a train car. *Shopping*, *stasiun*, and *Sosro* are also marked (Fig. 5).

The street in Yogyakarta was, therefore, made up of specific territories which could be mapped according to specific activities carried out by specific groups of street boys. Through an investigation of their maps, it can be seen that the children had developed a system of meaningful places in their lives which gave form and structure to their experiences in the world. There was a clear system of territorial rules adhered to in the *Tekyan* subculture, with different groups operating along Malioboro or elsewhere in the city, occupying different areas which related to the various professions pursued. As shown in Ari's map (Fig. 5), the street boys themselves had their own specific bus routes and bus stops which they could “work” during the day. If they tried to work on another group of buskers' bus route, they faced violence and recrimination. Many of the children drew their maps of the city in relation to bus routes. The most powerful example is Agus's map where he has drawn a series of lines across the page (Fig. 6). Agus describes these lines as the bus routes branching out from the numbered bays at the bus terminal and winding off through the city. The map is a fascinating conception of space and mobility throughout the city, as Agus' patterns of information are directly

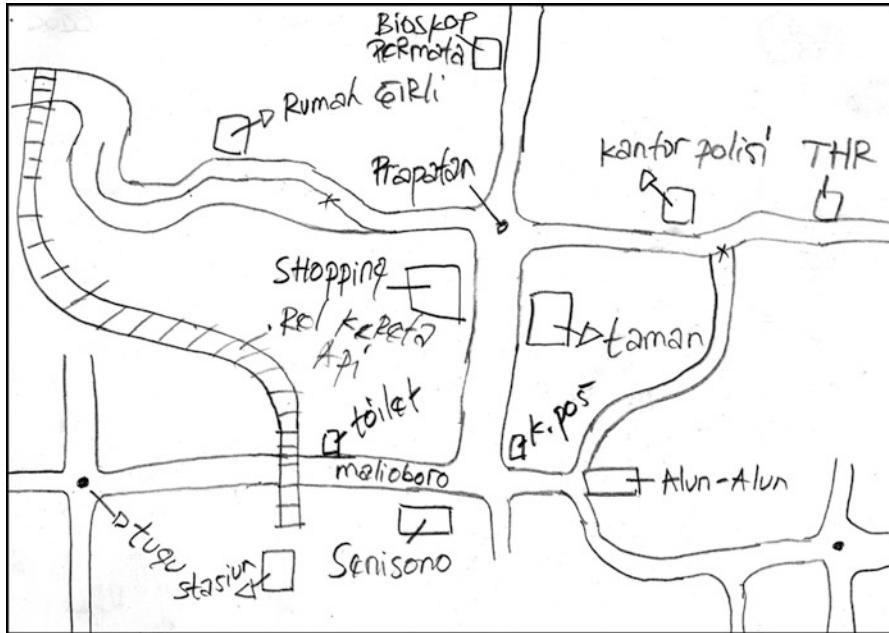


Fig. 7 Daniel's (16) map of the Malioboro area of Yogyakarta

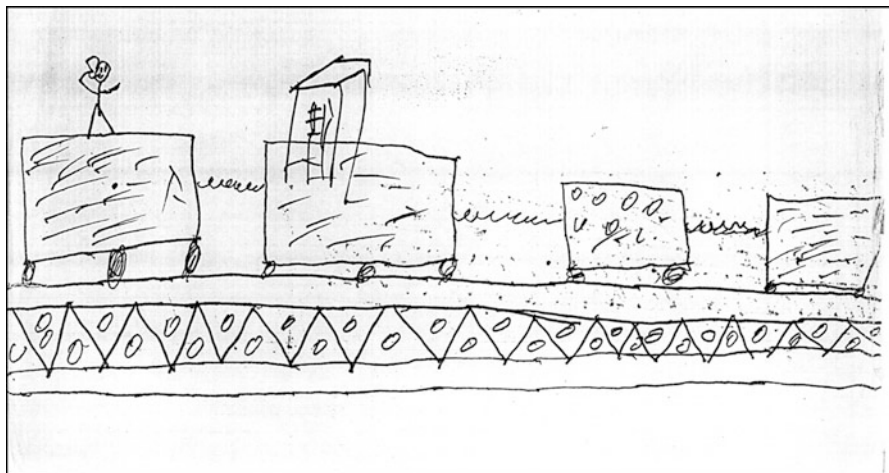


Fig. 8 Jumping scales: Tono's (10) picture of riding the "free train" (*kereta api gratis*) into Yogyakarta

connected to the way he earns money, and the various bus routes along which he travels when busking. Agus explained that also in the map are train tracks, the train station, and *gerbong* (*Gubeng*).

In Fig. 7, Daniel (16) marked *shoping*, the cheap *Permata* cinema (*Bioskop Permata*) which played kung fu movies, two *prapatans* (traffic light intersections), *Taman* where a group of street girls lived and where *banci* and gay men (*homo*) solicited for sex at night, and *THR*, the entertainment park where live music was played every night and where older boys sometimes went to look for groups of street girls. Also on the map is a police station, the central post office, the *Rumah Girli* (NGO open house), and *senisono*, an old Dutch building where many children hung out and slept.

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## 6 Places as Pivotal Points

The places the children marked on their maps were important to them and were places they occupied at different times of the day. They were spaces appropriated as a strategy for survival, for fulfilling specific needs such as eating (at the train station and Malioboro), sleeping (the Alun-Alun, toilet, *Girli*), earning money (traffic lights, bus stops, and Malioboro), feeling safe (toilet, *Girli*), forming friendships and finding pleasure (*THR*, *Taman*, toilet), washing (toilet, *Girli*, and *shoping*), and having sex (*gerbong*, *Taman*). These sites are discussed below in more detail because they are what Matthews (1980: 174) terms as “mean centers of gravity” or “beacons” for the children and essential for their survival and emotional well-being (Krafft 2013; den Besten 2010).

### 6.1 The Train Station

Almost all the children depicted motion and mobility with cars, roads, trains, train tracks, traffic lights, buses, and *andong* featuring in their maps and drawings. This recurring feature reflects the fact that mobility was an integral part of their lives. In particular, the train station and train tracks were in almost all of the children’s maps. This is because traveling by train was a noticeable behavioral aspect of the *Tekyan* subculture, and they moved across the country with what appeared to be considerable ease via Java’s extensive railway system, stowing away on goods trains (often in between the carriages or on the roof), which they called “the free train” (*kereta api gratis*) (Figs. 7 and 8). As Foucault (1984: 243) notes, railroads can be seen as an aspect of space and power relations which can provoke resistances:

A new aspect of the relations of space and power was the railroads. These were to establish a network of communication no longer corresponding to the traditional network of roads. In addition there are all the social phenomena that railroads gave rise to, be they the resistances they provoked, the transformations of population, or changes in the behaviour of people.

The children's use of the railways was an instrument of power for the *Tekyan* as they opened up new spaces of interaction with other street subcultures. Trains were used by the children to move around the country and to communicate with other street children in other cities, simultaneously spreading their subculture and subverting the state's discourse on the need for stability and immobility and dominant ideals of family, home, and the ideal child. Smith's (1994: 90) study of the homeless in New York examines the use of a "homeless vehicle" which allows homeless people to have greater spatial mobility, thus enabling them to "jump scales." Similarly, street children's high mobility by train enabled them to jump scales, away from oppression in one city to possible freedom in the next, thus avoiding state surveillance systems, which significantly restricted mobility for mainstream society during the Soeharto era:

Jumping scales allows evictees to dissolve spatial boundaries that are largely imposed from above and that contain rather than facilitate their production and reproduction of everyday life. (Smith 1994: 90)

During the time of the research, children left Yogyakarta by train if they were in trouble with the authorities, if earning opportunities were bad, if there were police "cleansing operations," if they had fallen out with someone, or if they were just looking for adventure or to follow friends. Groups of children frequently traveled to other cities, Bandung, Surabaya, and Solo, often returning with a friend or someone they had met en route. There was a constant flow of children between Yogyakarta and the capital city Jakarta, where many children felt at home and where they also had social networks and urban niches to survive.

Most street children did not originate from Yogyakarta and had arrived by train from other cities or surrounding towns. The train station was often the first meeting point, where they earned money and slept before they gravitated south to Malioboro and other parts of the city. There were various ways of earning an income and surviving around the station, from scavenging for newspapers, plastic spoons, and bottles to selling goods, shoeshining, stealing, and begging. Children were also able to look for *hoyen* in the empty carriages, before the cleaners arrived or the station guards chased them or beat them up. At the train station, the children learned from other boys about other places in the city for their survival, such as *shoping* and Malioboro.

## 6.2 Malioboro

Jalan Malioboro is the main road of Yogyakarta and the geographical center of the city (Fig. 1). The following poem was written by a street child about the busy main street of Yogyakarta where street boys and street sellers worked at night. The poem was published by the local street children NGO *Girli* in the zine *Jejal*. The word "Jejal" is an acronym from the Indonesian *jerit jalanan*, meaning "shrieks from the street."

**Malioboro**

Malioboro you are my life  
 You give inspiration to the outcasts  
 And this is where we are at!  
 Malioboro I feel alive again, because  
 on your land I can smell the fragrance  
 I have to care about  
 Malioboro your thriving occupants  
 Your prosperous situation  
 Malioboro you own us  
 You own the exiled children  
 (Iwan Galang, Jejal, Sept 1997)

The children's maps show that Malioboro was at the center of their lives. Many street children felt they belonged there and that the street "owned" them, body and soul. Along the length of Malioboro, younger boys shone shoes at the numerous food stalls and restaurants. Older boys busked with guitars at the food stalls, serenading diners. Malioboro was a "prosperous situation" where street boys could earn money, the "fragrance" they had "to care about." Malioboro is a mass of territorialities for the people working on the street, and by walking down the length of the road, "interconnected territories" of shoeshiners, buskers, pickpockets, and vendors are constantly crossed (see Arantes 1996: 86). Specific areas were recognized in the street world as belonging to different groups as well as to individual buskers and shoeshiners. The boundaries of the territories are invisible but known to all children, and conflict erupted if they were crossed. Street law dictated that appropriate distances must be kept between workers, and newcomers were instructed not to work too closely to another busker, as if one busker is singing, it could ruin the "act" of another.

### 6.3 The Toilet

[T]he retreat to the public toilet represents both a manifestation of highly circumscribed and regulated behaviour. . . in the public sphere *and* the creative use of toilet space as a means of social expression, refuge and freedom from surveillance. (White 1990: 197)

The public toilet on Malioboro was depicted on all the children's maps, and despite some differences in the maps, there was a distinct agreement in terms of this pivotal point. The toilet is marked at the center of the maps because it is an assembly point for the *Tekyan*; it is a bounded territory and a cultural, street children's space which had been "won" by the *Tekyan* subculture from the dominant culture, for leisure, work, and recreation.

People marginalized and stigmatized by harsh laws and social attitudes claim and share spaces in the city which are available (Murray 2001). These places are important for empowering alliances and for creating a common identity among marginalized people in opposition to oppression. The toilet was such a place for street boys alienated and stigmatized by society; it was a claimed territory which had immense emotional importance (den Besten 2010). It was a meeting place, “a site of cultural resistance” and a “liberated zone,” where the children felt a sense of safety, to relax, sleep, gamble, or hang out with friends (Myslik 1996: 168). It was also a place where they could hide their possessions, such as their shoeshine kits, guitars, and clothes. Outside the toilet, there was a rattan mat to sit on. The mat served to mark the place and was a sign that it was a claimed space which had been “won” by the street children.

The area next to the toilet became a source of income when the new “basement” nightclub opened, bringing the opportunity for parking cars (*parkir*). The nightclub, situated under the hotel, beside the toilet was very popular among the affluent young who arrived in their shiny new cars. At night, the space outside the toilet was occupied by the *parkir* boys who “parked” the nightclub punter’s cars. These boys had their own system of organization for who could participate in parking and how money was distributed. The *parkir* wore cutoff jeans or shorts to make them look younger and poorer, so people would give them more money. They also wore long-sleeved shirts to cover their tattoos, thereby assuming a different identity to the tough “hard” image they portrayed to each other in between working. If the drivers of the cars said they were not going to pay, however, the boys would let down the tyres, scratch the cars with coins, or break in with an iron bar and steal resaleable goods. The boys worked most of the night until 4 am when the nightclub closed and the last punters left. Then they divided their takings between themselves and had a wash in the toilet, put on long trousers, and went to look for street girls (*cari randan*) in *shoping or Taman*. Alternatively they ate, drank, and sang together and eventually slept at one of the *lesehan* (food stalls) over the road.

As well as the *parkir* boys and buskers, the toilet was occupied by younger children who came to hang out and chat in between shoeshining at the *lesehan* along Malioboro. Drinking rituals took place periodically throughout the night at the toilet, and the boys bought alcohol by having a whip-round for money. Holding one’s drink was considered to be a display of masculinity – an important part of the *Tekyan* subculture. In direct contrast to how the children covered their tattoos when they were trying to earn money, they sat in a circle on the mat, took off their shirts to display their tattoos, and passed one glass round the group, each drinking a whole glass quickly until the bottle was finished. They then went back to work. Drugs were also consumed at the toilet: marijuana or “*Bob*” (Marley) when they could get it and all types of prescription pills which they also sold to the nightclub punters.

A sense of belonging or not belonging contributed in an important way to the shaping of social space at the toilet. There were numerous accounts of children from other cities going straight to the toilet when they first arrived in Yogyakarta. They were often interrogated about who sent them and were sometimes beaten before they were permitted to join the group at the toilet. (For a discussion of how

newcomers are socialized into the street children's world and the processes of socialization to the *Tekyan* subculture, see Beazley (2003a). It was a very masculine space, and compliance with peer norms of masculinity was essential to the *Tekyan* because friendships, support in hard times, and personal safety were all dependent on acceptance by the group. Street boys had to act in a more masculine way than was already required of men in Indonesian society. This was particularly true for the young prepubescent boys for whom acting "macho" came less naturally.

The strong competition for the use of space on Malioboro, and in other areas of the city, was accompanied by a discernible community spirit between the different groups on the street. This solidarity was most apparent when an outside force intruded and when the children's power of control over a "public" space was superseded by a more powerful force which occasionally visited the toilet. This force was described by the boys as *penyakit* ("the disease"): the police or army who periodically come to the toilet to "clean up" the area of undesirable street traders and children. (The use of language, parody, and other acts of resistance used by the *Tekyan* subculture in response to their marginal status is analyzed in Beazley (2003a).)

Clearly, the children at the toilet were not safe from oppression and brutality, but many regarded it as a safe place, because of their feelings of safety in numbers. When a *garukan* (police raid) hit, the people on the street would unite to help each other, and the toilet was a place to where children ran if they felt threatened or if they are looking for companionship. It was a place where the children could identify with one another and assert their differences and marginality, and the safety they felt was an emotional and psychological safety that came from being in an area with a sense of belonging or social control, even in the occasional absence of physical control (Myslik 1996: 168; den Besten 2010; Blazek and Windram-Geddes 2013).

On the street, an age hierarchy existed, with the boundaries around the toilet being policed by the older boys who were more dominant in the peer group. Although "respecting one's elders" and age were very important factors in the *Tekyan* social hierarchy (as is the case in Javanese society), also of importance for gaining respect and status was the length of time a child had lived on the street. Naturally, older children were the ones who had usually been on the street for longer, although there were some younger boys who had more status compared to those in the same age cohort, because of their length of time on the street.

## 6.4 Alun- Alun

The Alun-Alun is the main square to the South of Malioboro, where a small group of street boys aged between 9 and 12 years slept behind a fence on the east side of the square. During the research period, two of the boys went on a train journey to Jakarta. Only one came back. He returned after a few weeks, distraught with the news that his friend had been knocked off the roof of a train when they went through a tunnel. They had been sitting on the top of a goods train.



A distinctive feature of the Alun-Alun children was that they were glue sniffers, and they sniffed cans of glue which they kept up their T-shirts. They learned to do this from a Jakarta street boy whom they appeared to admire. At night, the Alun-Alun boys hung around the square, sitting on the pavement or at the various food stalls, on the east side of the square. During the afternoons between 4 and 7 p.m., they went begging and busking (with *celek-celek*) at the traffic lights nearby. They sometimes operated by the traffic lights at the bottom of Malioboro, if there were no police to move them on. Over the holiday period (*Lebaran*), however, the police were stationed there permanently, threatening the children with arrest if they tried to beg there. In contrast, the police stationed at the shopping traffic lights allowed the children to beg. The Alun-Alun boys were usually very dirty and rarely washed, unlike the Malioboro boys. They said they could get more money from begging that way, as no one would give money to a boy who was clean and well dressed. At night, the Alun-Alun children often walked to the train station to look for *hoyen* and to beg. In the day, they spent their time wandering around shopping, where they bought supplies of glue to sniff and hung out in the video arcade.

## 6.5 Surgawong: The “Paradise People”

Resistance cannot be understood as a face-to-face opposition between the powerful and the weak, because other spaces are always involved: spaces which are dimly lit, opaque, and deliberately hidden, saturated with memories that echo with lost words and the cracked sounds of pleasure and enjoyment (Pile 1997: 16).

One “dimly lit” and “deliberately hidden” social site for a group of 14 street boys was *Surgawong*, the name given by the boys to a bridge under which they lived and where one could often encounter the sounds of enjoyment. *Surgawong* was a bridge to the northeast of Malioboro. Across the bridge in Edy’s picture of *Surgawong* (Fig. 9) is written: *Jembatan (Surgawong) Kusus Jalur Kere*, “Surgawong Bridge: Special Way for Street Kids.” Underneath the bridge is the running river and the mats on which they sleep where *kamar* or “room” is written. This was their space, where they hung out when not working at the bus stops of nearby traffic light intersection.

*Surgawong* was a bridge on a main road, over which hundreds of tourists traveled every week, on their way to the famous Hindu temples in Prambanan. Although it was hot, dusty, and noisy on the bridge, beneath it was quiet, tranquil, and cool, secluded from the pollution and noise above by huge concrete slabs on the underside of the bridge. The children made use of these slabs, by using wooden planks to construct platforms between them, producing a safe place sealed off from surveillance, where they were able to sleep and hide their few possessions. Below the bridge ran the river where they were able to wash, and palm trees along the river made it a very pretty place, as the boys were keen to point out to me. Above the bridge, just a few hundred meters away, was a bus stop where they could earn money in the daytime while the buses were running (Fig. 9).



**Fig. 9** Edy's (14) drawing of Surgawong

Every evening, between 5 and 9 p.m., the children worked in a group busking with guitars and drums at the traffic light intersection. After they had finished working, they frequently spent all their money on video games. Almost all the children living at Surgawong identified themselves as *Girli* children, although they considered themselves completely independent of the NGO, which gave them a sense of pride. Pri, one of the Surgawong leaders, got the idea to live under the bridge after he stayed with a street kid community in Jakarta who also lived under a bridge, near to a large market, and Pri stayed with them for a few months before he returned to Yogyakarta.

The poem below, just like the poem about Malioboro earlier, illustrates how street children in Yogyakarta identified with the place they lived, evoking a strong emotional geography of safety and belonging and of sharing, solidarity, and freedom (Kraftl 2013; Blazek and Windram-Geddes 2013).

#### **Surgawong**

There we joke  
 There we eat  
 There we talk

(continued)

About freedom  
 There we cry  
 There we laugh  
 The bitter sweetness we taste  
 Together  
 That is all we can do  
 The bridge is my soul  
 The traffic lights are my heart  
 My heaven is Surgawong  
 (Anon, *Jejal*, July, 1997: 23)

The Surgawong boys acknowledged that the bridge was protecting them from the harsh external elements, seeing it as their “home.” The place was seen as being responsible for the children’s safety, livelihood, and happiness. The boy writes about the bridge being his “heaven” and “soul” and the traffic lights, where he and his friends earned their money, as his “heart.” The name Surgawong is a play on words as the bridge is known locally as the *Gajah Wong*, or “elephant man,” after a myth about a man who lost his elephant there years ago. The acronym the boys devised is from *surga* – the Indonesian for “heaven” or “paradise” – and *wong* meaning person in Javanese: “the paradise people.” It was a very strong and happy community, and the boys were extremely proud of their new “home.”

## 6.6 Gerbong: “The Sex Place”

At night-time, the boys from the Alun-Alun and Malioboro sometimes went to gerbong for sex: to get paid by the transvestites (*banci*) for oral sex or to pay a prostitute for sex. (There is a myth which exists in the *banci* community that the semen of young boys will keep them young and beautiful.) Almost all the boys, even the youngest, put gerbong on their maps, although some chose not to. On one occasion, a 16-year-old Ary had omitted to draw gerbong on his map. When asked where gerbong was on his map, he replied: “*Jangan! Bahaya AIDS! Nanti kamu digigit*” (“don’t go there, it’s dangerous, you’ll get bitten (*lit*) by AIDS!”). One of the street boys was transgendered and sometimes operated in gerbong as a transvestite (*banci*) at night. His name was Jeanette (this was the name the boy chose when asked which pseudonym he would like). Jeanette was about 18 years old and knew all the *banci* at gerbong, where s/he sometimes worked, and he/she was friends with the “leader” of the *banci* who was known as *Ibu* (the polite form of address for an elder woman). *Ibu* occupied the police post after the police have gone home, from 10 p.m. until 4 a.m. From the post, she could watch the comings and goings into gerbong, inform people of others’ whereabouts, chat to passersby, and solicit for sex. She also worked for the local AIDS awareness organization, *Lentera*,

as an outreach worker and referred to the police post as her “office.” The children sometimes stopped and chatted to *Ibu* or other *bancis* who were hanging out at the post. They then went on to gerbong to go with *banci* or further down the tracks for sex with prostitutes (*lonte*). The prostitutes solicited along the dark train tracks nearer to the bridge. In this area, there were a lot of men hanging around and sitting in very dimly lit food and beverage stalls (*warung*), which were set up on either side of the railway tracks. Apparently there were frequent police raids along this stretch of the rail track, and when one occurred, clients and *warung* owners would have to clear out of the area quickly, throwing themselves over the fences by the rail tracks in order to escape arrest.

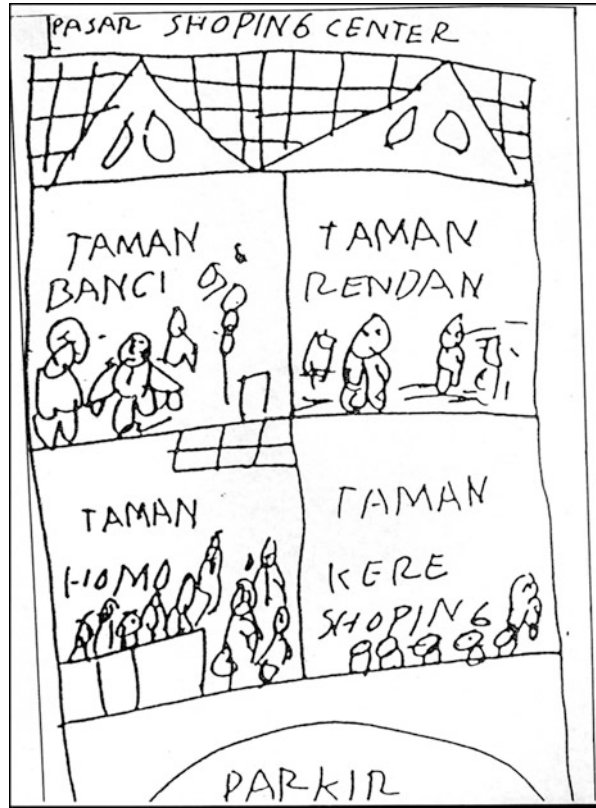
One night during a fieldwork trip to gerbong, Jeanette explained where the different places were for different groups of *banci* or prostitutes. He/she pointed out the various locations where activities took place: train coaches’ area (from which the area gets its name), outhouses, strategic bushes, and the covered train washing areas. Jeanette also told of how “shocked” (*kaget*) he/she had been one night to see a younger boy from Malioboro there having sex with one of the *banci*. What really shocked him was how experienced the boy appeared for someone so young. Jeanette did not mention the boy’s name, although he/she said that he was a shoeshiner on Malioboro. This was a further example of how the children shifted their identities according to their environment and activity.

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## 7 Meanings of Places

Particular places in the city, therefore, had special meanings for street children, and this was reflected in their maps and also their conversations about specific locations and the people who occupy them. Relph (1976: 3) elaborates on the “meanings” of places: “A place is not just the ‘where’ of something, it is the location plus everything that occupies that location seen as an integrated and meaningful phenomena.” For example, in the street boys’ language, the word *shoping* was often used as a metaphor to signify “cheap” or inferior, as cheap goods and street girls (who were considered “cheap” by the boys) could be found there. Similarly, Taman, gerbong, and shoping were all areas in the city which had extended sexualized meanings within street boys’ discourse, as they were places they go to look for street girls and *banci* for sex. Thus, gender, sex, and sexuality were all spaced in the children’s imaginations of the city. This can be seen clearly in Fig. 10, where in his “map” Petrus divided the shoping building into four different parks (*Taman*, in reference to the city park, over the road from the shoping): *Taman banci* (transvestite park), *Taman rendan* (street girls’ park), *Taman homo* (the gay park), and *Taman kere shoping* (street boys from *shoping*’s park). All these groups spent time in the city park at different times, day and night.

**Fig. 10** Petrus' map of shopping and Taman



## 8 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how street children in Indonesia have contested their own exclusion by appropriating specific places in the city and by constructing a network of entwined spaces for their everyday survival. In Yogyakarta, these chosen places reflected the children's social marginality, which may be understood as the children's own produced "urban niches" in which they could earn money, obtain food, and feel safe, despite the hostility of outside forces.

In Yogyakarta, street boys marked particular places on their mental maps which they perceived as important: the traffic lights, bus stops, the sides of roads and rail tracks, outside a public toilet or an entertainment area, under a bridge or in a city park, and other public spaces where access was not rigidly controlled. The maps show that the street children were not tied to any one place and that they have numerous "symbolic cocoons" or urban niches which they used in the city in order to survive. These territories were alternative spaces and sites of interaction for the

boys, where alternative communities were formed. They were places for establishing and maintaining solidarity and for creating a collective identity in opposition to the oppression of marginalized people (Murray 2001). Spaces such as the toilet and Surgawong created a strong sense of emotional attachment and empowerment which allowed the boys to look beyond the dangers of being homeless in the city and to feel safe. In effect, these spaces became a “home in the public space” (Arantes 1996: 86), helping a child to survive and to feel as though he belonged and existed in a world which would rather he did not.

It is the “fluidity” of these spaces and the flexibility of the children to shift from one place to another at a moment’s notice, which ensured their survival (Massey 1998; Pile 1997). If one place became difficult to operate in, due to the threat of the *penyakit* coming, then they escaped to another urban niche or found somewhere new. In addition to the multiplicity of spaces the street children occupied, this chapter has shown how the shifting of identities was a vital part of street survival and that different places resulted in children assuming a different identity. The street children had to learn from early on when it was necessary to be cute, macho, friendly, or hostile, and their identities were as fluid and shifted as frequently as the spaces in which they operated.

In summary, the street boys in this research demonstrated various strategies of resistance to the marginalization imposed on them by the state and society. They did this by occupying multiple and shifting sites around the city and by employing an expansive range of survival strategies across diverse spatial relations. These actions can be read as “geographies of resistance” and everyday forms of endurance (Pile and Keith 1997). Street children’s relationships with different places and their use of geographical spaces are complex and multilayered, and their activities and behavior patterns change over time in response to their changing environment. Such adaptations are part of their survival.

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## Part II

# Inclusion and Exclusion

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# Faith, Space, and Negotiated Subjectivities: Young Muslims in Suburban Australia

# 10

Chloe Patton

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	194
2	Celebrating Diversity, Fearing Decline: Competing Representations of Dandenong and the Formation of a Muslim Youth Subject .....	196
3	Young Muslims' Images of Self and Belonging in the Suburbs .....	202
4	Conclusion .....	210
	References .....	212

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## Abstract

This chapter takes up the volume's broader concern with young people's identities and subjectivities by looking at the processes of inclusion and exclusion implicated within narratives of post-9/11 Muslim youth identities. Using the locality of Dandenong in outer-suburban Melbourne, Australia, as its focal point, it first examines some of the discursive practices – from the racialized aesthetization of public space to governmental interventions aimed at fashioning young Muslims into good citizens – through which a Muslim youth subject is constructed in this context. It then explores how young people negotiate these subject positionings through ethnographic fieldwork conducted with young Muslims living in Dandenong and neighboring suburbs. Organized around the recurring theme of mobility expressed in the narratives of selfhood and photographic self-portraits created by these young people, this chapter shows how stories about negotiating the local terrain facilitate insights into how young people conceptualize and enact their positionings within local and national social imaginaries. In doing so, it draws particular attention to three interrelated

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areas of postsecular social transformation shaping the everyday lives of young Muslims in this locality: the changing nature of faith-based public collectivities, mundane challenges to dominant narratives of nationhood, and emerging forms of religiosity.

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**Keywords**

Australia • Muslim youth • Multiculturalism • Islamophobia • Subjectivity • Identity • Belonging • Religiosity • Melbourne • Dandenong • War on Terror • Counterterrorism • Radicalization • Postsecularity • Social media • Mobilities

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## 1 Introduction

The bus sets me down beside a large paddock with a perimeter of churned mud, where two horses graze on sunburnt grass. A water-logged irrigation ditch runs between me and the barbed-wire fence of the horse paddock, leaving me no choice but to walk on the shoulder of the road. Despite these rural trappings, this is hardly a scene of bucolic tranquility: the road is a busy north-south arterial with an endless stream of cars and trucks thundering by, while most of the upwardly sloping land behind the paddock is occupied by a vast estate of gardenless project homes, jammed together so tightly the hillside appears to be paved with uniform dark grey roofing tiles.

This is the outer southeast of suburban Melbourne, where I've come to interview a participant in the research on young Muslims I have conducted here since 2005. The bus I've taken here, which runs half-hourly at peak times, originates at the train station in the suburban centre of Dandenong. It passes through some of the most economically disadvantaged areas of Melbourne. Here, neighbourhoods of aging weatherboard and fibro-cement homes butt up against newer housing developments that are popular with young families for the size of the homes and their proximity to a major freeway into town. Two suburbs out from the station and I'm standing on the border of each, in what is often referred to as a public transport and public amenities 'black hole'. (Fieldwork diary extract)

This chapter takes up the volume's broader concern with young people's identities and subjectivities by looking at the processes of inclusion and exclusion implicated within narratives of Muslim youth identities in this post-9/11 suburban landscape. It takes its theoretical cues from poststructuralist theories of subjecthood (Hall 1992; Laclau and Mouffe 1985) that stress the discursive, socially contingent nature of subject formation. It approaches what is often termed "postsecularity" – the social transformations and attendant scholarly questions brought about by the (unanticipated) increasing visibility of religion in Western public life (Berger 1999; Davie 2007) – from a different ontological starting point to much of the literature concerned with the so-called Muslim Question. Habermas (2008), for instance, employs a realist ontology in his conceptualization of the postsecular as the West's pressing need to resolve tensions around religious differences caused by immigration from societies where what he terms "traditional cultures" are practiced. The

approach adopted in this chapter, by contrast, problematizes how the very terms of that question are constructed, shifting the emphasis toward the ways “differences,” otherwise conceived of as antagonistic subject positionings, come into being and how this informs individual subjectivities.

Using the suburban locality of Dandenong as a focal point, the first part of this chapter examines some of the discursive practices – from the racialized aestheticization of public space to governmental interventions aimed at fashioning young Muslims into good citizens – through which a Muslim youth subject is constructed in this context. The second part then explores how young people negotiate these subject positionings through ethnographic fieldwork conducted with young Muslims living in Dandenong and neighboring suburbs.

The fieldwork in the second part reports on one of two cohorts of high school students who participated in a visual ethnographic study of Melbourne-based youth groups run by a Muslim youth association. There were 24 youth group members in this cohort when the research began, a number that fluctuated throughout the study as new members joined and older members left to concentrate on high school exams. All of the young people involved in the study identified as Shia Muslims. Their ethnic identities reflected the identity of Muslims in the Dandenong area: most were born in Afghanistan and had migrated to Australia as small children, while several others were from Iraqi, Lebanese, Uzbek, and Bosnian backgrounds.

A significant component of the research involved youth group members creating photographic self-portraits. Over a 6-month period, photography workshops were run by the author as part of the youth group’s weekly activities. Each session was structured around a mixture of group discussions and studio practice: participants discussed their ideas about self-identity and image production and helped each other create their self-portraits in a makeshift studio. These workshops culminated in a public exhibition at a prominent Australian photographic gallery. The fieldwork presented in this chapter is drawn from youth group members’ narratives of selfhood and belonging that were provoked in the course of the portrait-making activity. While parts of this chapter are reconstructed from fieldnotes, in an effort to include participants’ own voices, in-depth interviews were conducted with ten youth group members between late 2007 and early 2008 in which they reflected on the themes they sought to express through their portraits. Pseudonyms have been used where these direct quotes have been included in the text in all but one instance; the exception being Ali, who chose to use his real given name as it was an integral part of the way he narrated his identity.

Several of the self-portraits serve as narrative anchors in the second section of this chapter. All relate to the general theme of mobility, expressed through the recurring material motifs of the car and the personal computer. Attention to the mobility of (sub)urban publics raises new questions about how such mobilities are shaped by power relations; motility, in particular, is not equally available and thus serves as a useful window into social practices of inclusion and exclusion (Shelley and Urry 2000, p. 741). The resulting overall snapshot of the ways young Muslims physically negotiate getting around the local terrain facilitates insights into how they conceptualize and enact their positionings within local and national social

imaginaries. In doing so, it draws particular attention to three interrelated areas of postsecular social transformation shaping the everyday lives of young Muslims in this locality: the changing nature of faith-based public collectivities, mundane challenges to dominate narratives of nationhood, and emerging forms of religiosity.

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## **2 Celebrating Diversity, Fearing Decline: Competing Representations of Dandenong and the Formation of a Muslim Youth Subject**

Like many other rural-turned-industrial towns throughout the West, the history of the suburban municipality of Dandenong has been deeply marked by twentieth-century global processes. Located roughly 30 km southwest of Melbourne's city center, Dandenong began its post-European settlement life as a thriving market town, thanks to the area's rich pastoral land. A rail line was extended to Dandenong in 1877, and the town soon became the main supplier of dairy and market garden produce for Melbourne and then one of the richest cities in the British Empire. The electrification of the line in the 1920s paved the way for the rapid growth that led to the official establishment of the City of Dandenong in 1952. By the 1960s, Dandenong was a center for not just food manufacturing but a wide range of heavy industries, including automotive construction (Alves 1992). In the decades that followed, Melbourne's rapidly expanding suburban fringe extended toward and eventually beyond Dandenong, leading it to become one of several of Melbourne's outer suburban commercial centers. Dandenong's train station is now one of Melbourne's busiest and the most important public transport commuter hub for the outer East, seeing 2.7 million rail passenger movements annually and serving as point of departure for a score of bus routes (Public Transport Victoria [n.d.](#)).

Manufacturing jobs drew newly arrived Southern European immigrants to Dandenong in the 1950s. With the dismantling of the White Australia policy in the 1970s came the arrival of non-White immigrants, setting in motion the transformation of Dandenong's working class white demographic. Today the City of Greater Dandenong municipality, which takes in Dandenong and surrounding suburbs, is the most ethnically diverse locality in Victoria and the second most diverse locality in the nation. Sixty percent of Greater Dandenong's residents were born overseas, 82 % of residents have both parents born overseas (compared to 34 % of Australians overall) and 64 % speak a language other than English. Muslims make up 10 % of Greater Dandenong's population, a figure more than quadruple the 2.2 % of the total national population that identifies as Muslim (City of Greater Dandenong 2012). Within the suburb of Dandenong itself, however, 24.1 % of residents identify as Muslim. This is largely due to its sizable Afghan population: people of Afghan ancestry account for 5.5 % Dandenong's population, making it the fourth largest ethnic group in the locality, after English, Indian, and Australian (accounting for 10.9 %, 10.8 %, and 7.1 % of the population, respectively) (ABS 2011; Remplan 2015). Afghan migration to Dandenong is a relatively recent phenomenon: a small but steady stream of Afghans arrived in Australia either in

the mid- to late 1990s as a result of the protracted civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal in 1979. More recently, the War on Terror has seen an increase in arrivals of persecuted ethnic Hazaras who make up a substantial proportion of Australia's humanitarian intake. As a result, Dandenong is one of the few Australian localities with a significant Shia presence (DIAC 2014).

The dismantling of protectionist tariffs in accordance with federal policies of trade liberalization in the late 1980s opened Australian markets to cheap imported goods, effectively decimating the local manufacturing industry. Like other manufacturing centers across the West, Dandenong was particularly hard hit by the recession that gripped Australia in the early 1990s, and it never fully recovered from this economic decline. Today it is the most socioeconomically disadvantaged urban local government area in Australia, with unemployment running at almost double the national average (11.2 % vs. 6.2 %) and average household incomes roughly two-thirds that of the national average (ABS 2011).

This combination of ethnic diversity and socioeconomic disadvantage has spawned sensationalist media narratives of uncontrollable crime and ethnic tension. Dandenong's railway station, once a symbol of growth and prosperity in the public imagination, is now synonymous with its decline. In 2012, the Premier of Victoria dubbed Dandenong Station one of the most dangerous railway stations in the state, leading him to assign a team of controversial protective services officers with quasi-police powers to patrol it day and night (Macarthur 2012). The streets surrounding Dandenong Station have been characterized by the media as a place "where the locals fear to tread," preferring to catch cabs for easily walkable distances to avoid gangs of ethnic youths armed with knives and machetes (Elder and Pierik 2010). As the social geographer Michele Lobo (2010) observes, the nation's conservative commentators have translated these representations of Dandenong as dangerous ethnic "gangland" into a narrative about Australian multiculturalism causing social decay. She argues that this narrative is "partially yet problematically offset by reports that celebrate and exoticise a non-Anglo ethnicity" and a related assumption that sees the maintenance of interethnic harmony as something that must be managed by local government (Lobo 2010, p. 91).

The twin imperatives of exoticization and cultural management in the second mode of narrating Dandenong's cultural diversity can be observed at play in the celebratory aestheticization of public space in the vicinity of Dandenong Station. A recent joint local and state government-funded planning project sought to create an "Afghan cultural precinct" – dubbed the Afghan Bazaar – by visually altering the streetscape of Thomas Street. The designated locality consists of around 20 preexisting shops – including grocers, a bakery, restaurants, and several take-away kebab shops – located a short walk from Dandenong Station. The council describes the rationale for the \$1.1 million project as a "community-building opportunity" and justifies individual design elements in cultural terms. A predominantly blue color scheme was chosen, for instance, because "blue resonates with the Afghan community and supports a cultural signature for the broader community," while the Mazar-e Sharif Mosque in Western Afghanistan is visually referenced in tessellated tilework because "it is an endorsed expression of Afghan

culture and provides an opportunity for a contemporary interpretation related to Greater Dandenong” (City of Greater Dandenong 2014a).

Alterations to physical amenities in the space are designed to elicit desired modes of cultural expression from residents of Afghan origin and even racialized forms of bodily comportment:

Narrowed roadways and widened footpaths establish new infrastructure for community festivals and events, such as Nowruz (New Year). . . Custom seating reinterpreting the traditional Arabic ‘suffah’, or dais, encourages the community to socialise in familiar ways. (Hassell Studio 2015)

A council-run tour of the precinct explicitly addresses its non-Afghani audience as consumers of exotica: “Your friendly tour guide will lead you on a journey to a far flung corner of the world, throwing light on the captivating Afghan culture where exotic music, unique fashions and tantalising food will be experienced” (City of Greater Dandenong 2014b). It encourages the visitor to engage in amateur anthropological research by providing a series of preformulated “question prompts” to ask traders; recommended topics include the cultural significance of their jewelry, traditional headwear for men, the most popular Afghan meal, how their bread is baked, what is halal meat, what is tikka kebab, what is the “Afghan beverage of choice,” and so on (City of Greater Dandenong 2014c). Advice is given on how to cultivate a difference-prioritizing mode of vision so that one may discern civilization schisms in spaces as mundane as the shelves of the local shops:

Notice the differences between an Afghan grocery shop compared to a Western supermarket. You will see that produce is displayed in a more random manner where you can expect to find crystalised sugar, plump sweet dates to [sic] roasted chickpeas. (City of Greater Dandenong 2014c)

Thus, the project maps onto the local terrain the racialized subject positionings of the cosmopolitan Anglo culture-consuming Self and its culture-bearing immigrant Other described in Hage’s (1998) influential critique of liberal multiculturalism in Australia.

This version of liberal multiculturalism, however, is not the dominant discursive frame for understanding Muslim youth subjectivities in Dandenong. In September 2014, the police shooting of a local teenager saw the narrative of ethnic youth criminality in Dandenong powerfully collide with a national discourse on Islam. According to police statements and media reports, Numan Haider, an 18-year-old of Afghan origin from the nearby suburb of Narre Warren, was stopped and questioned by police when he was seen with a Shahada flag in the Dandenong Plaza shopping center. Friends told reporters that the teenager was deeply upset by a series of heavily publicized police raids on the homes of Sydney Muslims that had taken place that morning. Four days later, police reportedly visited his family home while he was out and searched his room. The following day, he agreed to a request to meet with a police officer and a member of the Australian Federal Police in the carpark of a local police station to discuss the flag incident and some social media

posts he had made about the AFP and ASIO. There has been no clear account of what happened next, but a short time later the two police officers were hospitalized with stab wounds and Haider lay dead from a single gunshot wound to the head from a police weapon.

Media outlets nationwide immediately labeled the incident a terrorist attack and published reports that Haider was plotting to assassinate the Prime Minister and behead the two police officers, stories that the police quickly dismissed as entirely unsubstantiated. One outlet ran a photograph of a local Afghan teenager it incorrectly identified as Haider on the front page of multiple newspapers across the country (Media Watch 2014), while another went so far as to explicitly blame an entire religion for the incident in an editorial titled, "Time for Islam to stand up" (Herald Sun, September 25, 2014). Although alternative voices were scarce, Barat Ali Batoor (2014), a local community worker, drew on the vocabulary of liberal multiculturalism to arrive at a less hysterical yet nonetheless culturally determinist reading of the incident. For Batoor, Haider's death represented a discord between different cultural communities; he claimed that young people can be "caught between pervasive Western culture and their family ties to Islam, sometimes creating a void in their values system. . . Many such youngsters live in disadvantaged areas with high unemployment and possibly see the world and any sense of opportunity passing them by." Conservative commentator Andrew Bolt (2014), who places street crime in Dandenong at the center of his long-running campaign to halt Australia's refugee intake, responded by accusing Batoor of "playing the victim card." In Bolt's view, Haider was symptomatic of national overindulgence of immigrants.

Two days after Haider's death, Sevdet Besim, another young Muslim from the area, joined many others on social media in demanding the public release of the CCTV footage of the shooting; by April 2015, an online petition had attracted over 2000 signatures (change.org). That same month, Besim was arrested along with four other 18- and 19-year-old Muslims after police conducted highly publicized raids across suburbs in the Dandenong area. Besim and Harun Causevic were held in custody under anti-terror laws, while the other three were released, one with a weapon charge and two without charges. Besim and Causevic's alleged crime was the planning of a terror attack to take place during Anzac Day celebrations. Media outlets repeatedly claimed that the teens were acting under the orders of an IS recruiter who had also allegedly incited Haider to attack police officers (Quinn and Radulova 2015). The basis of those claims was called into question within hours, however, when a 14-year-old British boy from Blackburn, Lancashire, was charged with inciting an act of terrorism in relation to the case (Pidd 2015).

In the absence of any critical analysis of the events in the media, some young Muslims turned to social media to voice their concerns over the raids, focusing on the arrested teenagers' family members' descriptions of police brutality during the raids. Their claims included tear gas being used to clear rooms, racist abuse directed at suspects' parents, younger siblings being dragged from their beds by their hair, machine guns being pointed at children's heads, and one suspect's arm being broken. The mother of an Aboriginal teen who was released without charge said



he was beaten so badly a pool of blood was left on the floor and he needed to be hospitalized (Lucas and Hatch 2015). An article from a regional Queensland newspaper was discussed in several Muslim Facebook forums as a means of demonstrating what was commonly claimed to be the Islamophobic imperative guiding the media coverage of the raids; it reported on a court hearing from the previous week involving a former army officer found with two barrels of fuel in her apartment which she allegedly planned to use in a bomb designed to destroy a 900 personnel Naval Base, the largest in Northern Australia (Power 2015). That case received no other media attention.

The template for understanding the alleged activities of Haider, Besim, and Causevic was drawn up after the 2005 London (UK) bombings, when the governing of Muslim youth becomes a public policy priority. Fears that “home-grown” young people could carry out terrorist attacks in Australia intersected with existing rhetoric about the need for Muslims to adopt Australian values, culminating in the 2006 unveiling of The National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security. The NAP, as it became known, was described as a whole-of-government policy initiative that sought to “address issues of concern to the Australian community and to support Australian Muslims to participate effectively in the broader community” (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007). Like the UK’s Prevent program, it came to do so largely through youth education programs aimed at steering the conduct of young Muslims away from adherence to Islamic theologies deemed terrorist and instead toward what the policy literature termed “mainstream” participation. As argued elsewhere (Patton 2014), the NAP was firmly embedded within counterterrorism discourse, representing Muslim religiosity as a potential barrier to the good citizenship practices that are understood to be the domain of an ethnically unmarked Australian “mainstream.” Here the Muslim youth subject is defined by what it lacks: national values and good civic comportment. Filling this void with state-approved theological narratives and values education is seen to be not only necessary but the only means of averting violent endpoints.

The extent to which young Muslims in Dandenong have come to be seen as problem subjects is particularly evident when narratives of multiculturalism can be seen to compete with narratives of Muslim deviance. In April 2015, two female year 11 students from Minaret College, a local Islamic high school, approached the City of Greater Dandenong council with an idea for an activity for its upcoming Youth Week celebrations. The students wanted to invite interested non-Muslim women to the Dandenong Library to meet and engage with young Muslims through the act of trying on a hijab. The council enthusiastically supported the activity as a means of facilitating “cross-cultural understanding” in the local community and recorded a short documentary about it for its online Youth Channel. One of the student organizers, 16-year-old Fatima, said that the event was a success: 15 women took part, she said, and their responses were overwhelmingly positive (news.com 2015).

Amid a string of articles with headlines such as “Cover yourselves, rate paying infidels” (Blair 2015), the mainstream media consistently labeled the activity a

government-driven “social experiment,” one that most commentators deemed a failure. The director of the Institute for Public Affairs claimed that the activity “encourages separateness”; Christians are the world’s most persecuted religion, he claimed, leading him to question why the council wasn’t encouraging residents to dress as Christians (Seven News 2015). Declaring it “absolute hare-brained idiocy,” conservative commentator Rita Panahi said that Muslim women had “no right to impose their values on the wider population” and that “if we are going to fully embrace the cultural practices of other countries, then perhaps we should ban women from driving. Or how about caning adulteresses in the Dandenong Civic Square?” (Pahani 2015) In a live interview with the mayor of Dandenong, radio DJ Tom Elliott repeated the same demand issued by a number of commentators: when will the council ask Muslim women to remove their headscarves and don bikinis in the name of understanding “mainstream” culture? Although the mayor insisted that non-Muslims were not forced to take part in the event, he struggled to explain why the two scenarios are not equivalent (3AW 2015). The council’s Facebook page, meanwhile, was inundated with overtly racist comments. The vitriol even spread internationally, most notably to Pamela Geller’s anti-Muslim hate site (Geller 2015).

Young Muslims in suburban Melbourne thus find themselves placed at the very center of public debates about the management of national social space, where intersecting anxieties over race, crime, and international politics are projected onto them. Political elites within the Muslim community have provided little in the way of alternative narratives. Frequently lambasted by mainstream politicians and media commentators for failing to rein in their delinquent youth, community representatives have tended to reproduce representations of young Muslims as deviant by drawing sharp distinctions between a peaceful, law-abiding, “moderate” Muslim majority and fringe-dwelling radicals. When the homes of young people connected to an Islamic bookshop in the Dandenong area were raided in 2012, for example, the Islamic Council of Victoria publicly thanked the police for carrying out the predawn raids with “cultural and religious sensitivity” (Lee et al. 2012). While young Muslims’ criticism of this is seldom aired outside arenas internal to the Muslim community, a small number of young people with experience in community politics have voiced their dissent in public. Mohamad Tabba, a PhD candidate and former spokesperson for the Islamic Council of Victoria, said of young Muslims who were publicly condemned by community leaders for a street protest over the depiction of the Prophet in a 2012 film:

As to the question of articulating these grievances correctly: this is the ironic and very sad part. These youth have been relying on their leaders – their representatives – to do exactly that on their behalf. Instead what they see is a leadership almost exclusively concerned with “portraying the correct image” of Muslims in the media. Rather than voicing their grievances, they see their leaders capitulating to representatives of the governments they accuse of Muslim oppression. Instead of protecting them from what are seen as some of the harshest anti-terrorism laws in the world, they see their leaders thanking police for raiding Muslim homes; they see their leaders as siding against them, rather than with them; they feel betrayed. (Tabbaa 2012)

Yassir Morsi, an academic and former president of the Muslim Student Association of Victoria, is equally scathing:

... many of today's Muslim-Australian leaders are, and I'm not exaggerating, almost entirely illiterate when it comes to understanding power in a post-modern society. They are the typical 'uncle' figure of a previous era, or worse: a new generation of business professional elites who equate running a community to running a business. (Savage 2014)

This is not to say that Tabbaa and Morsi's views are necessarily representative of their generation. They do, however, point to the increasing polarization of subject positions assigned to young Muslims: there is little space within public debate between enthusiastic members of what Prime Minister Tony Abbott calls "Team Australia" and those deemed to be extremists.

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### 3 Young Muslims' Images of Self and Belonging in the Suburbs

In one of his self-portraits, Ali chose to depict himself positioned in front of his car, flanked by two close friends and another younger boy. The car is a 1980s model Holden Commodore that Ali has carefully restored and customized with personalized number plates: ITS ALI. In one of the images, the three older teenagers have adopted tough "gansta" stances. The intimidating poses are clearly tongue in cheek, for the game is given away by the younger boy's inability to suppress an amused smile. Within the context of the youth group, the portrait could be considered representative of the good-natured teasing that Ali and his group of friends engaged in, as there were other "in jokes" in the image that were readily apparent to those who knew them. While the image was clearly designed to amuse friends and relatives, it also carried a message aimed at a broader public audience. As Ali said of it:

Lots of my identity now as a teenager has been the number plates – ITS ALI – so I thought, I gotta put this in, you know? It's a good sense of my identity in the fact that I'm proud of my name as well as not worried, not afraid to speak out so that everyone knows who I am. And then that sort of progressed into a group brotherhood sort of photo of who I've grown up with and that we've all got the same identity of, that we are Muslim Australian and, you know, having a Holden, which is an Australian car, with all the ethnic people in front of it, sort of bringing two worlds together. . .

While a number of youth group members used the portrait exercise to articulate their sense of pride in their culture of origin – through the use of national symbols such as flags and maps – representations of cultural mixing were common across the body of images produced. Most often these were not intended to be read simply as expressions of the successful integration of disparate cultural elements into a "hybrid" identity. In their discussion of the portrait activity, Ali and his friends were critical not only of the dominance of racialized representations of Australian

national identity but also their own tendencies to reproduce them through their own critical observations of “Aussie” culture. In this sense representations of “hybrid” subjectivities in the portrait activity constituted interventions into the politics of national identity. They presented a consciously disruptive normative vision of a more inclusive society premised upon the normalization of difference and the reduction of whiteness to a cultural resource like any other; in the case of Ali’s portrait, a car assigned equal symbolic weight to the non-White bodies surrounding it.

The need for this reimagining of national social space was particularly apparent in discussions of what it meant not to own a car. As the introduction indicated, the suburbs around Dandenong are not pedestrian friendly. Added to the frustration of long distances between bus stops and destinations and the absence of footpaths, walking in the local area also involved negotiating the terrain of Australian racism. As 17-year-old Yasmin explained:

With me I have to walk a lot, because I don’t have a car. I’m always walking here and there. Coz my school bus drops me off somewhere and I have to walk home. I get a lot of cars beeping at me, they stick their head out of the window and scream stuff, you know, or they rev their car up beside me like [imitates the sound].

*Does that sort of thing upset you?*

Yeah, but you get used to it. Then you can just smile and walk away. You can just go, “You sweat more so it makes you cooler!”

While having a quick rejoinder ready was a common way youth group members dealt with this kind of harassment, becoming used to it did not imply that it was not psychologically damaging. In one youth group session, a psychologist was invited to present a motivational talk about individual self-empowerment and how negative attitudes and poor self-image can be barriers to self-confidence. Nineteen-year-old Zhila was openly skeptical about this; she said that she sometimes felt acutely self-aware and lacked confidence when shopping at Dandenong Plaza, but the problem was not her attitude, but the fact that people sometimes stared at her in a hostile manner due to her headscarf, despite headscarves and even niqabs being a common sight in the shopping center: “As soon as they see this [points to headscarf], well it’s in the human being, they quickly judge, they don’t even want to know where I’m coming from. It’s like, “I already know”, coz they’ve heard something in the media.” Inas’ comments on a written youth group activity echoed this sentiment. When asked if other Australians generally accepted her Muslim identity, Inas wrote: “Yes, well not ‘generally’ because when I walk down the street I just see everyone staring at me because I’m the ‘scarf girl.’” Zhila was adamant that this hyperawareness could not be dismissed simply as negative self-image. Here she describes the immediate aftermath of a car accident she was involved in; while the car was severely damaged, Zhila and the other occupants – all of them young Muslim women – emerged shaken yet uninjured:

[...] we’d just had an accident, and we all stood around that area, around the car that had already crashed and this other car was really going fast. It was on the freeway so it was

going really, really fast. And in that split second he noticed the Muslim girls and he actually thought about swearing at us. How quick was that?

*So not, "Oh they've had an accident I'll see if I can help them"?*

No, no, no. Just because we were wearing the scarf. Why would you swear at someone who had just had an accident? We weren't even blocking the way or anything. How did he think as he was going past, "Oh, Muslim girls, let's swear at them!?" That's how quick their thought is, like let's assault them.

Hijabi youth group members were subjected to more of this behavior than other members given that they were easily recognizable as Muslim in the street. Those who did not wear the headscarf, however, were not immune. Mehri, for example, said that she had been frightened when a group of young men surrounded her and called her a "dirty Arab, even though I'm not Arab."

A recurring theme in discussions of racist abuse shouted from cars and similar incivility was that it was an ordinary part of everyday life. This is empirically supported by a Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report on the racism experienced by Muslim and Arab Australians in the wake of 9–11. Two-thirds of the report's respondents said that they had experienced racism in the street, ranging from verbal abuse and other rude or insulting behavior to spitting and physical attacks (Poynting and Noble 2004). This is similar to experiences reported by British Muslims (Lambert and Githens-Mazer 2010; Copsey et al. 2013). Despite the seriousness of some members' experiences of racism and discrimination while going about their daily business, youth group sessions were marked by a general reluctance to label Australia a racist or Islamophobic society. While all members agreed that racism and Islamophobia existed in Australia, they also felt that the nation's multicultural identity meant that those who make others feel excluded on the basis of ethnic or religious identity are "just idiots" who "don't deserve to call themselves Australian," as 15-year-old Meena put it. A shared commitment to a politics of what might be termed difference as norm informed both the images depicting the mixing and merging of cultural symbols mentioned above and contingent narratives of selfhood belonging. Mehri, for example, spoke of how "at home" she felt in Dandenong because of its diversity. When asked to specify what made diversity feel inclusive, she said that she felt a particular sense of community on the bus coming home from school because there was always an "old Italian nonna" with whom she could practice the Italian she was learning. Speaking about being bullied by "Aussie" kids at school over her headscarf, Zhila said that she was touched by the unexpected support she received from Indian Sikh boys, something she put down to the multicultural environment of school. Sisters Meena and Pareesa likewise said that they experienced a strong sense of social belonging at school due to its cultural diversity: "our school's so multicultural and there's heaps of everyone and so you don't have to feel different" (Meena).

Research involving young Muslims in Britain indicates that drawing on the language of multiculturalism to narrate one's sense self is a common way to negotiate racialized subject positionings (Valentine and Sporton 2009). Discursively constructing everyday racism as a form of social deviance certainly seemed to be a useful way for youth group members to forge a meaningful sense of social

belonging in a context in which their very right to belong was frequently called into question. However, locating racism in the actions of deviant individuals made identifying and critiquing institutional forms of racism difficult. A notable exception was another self-portrait created by Ali, which used a car number plate to metonymically signify and parody the dominant perception that youthful Muslim Australian masculinities are inherently violent (Dunn 2004; Collins et al. 2000). In a clear reference to the globally recognizable aesthetic of US crime mug shots, the portrait is a triptych consisting of three images in which he holds his car number plate – that which bears his name – as if it were a police identity board. His Muslim identity is clearly referenced by the kefiyah and taqiyah, both gifts brought back by his parents from a hajj trip that he wears with his usual outfit of fashionable street wear, flip-flops, and baseball cap. In the first image Ali stands square to the camera holding his number plate across his chest, his expression deadpan. The second image depicts this same pose from the side, again true to the mug shot form. In the third image he gives the game away, for he is deliberately lurching to one side with the number plate tilted, smiling cheekily. Ali's intent is immediately apparent: his portrait cleverly lampoons the stereotype of the young Muslim man as criminal by consciously mimicking it.

Ali's semiotic link between the car and criminalized Muslim masculinities is particularly apt in light of recent events involving teenagers in the Dandenong area accused of planning acts of terrorism. The trope of the delinquent ethnic "revhead" in particular has been a recurring feature of media portrayals of these so-called terror teens. Media reports of the first round of raids on the family homes of five teenagers frequently referred to the makes of the cars that the young people drove, with particular attention being paid to one boy's silver BMW. In one report, a neighbor's complaint that one of the teens performed "hoon burnouts" in the street was presented as evidence of his bad character (Rule 2015). But the portrait can be read not just as a comment on institutionalized forms of Islamophobic racism in the form of media representations of Muslim youth deviance. Young Muslims' experiences of racial profiling in the form of frequent and intrusive "stops and searches" have recently come to public attention after Victoria Police settled a high-profile civil case brought against them by six teenagers of African and Afghani backgrounds. The teenagers' claims included being repeatedly stopped for unwarranted reasons, being racially taunted, and being subjected to physical assaults by police officers, including assaults in custody (Donovan 2013; Seidel and Hopkins 2013).

Even where there is no physical violence involved, such experiences can have devastating outcomes for young people. Reflecting on his own teenage years growing up in outer suburban Melbourne, Mohamad Tabbaa (2013) writes about how young Muslims are unduly affected by what he calls the banality of police racism. He describes how routine harassment of Muslim teenagers on the roads and on public transport leads to them accumulating fines for minor or nonexistent ticketing, traffic, and vehicle infringements. Frequently passed over in favor of Anglo teens in the local low-skilled job market, with no means to pay small fines or service the interest that accrues on them, by the time they reach adulthood, they can

find themselves saddled with tens of thousands of dollars of debt. Tabbaa writes of carrying substantial debts from minor fines into his PhD, despite having no criminal record, and of friends with

debts upwards of \$50,000, after which their cars were repossessed, and they were sent to jail for lengthy periods. Many are never able to leave the jail-cycle after that first experience. . . . Most of my friends from my childhood and early adolescent days have ended up in jail, on the streets, on drugs, dead or simply unmotivated. I learnt only a few months ago that a close friend of mine hung himself in one of Victoria's jail cells.

Since the 2013 racial profiling case, some small measures have been taken to address the policing of young people in suburban Melbourne. Dandenong in particular is one of two localities where police and protective services officers are now required to provide a written receipt upon request for stop and searches on the street or on public transport (Police Accountability Project 2015).

The car also served as a symbol of belonging in several self-portraits by 19-year-old Zhila. One of her images depicts a small, older model, yet immaculately maintained blue hatchback parked in what looks like a rural location but is actually the grounds of one of Melbourne's largest universities. In another, the same car is shot from a different angle and Zhila and a friend are seen sitting on the parched grass in front of the car, smiling happily. Here Zhila explains what made her choose to photograph her car as a motif of her sense of self:

That's when life really starts when you have the car. You can go anywhere you want without having your parents take you there. There was all this stuff happening with Islamic activities before then and my dad never took me because he was always too busy and I really love to go, and now that I've got the car I don't even have to ask him to take me, I just come by myself and it's really good for me.

Zhila also explained in youth group sessions that her level of religious commitment had led to her experiencing quite serious problems with her father, whom, she said, expected her to discard certain religious practices when the family migrated to Australia several years earlier. The most difficult of these to negotiate was his desire that she no longer wear the headscarf. According to dominant public perceptions, familial rifts involving the headscarf involve its imposition on daughters by fathers and complicit mothers, often with policing by older brothers. This was not the case for youth group members. In the few instances where the headscarf was at the heart of domestic struggles, it was because it had become a material motif of parental anxieties over their daughters' abilities to fit in. Girls' future employment opportunities figured strongly among the fears that parent's projected onto the garment, echoing Gole's (1996) observations in the Turkish context. The hijab was a regular topic of weekly youth group discussions and was explored in multiple dimensions, from its significance within Islamic texts to the challenges of adopting a sign of stigma in a predominantly non-Muslim society. Group exercises that addressed issues concerning hijab included, for instance, quizzes on what the Qur'an says about it and writing letters to newspapers concerning MPs' periodic calls to have it

banned in schools. Being integrated into the youth group community thus provided Zhila with resources to help her articulate her choice to cover her hair, as well as support from adults who were able to help her negotiate what had seemed like an impossible situation.

Zhila's assertion that her car plays an important role in her religiosity by physically enabling her integration into an Islamic community is also relevant to another aspect of the discursive construction of the young Muslim as problem subject: their perceived exclusion from the religious life of the Muslim community. The dominance of Arabic-speaking preachers in mosques across the country is often believed to lead to young people's marginalization from the Muslim community because, being born and/or raised in Australia, they often do not possess the language skills necessary to fully participate in formal collective religious activities. This is said to cause disaffection, driving young Muslims toward sources of religious authority deemed unsavory, particularly the internet, thus leaving them vulnerable to extremist recruiters. David Irvine, the Director General of the Australian spy agency ASIO, has claimed that these disaffected young Australians are particularly valued by international jihadist groups as "English-language Islamic extremist propagandists," while some so-called moderate Muslim leaders have said that the appeal of certain controversial sheikhs lies mostly in their ability to articulate their messages in English (Shliebs 2014). Australia's Grand Mufti, Ibrahim Mohamed, has even couched the need for more religious facilities in counterterrorism terms, arguing in favor of the building of "mega-mosques" housing gymnasiums and other facilities as a means of combating youth radicalization (Bashan 2013).

The relationship between language, mosque attendance, and young people's religiosity in suburban Melbourne is more complex than this, however. Zhila, for example, was born in Iraq yet grew up in Iran after her family fled Saddam Hussein's anti-Shia regime; she therefore speaks fluent Farsi and considers it her first language. Despite the growing Persian and Dari speaking Afghan communities in and around Dandenong, at that time there was little in the way of regular formal religious activities conducted in Persian, or anything catering specifically to the needs of the Shia community. Even other Arabic-speaking participants spoke of the nuisance of having to travel to Shia mosques located on opposite side of the city to attend important religious events, such as the commemoration of the death of Imam Hussein. However, even a long commute would not have resolved the issue for Zhila. While both of her parents were born in Iraq and the youth association staff and members therefore recognized her as Iraqi, she in fact spoke almost no Arabic at all, which sometimes led to confusion and on at least one occasion good-natured teasing when she could not read from the Qur'an in Arabic. When I asked her why she didn't speak Arabic at home, she told me her father was in fact from a Turkish-speaking Iraqi minority, so the family spoke Turkish. But even for those who did have relatively easy access to a mosque where they could attend *khutbah* performed in English or a language in which they were proficient, this was not necessarily the kind of religious activity in which they most actively sought to engage, and nor was it what Zhila meant by the term "Islamic activities."



Contrary to the impression given by counterterrorism arguments in favor of young people's mosque attendance, young people themselves do not necessarily regard their integration into formal, spatially bound collectives such as mosques or youth groups as a pressing concern, regardless of the language spoken. While most participants in this study thoroughly appreciated the youth group, its regular, structured mode of participation was most suited to the needs of the younger members and their families. It was observed that in some cases, parents of younger members regarded it as a welcome form of free weekend childcare, particularly those who sent older siblings to attend as a means of organizing pickups and drop-offs. In early sessions, before the youth group facilitator clamped down on the behavior, a small number of male members aged in their late teens and early twenties were present at sessions yet did not take part in activities. Instead they sat at the back of the room impatiently jangling car keys and making frequent trips outside to look at each other's cars, as they waited for their younger brothers, sisters, or cousins to finish up. For those older members who took their participation more seriously, however, attendance was sometimes impractical due to the demands of high school or university exams and part-time work.

This did not, however, mean that older members therefore lacked adequate forums for religious engagement. Contrary to the popular image of an older generation well served by mosques at the expense of marginalized youth, young Australian Muslims living in major cities have far greater access to an ever growing number of resources for strengthening their *deen* (faith). In many cases, their participation in more diverse kinds of activities provides the opportunity to develop a much broader understanding of contemporary Islam than regular mosque attendance alone could offer. In a spatial sense, this did not entail eschewing "real"-world religious communities for cyberspace. The Internet, too often represented as a dark space of terrorist recruitment in relation to young Muslims, has been fundamental in facilitating the development of more fluid relationships with spatially bound forms of religious engagement. Integration into social media networks allows for the quick and easy sharing of information about activities held across the city, from reading circles to public sermons and lectures to university debates. As such, young people are afforded considerably more agency in shaping their religiosity to their own specific interests, as opposed to an older generation that is more dependent on what is provided by the local mosque. During time spent with the youth group, for example, older members drew on their social media connections in another city in order to circulate the itinerary of and thus attend the sermons of a popular sheikh who was visiting from overseas, even though neither he nor the masjids he was visiting had an Internet presence. They knew when and where often hastily organized protests over government policy and international conflicts were occurring and what was likely to be worth attending. And, perhaps more importantly, through Internet forums, they were able to share their views of the activities they physically attended with other young people, allowing them to carry on debates and discussions online long after the opportunity to do so in the physical realm had passed.

It is perhaps not surprising then that a considerable number of members included photographs of their computers in the artwork they produced as representative of their sense of self. From laptops framed by Spartan displays of neatly organized stationary to cluttered study spaces with computer monitors adorned with trinkets, the computer was the focal point of waking hour activity in almost all participants' personal space. When I began carrying out fieldwork among young Melbournian Muslims almost a decade ago, my research participants' Internet use tended to consume much of their spare time and was dominated by messaging and emailing. Here, 15-year-old Samira describes her daily after-school routine:

*I come home at three-thirty and I might not start my homework 'til four. Then I work until six, stop, have dinner then I go on the computer a bit, do this, do that, then I start again. When I go on the computer I message a bit, then do work, then message a bit. . . I get a bit distracted sometimes! I tend to do everything that needs to be done in writing first and then I go on the computer. So then I can enjoy myself and do work. . .*

While after-school socializing on MSN Messenger was undoubtedly the main activity performed online, the Internet was nevertheless a key component in collective political and religious discussion and debate. Even very young members used group emails as a means to distribute inspiring quotes from the Qur'an and notifications of upcoming religious events. During the Shia mourning period of Muharram, it was quite common to share graphic reminders of atrocities enacted against Muslims throughout the world via group emails. In 2014, several years after members had left the youth group, photographs of babies killed in Israeli airstrikes on Gaza were shared this way.

When this research began in the mid-2000s, user-generated web content was still in its infancy, with the mainstream adoption of Facebook and the advent of Twitter still some years away. Nevertheless, even then most of the young people had MySpace profiles and were avid participants in online forums such as Muslimvillage.com and Shiachat.com. As such, their level of knowledge of international affairs concerning Muslims often exceeded what could be gained through the Australian mainstream media. Speaking to the youth group about the French law banning headscarves in schools, it was surprising that that two high school-aged members were not only familiar with the law; they knew the names and personal circumstances of the two girls – Alma and Lila Levy – who were placed at the center of the debate in France after they were expelled from school. The mainstream media tended to represent it as an example of Gallic eccentricity, and, as indicated by a Factiva search, the names of the Levy sisters were not mentioned in Australian media coverage. When asked how they came to know so much about the affair, the young women said they had followed accounts of it on Muslimah blogs and discussed it in the sisters-only forum on Muslimvillage.com. For these digital natives, then, enacting their religiosity in cyberspace was not synonymous with their marginalization from more conventional “real-world” sites of religious engagement. Rather, the Internet provided an easily accessible space of informed discussion and debate and helped to shape feelings of transnational belonging to the

*umma* through connections with the plight of actors as far removed from one another (in a spatial sense) as French schoolgirls and Palestinian babies.

These observations echo broader scholarship on young Western Muslims' Internet use, which points to the development of alternative online public spheres that are distinctly Islamic in their social, moral, and political outlook (Aly 2012; Brouwer 2004; Bunt 2009; Spaiser 2012). While these forums for youth engagement may be beginning to receive scholarly attention, they tend not to figure in mainstream discourse on young Muslims, despite moral panics over terrorist organizations trawling social media for vulnerable young recruits.

In their study of young Australian Muslims' civic engagement, (Harris and Roose 2013) found that social media has consistently been overlooked in government reports on Muslim youth participation, yet a clear majority of the 80 young Muslims the researchers spoke with (60 %) said they actively participate in social media forums, including authoring their own blogs. Harris and Roose argue that the value of such forums is not only the opportunity for individual expression but also "the opportunity for exchanges as an equally entitled participant in the public sphere" (803). This notion of social media fostering more egalitarian modes of public participation has significant purchase with regard to the changing ways young Australian Muslims are relating to the Muslim community in terms of its political representation. By tagging self-appointed community leaders on Facebook and Twitter, young Muslims now have a direct and immediate means of questioning the authority of those who speak on their behalf. The potential for this kind of engagement to have meaningful impact became evident during Ramadan 2014, when young people who were fed up with harsh new anti-terrorism laws began a Facebook and Twitter campaign calling on Muslim leaders to boycott annual *iftar* dinners organized by the Australian Federal Police. While it is impossible to say whether leaders were directly responding to it or were following their US counterparts' boycotting of a Whitehouse *iftar*, the Muslim community's peak representative body, the National Council of Imams, pulled out of the dinners, along with numerous smaller organizations (Cannane 2014). When a similar campaign was run in 2015 and attracted even more attention, organizers claimed victory when the AFP circulated a notification of the cancellation of the dinners.

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## 4 Conclusion

As others have argued, Muslims have become modern-day folk devils in Australia's post-9/11 national psyche (Poynting and Noble 2006; Dunn et al. 2007). Young Muslims' religious identities are overdetermined to the extent that even innocuous activities are read through the lens of a clash of civilizations, evident here in the moral panic sparked by two 16-year-old schoolgirls' attempts to build a rapport with non-Muslim women in their local community by sharing their experiences of the hijab. In that respect, despite its continuing national commitment to multiculturalism (at least within public policy rhetoric), Australia is not significantly

different to countries like France, where multiple anxieties about the nation and its place in the world are projected onto the bodies of Muslim citizens.

Multiculturalism does, however, provide young Australian Muslims with a narrative resource that can help them forge a sense of belonging in the face of exclusionary social practices. But it is an “everyday multiculturalism” (Wise and Velayutham 2009) of difference as norm that is meaningful in this context, not the managerial narrative put forward through local government initiatives that reproduce the racialized subject positionings of White Australia even as they celebrate difference. As a political resource, however, this vernacular version of multiculturalism is limited by its capacity to describe and therefore challenge the relations of power underpinning racialized subject positionings. This is not the only way in which multiculturalism, the discursive frame most commonly used to articulate difference in a positive sense in Australia, is failing young Muslims. At present, their interests are not being adequately served by an outdated corporate model multiculturalism in which community elites – most often male – bear the burden of articulating increasingly diverse and often antagonistic subject positionings within their communities. This will certainly change: as the numbers of locally educated Muslim academics and activists grows, so too will the political capital needed to transform existing forms of political representation. In the meantime, however, there is little in place within the sphere of formal political engagement to challenge the dominant trope of the unruly Muslim youth subject.

The second part of this chapter was grounded by the theme of mobilities in very literal terms, in the form of narratives generated by the technologies – cars and computers – that young people use to navigate through their lifeworlds. One important conclusion that can be drawn from this concerns mobilities in a more abstract sense. This examination of young Muslims’ relationships with material mobility-enabling technologies suggests the need for a change in the way scholars in the social sciences use mobility in a metaphoric sense in relation to minority youth identity formation. In the popular imagination, being “caught between two cultures,” as Ali Batoor said in relation to Numan Haider, remains a common explanatory frame for understanding minority youth subjectivities. While earlier social scientific studies of young Western Muslims adhered to the trope of an individual identity crisis caused by this positioning (cf. Anwar 1994), more recently this has been replaced by the concept of “hybrid” subjectivities formed out of the successful integration of different cultural resources (cf. Asher 2008; Dallaire and Denis 2005; Marotta 2008). Whether it involves standing frozen or successfully negotiating, both of these analytic frames envisage a subject that is in a state of movement between the poles of home and host culture. The fieldwork presented here does not support this privileging of “culture” as a conceptual frame of reference for understanding Muslim youth subjectivities. The emergence of new publics, imaginative re-workings of narratives of nationhood, and alternative modes of enacting religiosity explored are not insights into how individuals manage the burden of culture. They are, rather, glimpse of the new political subjectivities that are emerging in the postsecular West.

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Karen Wells

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	216
1.1	Liminality and Child Subjects .....	218
1.2	Religious Belief, Liminality, and Social Recognition .....	220
1.3	Neonaticide, Infanticide, and Precarious Personhood .....	221
1.4	Language and the Young Subject .....	222
1.5	The Cultural Logic of Genital Cutting or the Painful Road to Adulthood .....	224
2	Conclusion .....	228
	References .....	228

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## Abstract

This chapter argues for the explanatory efficacy of conceptualizing childhood as a liminal space and children as liminal subjects. It argues for recognition of an ontological difference between children and adults that make children's personhood precarious and insists on the importance of children's social relationships for their material and symbolic survival. The chapter begins with an account of liminality in childhood and then moves on to explore how liminality renders the child sacred in the double sense of divine/otherworldly and sacrificial. This is particularly marked in infancy when the child is most vulnerable to bodily harm. The entry of the child into the symbolic order when he or she learns to talk is then explored to emphasize how speech is taken to be the signifier of human culture and asks what is the subject before speech? The child's gradually increasing competence in language shadows or parallels the gradual decrease in its liminal position – a dance between culture and nature which eventually brings the child to the threshold of adulthood. If infancy marks one particularly

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intense moment in the liminality of the child, adolescence marks another. This chapter explicates genital cutting as a form of bodily injury that is explicitly related to the transition from one identity (child) to another (gendered adult).

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### Keywords

Age-grade system • British infanticide law • Language • Liminality in childhood. See personhood • Personhood • Genital cutting, cultural logic of • Language • Neonaticide and infanticide • Religious belief and social recognition • Religious/cultural rituals • Rites of passage • Social recognition

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## 1 Introduction

Children are universally recognized as lacking in social and cultural power, that is to say as vulnerable subjects or precarious persons. Childhood studies has come close to asserting that these lacks are socially constructed in the same way that “race” and gender are socially constructed (that is to say as discursively constituted social fictions that have powerful social effects but that are not related to biology, as they generally claim to be). For childhood studies the remedy for the lack of social recognition accorded to children is to reimagine or discursively constitute children as effectively the same kinds of people as adults are imagined to be: rational, independent, autonomous, and secular. To accomplish the elision of differences between adults and children, childhood studies generally insists on the irrelevance of children’s biological or material capacities to their constitution as subjects.

Childhood studies has modeled itself on the struggles of other groups to be included in the contested category of humanness (Mayall 2002) or recognized as fully human. The exclusion of categories of persons from the label “human” is bound up with the operation of power and has been secured through the exercise of violence (Bourke 2011). These exclusions are political and social of course, not biological. The persons excluded recognize themselves to be human. It may therefore seem that children can be added to the long list of persons who have demanded recognition.

Children are biologically human so to be recognized as such may be thought to simply require an acknowledgement of an existing fact (an inscription, e.g., such as a birth certificate or a ceremony such as a baptism or a circumcision or simply an enunciation by others that he or she is human). The only impediment to the recognition of children as humans might be thought to be when the adults with whom they share some aspect of their social identity, for example, a nationality or ethnicity, has been refused full social recognition as human through the operations of racism.

However, this chapter argues that the exclusion of children (as a generation or age category rather than part of a wider subject position, say as a racialized minority) is not the same as the exclusion of groups of people (adults and children) from the category “human.” In contrast to the general trend in childhood studies, this chapter argues that the child is ontologically different to adults.

This ontological difference is played out in, *inter alia*, the contestation around when or how a fetus or a newborn or even an infant becomes recognized as fully human. Even within a clearly demarcated geographical space (e.g., a nation), competing ideas may circulate in different institutions about when personhood is conferred, so that a child may be recognized as a person in law but not culturally or socially, or a stillborn child may be recognized as a person within a specific cultural context, e.g., a pregnancy loss group, but not within wider social or legal domains. The controversy over the use of the removal of organs from the bodies of children who had died during surgery and of stillborn infants and fetuses at Alder Hey Hospital in Liverpool, England, for medical research is one such instance of competing concepts of personhood that circulated among, in this case, medical personnel and parents (Dewar 2004).

That the biological facts of existence are insufficient to guarantee personhood is a claim which is fundamental to the anthropology of childhood (Montgomery 2009) and has recently found purchase in children's geographies (Holt 2013; Wells 2014). As the anthropologist Wendy James notes "'Recognition' implies a pragmatic acceptance, conferring on the embryo, foetus, or infant at the least a provisional 'personhood' and an extension of basic physical care. This is not universal or automatic. Not all early human life is socially 'recognized' in this sense and partly as a consequence of the nature of such recognition *not all survives* [sic]" (James 2000, p. 170, emphasis added). Recognition is critical to the ability of the infant or child to survival. Although social recognition is a necessary part of all subjectivity the relationship between survival and social recognition is much more attenuated for adults than it is for children. This contestation around personhood and the dependence of children on others means that childhood may be conceptualized as a liminal space occupied by liminal subjects.

This chapter argues for the explanatory efficacy of a conceptualization of the child as a liminal subject. It argues that childhood is a liminal space overlaid or punctured by a series of liminal moments that include birth, infancy, the acquisition of speech, and the transition to a gendered adulthood. The chapter begins with an account of liminality in childhood and then moves on to explore how liminality renders the child sacred in the double sense of divine/otherworldly and sacrificial. This is particularly marked in infancy when the child is most vulnerable to bodily harm. The entry of the child into the symbolic order when he or she learns to talk is then explored to emphasize how speech is taken to be *the* signifier of human culture and asks what is the subject before speech? The child's gradually increasing competence in language shadows or parallels the gradual decrease in its' liminal position – a dance between culture and nature which eventually brings the child to the threshold of adulthood. If infancy marks one particularly intense moment in the liminality of the child, adolescence marks another. This chapter explicates genital cutting as a form of bodily injury that is explicitly related to the transition from one identity (child) to another (gendered adult).

Central to practices of recognition or the conferment of social personhood is the involvement of an organism in networks of social relations. Children and infants

(and even fetuses) may not themselves be the bearers of rights in any meaningful sense, but “they bear a relationship to others who may hold such rights and who are prepared to recognize and care for them, to confer a link on the model of ‘I/Thou’ with them” (James 2000, p. 177). Infants may be thought of as “‘partial persons’ . . . made complete by the social, ritual, and nurturing actions of others” (Butt 1998, p. 21 cited in Gottlieb 2004, p. 45). It is this partialness or precariousness of subjecthood that places the child(hood) in a liminal space. The conclusion of this chapter argues that childhood studies should consider shifting its focus from “recognition” of children’s (independent) agency to recognition of the precariousness of children’s subjecthood and the importance of children’s social relationships for their material and symbolic survival.

## 1.1 Liminality and Child Subjects

Prior to the development of language, the infant or young child has to rely on others to speak for them and to invest them with subjectivity. It is this ontological difference between young children and other humans that places the child in a special category which we might recognize as sacred or sentimental. This special character of the young child, their distinctiveness in relation to other humans, makes them vulnerable to harm because they occupy a liminal space of non-personhood. The desire to think of the child as sacred in the sense of divine and therefore as one whom it is impossible to harm overshadows the recognition of the child as sacred in the sense of sacrificial and therefore always vulnerable to harm.

Liminality is betwixt and between cultural categories that we are deeply invested in. To be confronted with a being who destabilizes these categories because they exist outside of them may be deeply discomfoting (Burman 1999). In increasingly aging societies where it is possible, for perhaps the first time in human history, for adults to not know any children and to not see them in public spaces (because of the sequestering and institutionalization of childhood), the disconcerting effect of being with a person who is outside language, who is ontologically so different to oneself, may be further amplified because it is so unfamiliar. Furthermore, in a secular society that disavows the uncanny, the uncanniness of the infant may be a source of terror as much as of joy.

Rites of passage that are universally observed in the life of the young child also suggest that the acceptance of children into social personhood or their recognition as human is far from automatically assured. In most cultures religious/cultural rituals mark the beginnings of the infant’s entry into culture that is to say into social personhood and humanness (Hannig 2014). Such rituals include baptism (Meador and Shuman 2000), infant circumcision, inscriptions on the infant body (Gottlieb 2004, p. 237; Popenoe 2004, p. 147 cited in Hannig 2014, p. 299), the wearing of amulets and wristbands (Gottlieb 2004, p. 85), and naming ceremonies.

As Hannig observes in her research on childbirth and seclusion among the Amhara, birth renders both child and mother spiritually vulnerable and dangerous when “[b]eing not fully one thing or another, mother and child inhabit a temporary state of liminality” (Ibid, p. 296). Rites of passage generally place people in liminal spaces and, on their completion, inaugurate them into a new relationship to the social order. These rites of passage instead acknowledge the child’s already liminal status and serve to attach the child to a culturally meaningful personhood. Such ceremonies may even be practiced for a stillborn baby or neonatal death in which case it inaugurates the baby’s entry into social personhood making it possible to acknowledge their existence and grieve their loss.

Rites of passage take people out of their everyday lives and place them in a new space and then return them to their life with a new social position. Infants and newborns are removed from their previous state not by culture but through birth (which is not to deny that birth itself is a cultural practice). Birth brings them into a liminal space and cultural practices, of varying degrees of formality, initiate them into social personhood. Yet this initiation does not secure a full personhood for them, since this is deferred until they can claim adulthood. So, in some sense childhood itself is a liminal state, even if it is punctuated by rites of passage that move children through various degrees or intensities of liminality. Liminality might also, to use another register, be thought of as queerness.

Childhood is a liminal space between animal and human, the spirit world and this world, nature and culture, wild and civilized. It is, as Victor Turner famously says a place or a state “betwixt and between” (Turner 1966). The liminal body is neither one thing nor another; it is not a boy or man, not a girl or a woman, but a nonperson, suspended between social states. Rather than juxtapose the child to the adult in a series of binaries, as is usually proposed, this schema identifies the child as in a state of suspension or movement between these oppositions, constantly reaffirming and yet also destabilizing them. There is considerable evidence, largely from the ethnographic record, that this is the case. Children are not bound by the laws that others are bound by, they are frequently believed to be interlocutors for the spirit world and even themselves ghosts or spirits (Allotey and Reidpath 2001; Denham et al. 2010), and, similarly, spirits may be conceptualized as children (Sinnott 2014).

Liminality is usually understood as a spatializing of cultural forms. This suggests that we may ask: where is the liminal space that the child occupies? Is the child in a liminal place that is analogous to the initiate’s spatial separation in the bush and, if they are, where is it? This chapter proposes that the site or space of liminality for the child is her own body. For this too is a space betwixt and between. Clearly the child’s body is material; her experiences and desires visceral. Yet, the child’s body is not what the adult’s body is (or is fantasized to be): complete, bounded, and unambiguously gendered. The difference of the child’s body from that of the youth or the adult cannot be ignored when thinking about how the subject comes into existence. The softness of the young child’s body surely affects how others relate to her; the smallness of their bodies affects their geographies (how far

they can travel, what heights they can see, the ability of others to carry them); and the sexlessness of the prepubescent child whose gender is hidden unless naked makes visible the arbitrariness of gendered identity. Their constant change is itself a source of instability for categorization.

## 1.2 Religious Belief, Liminality, and Social Recognition

The liminal status of the child is made most visible in religious belief where a range of practices inscribe humanness on/to the child in an effort to separate the child from the spirit/other world in which they are presumed to have had a preexistence. Although this belief in children having come from the afterlife (Gottlieb 2004) is mostly associated with animistic religions, it is also evident in some form or another in all the monotheistic religions.

In Islamic doctrine the fetus becomes a baby in utero at 120 days when, according to the *Hadith*, an angel breathes life into it. Alison Shaw, in her research with Muslim women in an English town, was told by her respondents that customary practice denies social personhood to a child who is born dead, but a child who is born live but dies immediately will be recognized as a person if she or he has the *azan* whispered into her ear (Shaw 2014). Shaw points out that this is a customary practice, and not part of Islamic law, suggesting the importance of culturally specific context to the practice of conferring social personhood on the very young. A similar distinction between birth and personhood is made by Sierra Leonean Muslims living in the USA who take the child's naming ceremony as the inauguration of their social identity (D'Alisera 1998).

In her research with Amhara (Orthodox Christian) women in Northern Ethiopia, Hannig says that her respondents professed no attachment to a child who was miscarried, stillborn, or died in infancy. The body of an unbaptized child "is neither washed, nor bound, nor sprinkled with holy water before the funeral" (2014, p. 304) since the child is not considered a Christian. In fact her respondents said that they did not feel a sense of grief or bereavement over the loss of their newborn or stillborn child: "[o]nly after having 'seen' – that is, having come to know a child grow, eat, or behave *like a human being* in other ways – do women say that they feel sadness or grief over this child's passing" (Hannig 2014, p. 305, emphasis added). Hannig notes that the ethnographic literature indicates a denial of personhood to the newborn child in diverse cultures, citing Stasch (2009) on historical infanticide among the Korowai of West Papua and Pina-Cabral's (1986) research in Minho.

Among the Beng, in Cote d'Ivoire, babies are believed to have come from the "afterlife," the world of the ancestors and the spirits and to still be connected to that world (Gottlieb 2004). The idea that children are connected to a spiritual world in which they existed before coming to this world is prevalent in many religious and folk belief systems, cross-culturally. In Japan there is a widespread Buddhist belief that the aborted fetus has spiritual powers that need to be appeased or the fetus will haunt the "mother" (Moskowitz 2001).

Among the Nankani, subsistence farmers in Northern Ghana, infants up to the age of 12 months, and sometimes older, may be diagnosed as spirit children if their births are coterminous with misfortune or they have particular characteristics which are associated with animals (e.g., being born with teeth), or anomalous (e.g., having large heads). Denham et al. (2010) comment that “From the perspective of the Nankani, spirit children are bush spirits born into a family in human form. Although they appear human, spirit children are not human beings and are not regarded as persons” (2010, p. 611).

The facts of corporeal existence then are not sufficient or even necessary to secure or refute the human status of the young child – a never-born child may be given humanlike status and conversely a child may be denied human status if they die young or show signs of still being with the spirit world. The precariousness of the young child’s human status is not only seen in religious cultures but is also shown in the legal status and social attitudes toward neonaticide and infanticide.

### 1.3 Neonaticide, Infanticide, and Precarious Personhood

Infanticide and neonaticide are often linked to birth control in developing countries, but such a functionalist explanation for child murder is unconvincing, particularly given the persistence of infant murder in the developed world, for example, “between 2001 and 2005 a total of 2402 children less than 2 years of age died from a homicide in the United States” (Malmquist 2013 citing Fujiwara 2009). In many US states, injury to a pregnant woman which causes miscarriage is classed as homicide (Smith 2000), which therefore suggests that fetuses are legal persons. Although the crime of feticide is intended to protect pregnant women from assault, it has recently been used in the USA to charge women who have sought abortions for reasons of sex selection.

In many countries a distinction is made between infanticide and other forms of homicide. This distinction between neonaticide (murder within 24 h of birth) and infanticide (murder of a child under 12 months old) is based on the observed differences in the circumstances of mothers who kill their newborn babies and mothers who kill infants (Resnick 1970). Mothers who kill their newborn babies are often in a state of denial about their pregnancy. They are likely to be young, living with their parents, and with no or ineffective involvement of the baby’s father in their lives.

In the USA, although neonaticide and infanticide are not distinguished in statute from homicide, in practice a distinction is made between these forms of murder (Shelton et al. 2010) as well as between these and child murder; whether charges are brought against a woman/girl who kills her child in the first 24 h seems to be dependent on a range of factors other than the fact of the intentional death of a newborn (Malmquist 2013). In Malmquist’s article two cases of neonaticide are described. In one, for which the 16-year-old mother was found guilty of first degree murder, the mother “immediately [after giving birth] took a knife and stabbed the infant multiple times and placed the infant in a garbage disposal bin” (2013, p. 403).

In the second case a young mother on giving birth left the infant to die and drove herself to hospital when she realized that she was hemorrhaging. No case was brought against her. Malmquist argues that the treatment of the newborn depends on a similar understanding of what confers personhood as for the fetus. He notes that

It is argued that the foetus per se lacks full intrinsic value since it lacks the capacities that make a person fully human, such as awareness, capacity to feel, rationality, and self-consciousness. The inference is that a foetus, as well as an immediate newborn would lack the full legal, ethical, and moral rights associated with being human since they are nascent humans. (Malmquist 2013, p. 404)

The “nascent human” status of the newborn allows the literature on infanticide to focus primarily on the mother’s state of mind (and it is predominately mothers who kill infants) and the reasons why mothers should be excused for full culpability of the murder of their children (Anand 2010). The British Infanticide Law 1938, still in force, allows for a woman not to be charged with murder if

the balance of her mind was disturbed by reason of her not having fully recovered from the effect of giving birth to the child or by reason of the effect of lactation consequent upon the birth of the child, then, notwithstanding that the circumstances were such that but for this Act the offence would have amounted to murder, she shall be guilty of felony, to wit of infanticide. (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/1-2/36/section/1>)

In 2005 judges reviewing the conviction of a woman who had murdered her 3-month-old son, called for the law to be reviewed to, in effect, include a failure to bond as mitigation for the murder of a child under 12 months (Frith 2005). It is hard to imagine that the study of the murders of any other group of people would be so focused on exonerating and indeed sympathizing with their killers. This attention to the state of mind of the mothers is indicative of the absence of personhood invested in the infant (although it is also important to recognize that the legal ambivalence about the actions of young mothers who kill their newborn infants is partly a response to the ambiguous personhood of the young mother who herself is between childhood and adulthood).

## 1.4 Language and the Young Subject

The focus of this chapter so far has been on the prelinguistic child and the liminal status that their ontological difference to other humans places them in. The chapter has showed that both religious and secular orders are ambivalent about the humanness of the young child and that this ambivalence is played out paradoxically in a simultaneous disregard for and a special regard for the young child. This paradox may be thought of as being indicative of or arising from the sacred character of the young child in both the sense of divine and of sacrificial. The emphasis of this

chapter on the child's body is in contrast to the psychoanalytical/post-structural emphasis on the entry into language as the inauguration of the subject.

The entry into the symbolic order, whether that is taken to be the psychoanalytic "mirror stage" or its linguistic accompaniment ("me"), is understood in post-structural theory to be the inauguration of the subject. It is at this moment that the child understands that she is not a unity with the world but is separate from it and that she does not therefore control the world but is controlled by it. Yet if language is the point at which the subject comes into existence and there is no subject that preexists speech, then who or what is it that exists prior to this moment and what is its relationship to the subject, what does it mean to say that the infant has a subjectivity, and, conversely, if the prelinguistic infant does not have a subjectivity then what, exactly, is she or he (if it is even possible to speak of a gendered nonsubject)?

The entry into the symbolic order or better, the child's grasping of their entry into the symbolic order, cannot be a singular event but a series of moments and repetitions, returns, and refusals. That is to say, the first recognition that "I" am not the world cannot be an epiphany or even an inauguration, because the child is already part of the symbolic order prior to this moment, rather it is a moment in a gradual unfolding and folding into the self of subjectivity. This folding involves the recognition of the other who enables the recognition of the self. Yet the recognition of the other is not initially a linguistic act, it rather emerges out of the infant's desires and drives.

Judith Butler's work and in particular her investigation of the general conditions of the formation of subjectivity, *The Psychic Life of Power*, is perhaps helpful here (Holt 2013). As Butler says, we are used to thinking of power as what presses on the subject (already existing) from the outside but, she argues, "Subjection consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency" (Butler 1997, p. 2). This discourse (in language) does not come from the child (who cannot speak) but is enacted on and shapes the interactions of others with the child. Furthermore, this submission for the child is a consequence of her "passionate attachment to those on whom he or she is fundamentally dependent" (Butler 1997, p. 7) and the inescapable desire to be part of social existence since "Where social categories guarantee a recognizable and enduring social existence, the embrace of such categories, even as they work in the service of subjection, is often preferred to no social existence at all" (Butler 1997, p. 21).

It is the infant's drive for life and desire for nurture (food and warmth, but also, and perhaps most importantly, touch) that compels its interactions with others, the same interactions ("passionate attachment" in Butler's words) that will lead to its will being subordinated by others. Furthermore, Butler suggests (following Nietzsche and Freud) that the turning back of the drive on itself is the basis for the formation of conscience which produces the internality that is also at the heart of subject formation. This turning back on itself of the drive is also not necessarily accomplished through linguistic injunctions for the child but is likely to involve violence (hitting), exclusion, or other actions on the child's body.



So, the infant and the (prelinguistic) child already have a passionate attachment(s) to those who are around him or her that preexists the child's entry into language. The child necessarily attaches to those who make her life literally possible – feed, wash, and shelter and comfort the child but also, potentially, harm the child. In the formation of these attachments the interpellation and inscription of the child as a gendered and often racialized person begins from the moment that the child enters the world, and entry into the world should be thought of not as birth but as an entry into the social and cultural imaginary which generally predates birth by at least some weeks, if not months. These interpellations and inscriptions are working on a substance, so to say, that is not fully human or not felt to be fully human.

Occupying a precarious relationship to subjectivity and even after their inauguration into the symbolic order through language having nonetheless an incomplete grasp of it, means that they are not recognized as fully human. Children in short do not occupy full social personhood. Their liminality makes them sacred in both the double sense of sacrificial and divine. This sacred quality of children, which in religious cultures tends to associate children with the spirit world and in secular cultures with optimism and playfulness, arises out of their liminal status. At the same time, the ambivalence of this position makes them vulnerable to violence and means that harms that would not be legally or culturally allowed for full humans are allowed to them.

## **1.5 The Cultural Logic of Genital Cutting or the Painful Road to Adulthood**

So far this chapter has been concerned with the early years of childhood. It has argued that, contrary to the post-structuralist emphasis on the child's entry into language, subject formation necessarily precedes this accomplishment. Yet it is a precarious subjectivity. The acquisition of competence in the symbolic order and the internalizing of subjectivity do not eliminate but certainly attenuates this precariousness through the course of the child's life. The rest of this chapter is concerned with genital cutting as a rite of passage that makes gendered adults out of children. This is to suggest that there are some periods in the child's life which are more intensely liminal than other periods. The first of these, the space between not-being-in-the world and being-in-the world or from nonexistence to childhood, is one such long period stretching from birth or before birth to the acquisition of language or full competency in speech. The second is from around puberty to social recognition as an adult.

Among communities that do not practice genital cutting it can seem so self-evidently violent and cruel that it defies explanation. The purpose of this section is not to justify genital cutting, but to show that it has a cultural logic that makes its abandonment difficult to contemplate in cultures where it is seen as central to the acquisition of adulthood. It explores how genital cutting is bound up with deeply held beliefs about what makes gender and about how children become adults and what the relationship is between gender and adulthood. It therefore situates genital

cutting within an overlapping cycles of liminality. If the child's body is the first liminal space of childhood, a liminality which is partially resolved by various rites of passage that inaugurate the child into sociocultural personhood (and which may include genital cutting), the final liminal space as the child enters adulthood may take any number of forms. In cultures where initiation is practiced, the geographical space in which the child's body is held and her or his genitals are cut is the final liminal space of childhood. It separates the body of the initiate from culture in order to reintegrate him or her into culture with an altered consciousness of self. In communities where an age-grade system organizes age groups into generational groups, circumcision is a central element in entering or confirming youth into age grades. In communities where there is not an age-grade system, circumcision at puberty signifies the child's transition into adulthood and establishes the precondition for him or her to become an adult. In all cases where genital cutting is practiced at puberty, it is informed by a cultural logic that makes it impossible for a person to accomplish social adulthood, which is to say the recognition and respect that accompany adulthood in contrast to childhood, without being subjected to genital cutting (Mavundla et al. 2010; Njambi 2007; Thomas 2000; Vincent 2008).

The formation of age-grade collectives is a feature of many communities in Kenya, and in the past circumcision was necessary to secure the entry of a youth into his or her age grade. In Kenya, for the Maasai (Berntsen 1976) the Kikuyu (Robertson 1996; Thomas 2000) the Kaguru (Beidelman 1997) and the Meru (Thomas 2000), the ideal transition to a gendered adulthood is not an individual event but a collective experience. Through the collective ritual of circumcision, a new age grade is inaugurated and its members form a new age set, a generation. The co-members of a person's age grade are a lifelong source of solidarity and support for both men and women (Njambi 2007; Robertson 1996).

Age grades are part of a gerontocratic structure of power (Robertson 1996). Older age grades and seniors exercise authority over younger age grades and juniors. Since there are separate age grades for men and women, the age-grade system produces a space within which older women exercise power and authority over younger women and, at least in areas related to sexual politics, over men. Claire Robertson (1996, p. 620) convincingly suggests that female initiation survived mostly because of the, albeit delimited, space of power that it opens for senior women, "rather than to blind tradition, naked patriarchal power, or a type of false consciousness." She adds that this "[g]erontocratic organization for women was extremely important and reluctantly surrendered" (ibid).

Although the age-grade system and gerontocratic power is reluctantly surrendered, Robertson also claims that the age-grade system has become less important as a site for women's organization in the wake of other changes in women's economic role in the postcolonial state. She suggests that the decline in the practice of initiation among younger women may be attributed to the diminishing importance of the age-grade system (ibid, p. 630). Confirming Robertson's claims that initiation has persisted because of its importance to the formation of age grades, Pedersen (1991, p. 678) also claims that the postcolonial government's success in reducing the practice among the Kikuyu was an effect of the age-grade system

falling into disuse under the impact of other economic changes and the practice therefore, becoming, in the words of one of Davison (1989, p. 121) informants, “useless.”

Not all communities who practice genital cutting do so in order to form age grades. The most severe form of “circumcision” that is practiced widely in Northern Sudan is not connected to age grades, but is necessary for a girl to become a moral adult. It involves the excision of the clitoris and the internal labia and the paring of the outer labia which is then sutured or stitched to produce a smooth, closed genital area, with only a small hole for the release of urine and menstrual blood. Although the actual form that cutting takes, as well as its connection to generational relations, is different in Sudan and Kenya, in both countries the purpose of cutting is to remove what is considered anomalous and/or polluting in the gendered adult.

The focus of academic and policy interest in female circumcision has largely been on strategies to eradicate it in the name of ending violence against women and girls (Njambi 2007). For this reason there has not been the same level of interest in either understanding the cultural logic of male circumcision or in eradicating it. However, wherever female circumcision is practiced, male circumcision is also practiced. The reverse is not true, there are many communities in Africa and elsewhere (including, of course in Europe and North America) who circumcise boys but not girls. However, the exclusion of girls from circumcision (when boys are still circumcised) may suggest the continued exclusion of girls from full social personhood, rather than recognition of their right to bodily integrity.

In any event, from the point of view of communities that practice circumcision on boys and girls, it makes no sense to outlaw circumcision of girls but not of boys; socially and symbolically the practices are analogous and complementary to one another. This is not to deny the physical differences and the medical complications that arise from them for girls and boys but to emphasize the social and symbolic equivalence between male and female circumcision.

One equivalence between male and female genital cutting is in the cutting away from women’s genitals of what is identified as male, and the cutting away from men’s genitals of what is identified as female. So, for example, Janice Boddy (2007), who has worked as an anthropologist with women in Northern Sudan for many years, maintains that for her respondents “concealment” is a feminine attribute. This is congruent with a range of Islamic practices intending to conceal women (examples are the wearing of the hijab, the niqab, and purdah). The foreskin in this cosmology is therefore anomalous because it conceals the penis. Similarly, the clitoris is anomalous because it is exposed. Indeed, and congruent with this idea of concealment, Boddy (2007) reports that sometimes the clitoris is not cut away but is covered over by the stitched-together external labia.

If the Northern Islamic Sudanese make a specific association between adult female sexuality and concealment and the Maasai conversely associate adult female sexuality with openness (Talle 2007), this difference should not obscure

the underlying similarity: that the child's genitals have to be modified to enable the transition to adulthood. It is not hard to understand why the genitals are the bodily site on which the accomplishment of adulthood is inscribed. Although it has been suggested by some that the cut of the genitals is analogous to the cutting of the umbilical cord and signifies a kind of second birth (Njambi 2007) the cutting of the genitals also insists on the importance of reproduction to adulthood and to adult sexuality.

Genital cutting involves pain, and this is also a shared and important function of ritualized circumcision. As one of Davison (1989, p. 22) Kikuyu informants told her "one must buy maturity with pain" (cited in Robertson 1996, p. 622). To bear the pain of circumcision without crying out is taken as the first indication that the initiate has the strength of character to become an adult. In a similar explanation for the pain involved in circumcision and its relationship to adulthood, this time among the Sara in Chad, Leonard reports that

Initiation, which typically occurs during adolescence, is the Sara's primary ritual event. The ceremony is designed to educate Sara youth to be responsible members of the adult community, to venerate their ancestors and to respect the group's traditions. During this period, character traits valued by the Sara – strength, bravery, endurance and industry – are inculcated through a series of rites; with few exceptions, ritual circumcision is the principal rite associated with the female ceremony. At the core of the lengthy and multifaceted initiation ritual is the belief that individuals are born with two distinct souls or spirits. *The undesirable, child-like spirit is called koy, and must be permanently expelled from the individual around adolescence.* At the same time, the mature, adult spirit, called ndil ke madji, is drawn out and developed. In its most general sense then, ritual initiation involves shedding the koy and celebrating the emergence of the ndil ke madji. The 'death' of the child and the development of the 'new', adult person are accomplished through rites which teach initiates to endure pain and physical deprivation with the dignity, character and spirit of an adult (1996, p. 258, emphasis added).

This association of maturity with being capable of bearing pain is one reason why hospital circumcision does not always confer adult status on circumcised youth. However, this is not always the case. In Sudan much of the ritual that used to accompany circumcision is no longer practiced and hospital circumcision with anesthetic is as culturally acceptable as any other kind of circumcision. In contrast, among the Xhosa, who only circumcise boys, hospital circumcision does not confer adulthood on the boy. In effect, the Xhosa boy circumcised in hospital is not regarded as having been circumcised and therefore can never attain social adulthood (Vincent 2008; Mavundla et al. 2010). As recently as 2007 the Maasai continued to see "circumcision ceremonies as generational initiation rites, part of a process where wasichana [girls] become wanawake [women]" (Koomen 2014, p. 255). Hence, genital cutting is a culturally complex practice that confers on girls and boys the precondition for becoming a morally respected adult. This suggests why girls and their mothers remain attached to this practice despite global and national campaigns against it since the colonial period.

## 2 Conclusion

Genital cutting is a very obvious instance of how violence is marked on the bodies of children in order for them to enter the social order. Other body modifications (ear piercing on girls being perhaps the most widely done) on children are widely practiced and, although often less painful than cutting, should also be seen as part of the same set of cultural practices that justify pain in order to make the social and cultural order and to make (gendered) people out of (human) animals. The otherwise puzzling fact that children suffer a disproportionate degree of harm despite the axiomatic recognition of their vulnerability can be explained through the schema offered here.

Childhood studies grasped the exclusion of children from full social recognition and has tried to address or remedy this exclusion primarily through reconfiguring the child as effectively the same as an adult: rational, independent, quotidian, or secular (in contrast to sacred). This has necessitated the elision of the biological capacity of the child and of the specificity of the child's relationship to subject formation, particularly the prelinguistic child. This strategy understands the child to be oppressed in the same ways that other socially excluded groups have been/are oppressed; in other words that claims about their specific nature are not recognition but misrecognition. This chapter is arguing instead for children's geographies to engage with children's liminality and recognize the extraordinary vulnerability and sacredness of liminal space.

Why do we all strive for social belonging? Because it is protective of our social existence and without a social existence we are if not nothing, then precariously human. Social belonging is protective even if it is at the same time constraining. So, the person who is not a person, the child who is not recognized as fully human, who has no one to speak for them is in a dangerous place. The child needs the acknowledgment of others to make it human; independence (which arguably is how childhood studies conceives a "good childhood") renders the child more, not less, vulnerable.

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# Classed, Raced, and Gendered Processes of Exclusion in Urban Young People's Subcultures

# 12

Sumi Hollingworth

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	232
2	Background .....	232
3	Identity, Subjectivity, and Performativity .....	233
4	Space-Time Embodied Relationalities and Intersectionalities .....	238
5	Capitals, Habitus, and Field .....	241
6	Conclusion .....	245
7	Cross-References .....	246
	References .....	246

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## Abstract

Drawing on empirical research on “social mixing” in multiethnic urban schools, this chapter outlines a recipe or route map to the study of young people’s identities, subjectivities, and processes of inclusion and exclusion. Exploring spaces of friendships, subcultures, and schools as places of inclusion and exclusion for young people, the chapter builds up a theoretical model, illustrating complex concepts with vignette examples from key scholars’ empirical work. Understanding of identity as discursively performative, embodied, relational, and intersectional, the chapter demonstrates that schooling, subculture, and friendships are implicated in the (re)production of normative raced, classed, and gendered subjects. Furthermore, identity positions (of gender, race, and social class) are embodied capitals/resources which produce young men and women as subjects of value/subjects without value, which feed into processes of inclusion and exclusion.

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**Keywords**

Identity • Subjectivity • Youth • Gender • Race • Class • Intersectionality • Power • Value • Embodiment • Capitals • Habitus • Field

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## 1 Introduction

This chapter provides a recipe or route map to the study of young people's identities, subjectivities, and processes of inclusion and exclusion. This epistemological and theoretical framework has been devised and tested through in-depth study of "social mixing," exploring young people's friendships in urban schools. This recipe or route map is by no means meant to be prescriptive, but offers a lens, or a series of lenses through which to view how social inclusion and exclusion work at the level of friendships.

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## 2 Background

Policy approaches to social mixing, community cohesion, and ethnic and social integration tend to present identities as fixed/given categories. Such approaches often build on the assumption that certain (homogenous) ethnic or religious communities need to "integrate" with the "host" community. Proximity and positive interactions seem to be the recipe for success and segregation and lack of contact to the problem (Ahmed 2007). Little attention is paid to sociopolitical histories and geographies of the "differences that make a difference" (Epstein and Johnson 1998), let alone the shifting fragility of the very identity categories themselves being studied and how they are historically and spatially subject to revision and contestation. Even in human geography where neighborhood mix is a topical site of study, identities of social class and ethnicity are still presented as fairly unproblematic categories, where respondents are categorized as, for example, "middle class" or "working class," "Asian" or "White British." In this literature there is an acknowledgment of White middle-class self-segregationist tendencies – particularly in urban areas undergoing gentrification (Butler 2003; Lees 2008) – but there is not enough exploration of what constitutes "White" "middle class" and "Black" "working class" in these different and ever-shifting contexts. Feminist geographers have paid more attention to complexities of identities, subjectivities, and intersectionalities in the geographies of children and young people, the geographies of gender, sexualities, and dis/ability (Bowby et al. 1998; Holt 2008; Skelton and Valentine 1998; Valentine 1996, 2007). However, these fields of study and theoretical approaches rarely intersect or interact with the fields of neighborhood and school mix.

In order to foster a better understanding of the dynamics and potentials for social mixing, and for friendships across class and race, this chapter calls for the study of the "local micropolitics of everyday interaction" (Amin 2002) or a "located politics of difference" (Jacobs and Fincher 1998). Such work calls for attention to multiple

and intersecting categories of identity and to “superdiversity.” A deeper, more politicized, and spatialized account is needed, which theorizes the relationship between identity, subjectivity, power, and place – how people define their differences in relationship to uneven material and spatial conditions (see also Vertovec 2006). Identity and subjectivity need to be taken seriously as a site of study.

Furthermore, research in the field of community cohesion or neighborhood mix tends to take the community or the neighborhood as the unit of analysis (Bunnell et al. 2012), where the analytical focus is often on interactions between relative strangers. However, it is proposed that in order to study segregation and processes of exclusion, an analytical focus on *friendships* provides a deeper understanding. Friendships may appear to be an individualized, psychologized phenomenon, but they are deeply embedded in, and reproductive of, social structures (Hey 1997; Bottero 2005; Bunnell et al. 2012). Schools are a good example of “contact zones”, where there is a “spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographical and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect” (Ann Phoenix 2009). This is a key site to explore how identities are produced by and in these encounters.

Using young people’s friendships, relationships, and associations as the unit of analysis, and schools as an empirical site, this chapter outlines an epistemological approach which aims to provide a deeper analysis of the located micropolitics of identity, mixing, inclusion, and exclusion in schools. It is maintained that the fluid, processual, performative, and nature of identities be studied but also the ways in which they produce and are produced by the layered, multidimensional space-times they mix in. This chapter builds a complex theoretical model for the study of social mixing which maintains a key focus on power and inequality and takes into account both disadvantage and privilege. The diverse but complementary perspectives adopted provide a model which holds in tension both structure and agency in the formations of subjectivity and identity. However, here this model is broken down into its component parts. The layers of analysis are built up using empirical examples as vignettes to illustrate the theory. Starting with theorizing the performative nature of identity and subjectivity, the chapter then moves on to discuss how the study of identity and subjectivity needs to take into account “time-space embodied relationalities and intersectionalities.” The theoretical model is accomplished with an exploration of theorizing how to use Bourdieu’s capitals, habitus, and field to understand the operation of power and the differential value of relationships.

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### 3 Identity, Subjectivity, and Performativity

In order to understand mixing across class, race, and gender, this chapter proposes an approach underpinned by a fusion of Judith Butler’s (Butler 1990) performativity and subjection theories with a Bourdieusian informed cultural class analysis, with implicit acknowledgment of critical race theory and postcolonial theory.

Identities of race, class, and gender/sexuality need to be conceptualized as *performative* and as states of becoming that do not precede discourse (Archer

et al. 2001). Feminist research in the field of education (e.g., see David et al. 2006; Francis 2010; Renold 2005) sees gender as (a series of repetitive) performance(s), as opposed to a natural given, emerging from the sexed body. It is proposed that gender is not something you have but something you do (Renold 2005). Butler (1990) argues that gender and sexuality are discursively produced, that is, they come into being through discourse. Discursive practices, which appear to describe (preexisting) subjects, are instead productive. It is only through discourse (and its historical consolidation) that “man” and “woman” or “boy” and “girl” become intelligible (Butler 2004), and it is practices of “doing girl” and “doing boy” (Francis et al. 2010) which bring these gender identities into being. Moreover, these performances have to be continually enacted in order to maintain gender norms. Hey argues that “performing the self entails the obligation to ‘do’ gender not as an act of intentionality, but as a performance already set up in a pre-scripted rehearsal” (Hey 2006, p. 445). The framework, or the “script,” of gender thus sets the possibilities for action. There is thus a tension between agency, a freedom to perform, and structure, the pre-given scripts which constrain action.

A Foucauldian understanding of power underpins this perspective on performativity. According to Foucault, power does not simply operate in a top-down manner but is diffuse and multilayered and distributed through social relations. Foucault refers to this as subjectification (subjectivation) – the process by which people come to experience themselves as subjects having particular subjectivities, the process of being simultaneously made a subject and subjected to (gendered, classed, and racialized) relations of power (Butler 1990; Phoenix 2009; Youdell 2004). This involves the way in which people come to experience themselves as subjects through *normalization* and *representation*.

In this model of performativity, individuals become self-regulating. Feminist education researchers using this framework argue that institutions such as schools *interpellate* young people by including them in identity categories that prescribe and enforce particular ways of thinking about themselves and of acting as subjects (Phoenix and Phoenix 2012). Feminist education researchers have written about how processes of subjectification operate in schools: how schools interpellate young people by including them in identity categories that prescribe and enforce particular ways of thinking about themselves and of acting as subjects (Phoenix and Phoenix 2012) (Nayak and Kehily 2006; Phoenix 2009; Youdell 2006).

Like gender, racial categorizations can thus be highly constraining, and the school is implicated in this process. Nayak argues:

Individuals may feel weighed down by a ‘burden of representation’ (Hall 1992) where bodies are interpolated [sic] through fixed encodings of race and ethnicity that can appear as homogenous as they are restrictive. (Nayak 2012, p. 462)

Phoenix has also conceptualized the school as a key site for the workings of racialized interpellation, a process which she argues can be damaging for minority racial/ethnic groups (2009). Thus exploring the ways in which young people in

schools are *interpellated* into gendered, sexual, racialized, and classed subject positions through school processes and through the processes of youth subcultural formation is key.

**Vignette 1** Phoenix and colleagues (2009) conducted qualitative research with (now adult) migrants to the UK from the Caribbean – exploring the part played by schooling in the production of agency and identity for a generation of African Caribbean adults. Situating their narratives in the well-documented historical socio-political context of biased IQ tests, and ethnicized differences in attainment, she shows how pervasive negative stereotypes of Black children as educationally inferior lead to processes of subjectification and how this necessitates their *own* engagement with constructions of themselves as devalued.

Focusing in particular on the women subsample, Phoenix pens her participants' moving stories of how their Caribbean accents were considered strange and unintelligible and how they routinely dealt with racism from their peers and teachers and (related to both these themes) were positioned as embodying both cultural and educational backwardness.

*She told of Angela, for example, who cried when she recounted being placed in the bottom stream (despite being in the top stream in the Caribbean) and was subject to vicious name-calling. Moreover how both experiences had a long-term impact on her academic confidence. And Josephine, who makes a conscious effort (still) to talk very slowly because she was teased about her accent. Women in particular recounted being ridiculed about their hair being different, and one woman told of having her skirt lifted by boys to see if she had a tail.*

Phoenix theorizes how these women have been (and continue to be) subjectified in racialized and gendered ways. These experiences – of being *represented* as less than human and a *normalized* assumption of their educational inferiority – came to enforce particular ways of thinking about themselves as subjects. Implicit in this is a degree of acceptance of the view that their accent and way of speaking is inferior, that they are inferior.

However, this disciplinary power of the school “constitutes and constrains but does not *determine* the subjects with whom it is concerned” (Youdell 2004, p. 412). Indeed, Braidotti argues that although cultural norms act like magnets “drawing the self in certain directions,” they are not simply internalized in any straightforward fashion (Braidotti 2002 p. 40 cited in Blackman et al. 2008, p. 20). These processes can be constraining and restrictive, to some extent prescribing young people's “horizons for action”: who young people can and can't be, but at the same time, there is room for maneuver.

Thus, feminist education research, which has explored gendered performativity in the school context (Francis et al. 2010; Renold 2005), considers the ways in which norms of gender and sexuality shape young people's friendships and possibilities for mixing, but also the possibilities for these normative forces to be resisted or transformed. Young people form themselves and construct their own identities, but

“not in conditions of their own choosing” (Epstein 2002, p. 149). Children and young people are not only socialized by adults and institutions but also forge their own identities.

**Vignette 2** Renold’s (2005) ethnographic research on young sexualities in primary schools found the “tomboy” as an example of a subject position that whereby girls could occupy, exceed, and rework not only gender norms but also sexual norms.

*She uses the example of Erica, one of her research participants, a white middle class girl who ‘exclusively invested in, and publically celebrated, her ‘tomboy’ status. Renold describes how Erica rejected conventional feminine appearance, saying ‘I’m a girl without all the makeup’. She also rejected a sexualized femininity, asserting: ‘I hate all that boyfriend talk’. Erica was accepted as ‘one of the boys’: spent all her playground time with the boys, playing football, and developing close friendships with the boys. Renold noted that this seemed to exempt her from being positioned in the local ‘girlfriend/boyfriend circuit.’ (Renold 2006, p. 503)*

Renold (2006) thus argues that tomboyism – in its capacity to play with and resist gender norms – should not be seen as purely misogynistic but offers girls an “escape route” from the constraints of normative heterosexuality and the male gaze.

Furthermore, scholars studying friendship argue that these are key sites for the production of normative gender, race, and class (Bunnell et al. 2012; Hollingworth 2015).

**Vignette 3** Hollingworth (2015) explored young people’s friendships and associations in urban schools. Through case study, interview-based, research in two London schools, she explores how the subcultural formation of friendship groups produces and is produced by gendered, classed, and racialized differences.

For example, she identifies and explains how the “Football crowd” was dominated by Black and minority ethnic, predominantly working-class boys, and the “Smokers” group constituted by and of White middle-class boys. However, she also argues that these groups are reproductive of these identities of gender, race, and class themselves.

*For example, as well as the members being predominantly from Black and minority working-class backgrounds, the Football crowd performed a certain black working-class masculinity. This involved a passion for football, what they referred to as “loudness” and “jokes,” ascribed to Black Caribbean culture, and similar to the “lads” in Paul Willis’ (1977) study, prioritizing sport and sociability over their academic studies. By contrast, the Smokers performed a White middle-class identity. Their embodied aesthetic style, citing the “hipster” with elements of a “Preppy” American college “grad” look, referenced always already White middle-class subcultures; they performed effortless achievement with insouciance, balanced*

by an overt but “cool” rebelliousness. A “work hard, play hard” scenario, exemplified in their smoking outside the school gates and their talk of “parties” and recreational drug consumption, that did not affect their high attainment.

Hollingworth goes on to show how these subcultures reproduce these identities, through policing the boundaries and excluding those who cannot perform the “right” identity.

*For example, Tristan, a white British working-class boy was central to the football crowd as he could perform the desired football identity: he dressed the part (in football shirt, trainers, tracksuit bottoms), played football for a professional club, was well respected, and could perform the jokes and banter of the group. Indeed, Tristan performed this black working-class masculinity so well that he admitted people often assumed he must be of minority ethnicity. Amber, however, a Black Caribbean working-class girl, despite her love of football and her Caribbean cultural heritage, narrated her exclusion from the masculine subculture and her subsequent transformation into a “girly girl.” This suggests the “border work” (Thorne 1993) of the boundaries of gender is more pervasive.*

Thus Hollingworth (2015) theorizes that youth subculture is integral to the reproduction of class, race, and gender identities themselves. She shows *how* these apparent subcultural “choices” are “the very discursive practices that cite and inscribe these discourses and the identities that are constituted through them” (Youdell 2006, p. 139). Furthermore, she argues that these *school-based* subcultures tended to produce relatively normative performances of gender, class, and race – what Butler (2004) would call “intelligible” constructions (Francis et al. 2009).

However, friendships are also sites for resistance and transformation. Bunnell and colleagues argue:

Children establish complex ways of resisting or reworking the normative practices of their social expectations; through friendships, they have the confidence to develop alternative identities and the possibility of transformation. (Bunnell et al. 2012)

Thus school-based friendships can be seen as spaces to reproduce gendered, racialized, and classed hierarchies, but can also be spaces where this is undone. Hollingworth (2014) in her research on urban young people’s friendships in urban schools examined young people who were outside of the dominant subcultural groups in the school. Here she found much more nonnormative performances of social class, race, and gender, but also more mixed friendships.

These examples suggest that studying the performative aspects, not only of identities but of *friendships*, can be productive and generative. Furthermore, and as Bunnell and colleagues (2012) highlight, the spaces through which they are played out are important sites for study. This is elaborated in the following section.

## 4 Space-Time Embodied Relationalities and Intersectionalities

In order to understand how identities of class, race, and gender work together to produce patterns of inclusion and exclusion, an intersectional approach is needed. However, the criticism is that much research concerned with intersectionality does not fully interrogate the relationships between multiple identity categories (Valentine 2007; Youdell 2006). Identities are often presented in a simple additive way (Archer et al. 2001; Valentine 2007). However, others have called for an approach to the ways in which gender, race, and class “abrade, inflame, amplify, twist, negate, dampen and complicate each other” (Kessler and McKenna 1978:42 in Valentine 2007, p. 13). For example, the experience of being a Black woman cannot be understood by simply adding the experience of being Black to the experience of being a woman because “the experience of race alters the meaning of gender” (Valentine 2007, p. 13). Furthermore, this process of subjectification and identity formation is constantly renegotiated, so too are the intersections (Valentine 2007).

**Vignette 4** Valentine (2007), citing McCall (2005), suggests that a method to research intersectionality effectively is to start with an individual, group, or event working outwards to unravel how categories are lived and experienced.

Valentine (2007) puts this to work through analysis of the narrative of one of her research participants, Jeanette, to reflect on the way gender, sexuality, class, motherhood, disability, and “D/deafness” become salient/disappear, are claimed/rejected, and are made relevant/irrelevant in different moments of her experience. Jeanette’s story was part of a research study about lesbian and gay men and D/deaf people’s experiences of marginalization in the UK (Valentine and Skelton 2003).

*Valentine tells six different stories about Jeanette at different points in her life where her different identities come to the fore. The first story she tells is of Jeanette as a young girl where her gender identity is most prominent. She lives in a male-dominated household with her hearing family and consequently takes on much of the domestic and caring responsibilities. Her D/deafness and her sexuality are background or latent as she is in a hearing household, and her awareness of her sexuality has not developed. The second story is about her D/deaf identity coming into fruition, but also challenge, through her meeting and marriage to a deaf man. Her husband preferred oral communication (as opposed to sign language that Jeanette used). As well as shaping her feminine identity as a wife, her husband informed her deaf identity, preventing her from going to her local deaf club. The third story, having left her husband, Jeanette had a lesbian relationship with a woman she met at the deaf club, representing a discontinuity with her heterosexual identity, as well as an affirmation of her deaf identity.*

Valentine goes on to tell three more stories of Jeanette, clearly highlighting the constant movement individuals experience between different subject positions, in a constant and unpredictable process of becoming.



Hopkins argues “intersection is less about the alignment and crossing of [...] key social categories and more about capturing the messiness of layered subjectivities and multidimensional relations in particular localities” (Hopkins and Noble 2009:815 cited in Hopkins 2012, p. 1232). A further key dimension of the model then is attention to context and the spatial. Hopkins proposes that we explore the “space-time embodied relationalities and intersectionalities” (Hopkins 2012, p. 1232) operating in subjects’ lives. It is necessary to explore how power operates through gender, race, and class on multiple social and spatial scales (Mahler and Pessar 2001) – what Massey (Massey 2005 [1993]) refers to as power geometries.

**Vignette 5** Hopkins (2012) research attends to how the everyday evaluation of parts of people’s bodies – how people are regarded as tall, small, fat, or thin – relates to their experiences of inclusion and/or exclusion. He interviewed young people who identify as fat, obese, or overweight to explore how they experience and negotiate oppressive and marginalizing discourses and stigmatization. He found that their experience (of being “fat”) materialized, or came into focus, in certain spatial and temporal contexts (and less so, then, in others). Furthermore, the acuteness of these experiences was relational, dependent on other bodies that are present.

*For example, one of his participants – Gillian – explained how she feels “lumpish” in social situations in particular, where she finds herself judging herself against the friends that she is with. Another, Simon told him, if he is on his own he won’t think about his size, but if he is with someone thin he feels conscious of his different body. Participants discussed how specific situations accentuated their awareness and self-consciousness about their size such as eating out, going food shopping, going clothes shopping, sitting in aeroplane seats, and going to the beach.*

Last but not least, Hopkins identified how “synchronised with young people’s space-time embodied relationalities were complex intersectionalities that also shaped their experiences” (Hopkins 2012, p. 1236).

*For example, Seema felt she was “too tall for an Indian girl” and too “overweight” to be an attractive potential partner. Here Seema’s ethnicity and cultural background and expectations of what a woman is, or should be, amplify her concerns. Alternately Simon felt pressurized within the gay community to conform to what he saw as the stereotype of gay men being slim and muscular. Thus in situation where his sexuality was foreground, his awareness of his size also came to the fore.*

This means understanding how young people’s possibilities for mixing are dependent on a complex configuration of timing, location, and context; in relation to who else occupies or moves here and there, then; and who else the young people are in terms of their multiple identities. Furthermore, Hopkins’ work exemplifies how making bodies and embodiment explicit in our theorizing and empirical research has provided new ways of understanding subjectivities, power, and politics (Longhurst 2005d, cited in Hopkins 2008).



Hopkins further argues that different positionalities impact on people's mobility/immobility, in both a geographic and social sense. Intersectionality theory has for the most part been used to explore experiences of oppression and marginalization; however it, of course, can also be applied to researching and understanding how privilege operates (Hollingworth forthcoming; Valentine 2007). This draws our attention to the way in which there are hierarchies in these identity positions, albeit shifting and context-specific hierarchies.

**Vignette 6** Youdell's (2003) ethnographic research in urban school analyzes how the minutia of everyday life in schools constitutes African Caribbean students as "undesirable learners." She shows the discursive practices through which races are constituted as discrete, authentic, and hierarchical. She draws on Gillborn's work who argued that the school context is framed by teachers' "formal and informal constructions of an 'ideal' client" (Gillborn 1990, p. 26 after Becker 1970) incorporating classed, gendered, and raced notions of "appropriate pupil behavior" (Gillborn 1990, p. 25). Using episodes from her ethnographic observations, she explores how African Caribbean students' identities as learners come to be constituted as undesirable and intolerable within the terms of the hegemonic discourses of the school organization.

Episode 4: Black bodies walking

Year 11 Assembly. The majority of the year group (predominantly White), group tutors (all White, predominantly women), and DY are present.

*The Head of Year (man, White) is addressing the year group. The Head of Year pauses and looks out to the back of the assembled students. A few minutes later, looking in the same part of the audience, he calls out a short string of boys' names and instructs them to pay attention. A minute or so later, he stops midsentence and calls: "OK Daniel, outside my office please." There is a pause. Daniel (boy, Black) slowly gets to his feet, shaking his head as he does so. He takes his time as he leaves the hall; there is a sway and spring to his gait. The Head of Year continues his address. Through the rest of the address, the Head of Year sends a further two Black boys from the same group to wait outside his office. Each boy exits in a similar manner to Daniel. As the final boy walks toward the door, the Head of Year continues to chastise him. The boy makes a short tutting sound, which is audible to those toward the front of the hall, as he walks out of the door.*

Youdell noted that the students' disturbance of the assembly was minimal, and whether or not the boys were being less attentive than the other students, what is at play is the deployment of technologies of disciplinary power (Foucault 1991), whereby the Black boys' behavior was read as a challenge to authority.

So it is necessary to attend to how certain gendered and racialized identities are valued or devalued, and fundamental to how this works is looking at the different spaces/intersections by which value is accrued or cannot be accrued. Next the chapter moves on to theorize how the process of identity formation as structured by class relations, as a process of accruing value in the self, can be understood.

## 5 Capitals, Habitus, and Field

Holt's research on differently abled young people's relationships in schools draws attention to "social capital" as key to emphasizing the differing capital value of social relationships (Holt 2008, p. 231). Incorporating Bourdieu's conceptual tools of habitus, capitals and field, enables us to begin to bring class into this intersectional, spatialized analysis of *unequal* subjectivation and identity formation.

For Bourdieu, the middle classes maintain and advance their position not purely through the economic but through the accumulation of social and cultural assets or resources: "capitals." These can be economic (financial resources), but also social (networks and relationships) and cultural (knowledge and forms of representation, tastes, and dispositions). All forms of capital are located within a system of competition and exchange whereby different capitals have different "value" (Bourdieu 1986). These arenas of competition are known as "fields." Habitus can be described as the unconscious framework that individuals draw on: a "way of being," a "habitual state," and also tendency, inclination, or propensity – expressed as "taste" or "lifestyle" (Holt 2008, p. 232 citing Jenkins 1992). Habitus is a kind of history of habit, internalized and embodied. What is key for Bourdieu is which capitals have value and when they have value is arbitrary, but is normalized and made to seem natural, and thus the classed nature of habitus is hidden. Furthermore, habitus can be used as a tool to understand classed, raced, and gendered interpellation.

Extending our understanding of Bourdieu's "capitals," Skeggs argues that the contemporary *middle-class* life project is about the accrual of property and value in the self, and she understands culture as an exchangeable value (Skeggs 2004b). This accrual of (economic and cultural) value in the self is what (re)produces a middle-class position.

*Social* capital is a key concept that demands particular attention here, in the study of friendship and the possibilities for social mixing. Social capital, in the form of networks, social relations, and friendships, provides access to cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu 1997, 1996). So if the middle-class project is about the accrual of value in the self, it is imperative to understand social mixing in this context: *social mixing can be conceived of as a form of social capital accumulation*, or indeed loss (for the middle classes, at least). The term social capital is key to emphasizing the differing capital value of *social relationships* (Holt 2008, p. 231). In order to understand the self-segregationist tendencies of the (White) middle classes, this can be conceived of as a kind of resource protection, where mixing within the middle classes provides access to various resources which can be accrued, while mixing with the (minority ethnic) working classes, who are viewed as having less resources of value, would fail to generate the right kind of valued social capital and is thus avoided.

Furthermore, cultural and social capital are not just carried around in a "rucksack" (Erel 2010) or indeed "knapsack" (McIntosh 1997 [1992]), but "different bodies carry unequal values depending on their position in social space, on their cultural

baggage-the capitals they embody” (Skeggs 2004a, p. 17). Following Skeggs, exploring how different bodies become inscribed and marked with characteristics and how certain cultural characteristics fix some groups and enable others to be mobile is important. One can explore how social (and cultural capital) become embodied within individual’s “dynamic corporeality” (Holt 2008, p. 228). The idea of gendered and racialized identities as embodied resources or capitals, which have differential value in different “fields,” most explicitly in the context of the urban school can be explored here. It is with this framework that mixing is a form of capital accumulation or loss, where social identities are unequally distributed exchangeable *embodied* resources. Hollingworth (2015) theorizes the White middle-class body in the educational field (the “ideal learner”), as a body which has superior value and thus more extensive mobility, while working class and certain minority ethnic bodies have less value and are thus more static.

Not only are these resources embodied but they become etched on the psyche. Skeggs (2004a) and Walkerdine and colleagues (2001) conceptualize the White middle-class subject of value as the “neoliberal subject” – a risk-taking, enterprising self, envisaged for the future of neoliberal capitalism (not a docile worker who follows orders, does his job, and goes home). It is a self that works to accumulate its own value, in its own interests, via strategic decisions (akin to “the rational actor”) (Skeggs 2004b). Drawing on Foucauldian theorization, Walkerdine and colleagues argue:

the two classes[sic] are not simply the bearers of differing amounts of power and cultural capital, but the regulative apparatuses of particular modes of government at different historical moments produce different kinds of subject, and power is implicated not in the possession of capital but in the actual self-formation of the subject. (Walkerdine et al. 2001, p. 142)

Thus Skeggs goes further to argue that the self is not a subject position, but a system of exchange. Not only are capitals inscribed on the body, but the very aspects of *subjectivity* – which is seen as the essence of our being – are, for Skeggs, some kind of commodities, exchangeable resources. She argues that exchange value is the defining factor in contemporary personhood: it is in exchange that value is attributed. This is crucial to the theorization of social mixing where the self, and its racialized, gendered interpellation, is understood as exchanged through friendships.

**Vignette 7** Hollingworth (2014), in her research on young people’s friendships in urban schools, studied working-class young people’s attempts to belong in middle-class subcultures. Through close microanalysis of the discourses of several minority ethnic working-class young people in her research, Hollingworth shows how attempts to “border cross” (Bunnell et al. 2012; Hey 1997) were partial and context specific and dependent on young people’s embodied capitals and their ability to deploy them.

*For example, Tyler was a 16-year-old Black African boy from a working-class background, but had spent some time living in the USA. He recounted his*

*experiences of being taken under the wing of two White middle-class boys upon his arrival as the “new boy” in school. However, he told of how he “kind of resented” this, as he was a “Black guy” and did not want to be in the “White crowd,” who were also kids with “cash to splash.” He went on to reveal how, over time, he put concerted effort into working his way into the “sporty crowd” predominated by Black and minority ethnic working-class boys, where he felt more “comfortable.” Specifically Tyler talked of being positioned as a “freshy” (a “cuss” meaning “fresh of the boat”) which he said was a “novelty” for the White middle-class boys, but also how he had to lose a lot of weight in order to shake of a “nerd” identity and “put his books down” in order to have a chance to be in the Football crowd. Tyler eventually became central to the football crowd, but is still friends with the two White middle-class boys. However, he said if he “had to choose” a friendship group he would choose the Football crowd as these people would be more likely to “back you”: to come to your aid when in trouble.*

Tyler’s not-quite-African, not-quite-African-American, certainly-not-Black-British embodiment, always already fixed and marked in American caricature, was an attraction to the White middle-class boys. But Tyler’s body size (as overweight and thus deemed “unsporty”) excluded him from the Football crowd. Thus Hollingworth (2014) theorizes that Tyler’s “freshy-ness” and his “obesity” were embodied “capitals” but ones that have different currency in different “fields,” among different peers, thus shaping the forms of mixing and mobility available to him in social space. Tyler’s success at making it into the football crowd was borne out of his embodied raced, classed, and gendered identity, one that was dependent on his success at shedding his obese, nerd identity driven by a raced, classed habitus that let him know his sense of place in a particular field which valorizes the body. However, this very process simultaneously constrained his ability to participate in the “ideal learner” identity within the middle-class school, which valorizes “books” and the mind.

It is also important to draw attention to the ways in which capitals are context dependent. The value of a particular culture can only be known by the different fields in which it is realizable and can be converted (Skeggs 2004a). Spatial theory in the geography tradition brings a fresh look to understanding field in a more sophisticated way. Holt (2008) argues that Bourdieu’s concept of field can come across as quite static and fixed, but it is needed to conceive of field as a process (Massey 2005 [1993]). Space/field is “constructed out of particular interactions and mutual articulations of social relations” (Massey 2005 [1993], p. 68): space shapes social relations, and social relations shape space. Similarly Reay (2004) argues that field and habitus are mutually constitutive: field structures the habitus, and habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world endowed with value in which it is worth investing one’s energy. Thus, space and identity (Valentine 2007), field and habitus are co-implicated.

**Vignette 8** Holt’s (2004) research examines how (dis)ability is (re)produced as an embodied identifier by children and adults through mundane everyday practices

within school spaces. Through this work she comes to theorize capitals and habitus as embodied and performative.

Through qualitative examples of young people's experiences, she shows how young people often accept the positioning as "disabled" that is offered to them and incorporate some negative aspects of dominant discourses of disability into their sense of self. She gives the example of Ben, a boy with mind and body differences. Ben narrates:

*[my friend] always comes with me at playtime 'cause he didn't have a friend, and now, whenever I'm lonely and he's there, he always comes and cares for me.* (Holt 2008, p. 239)

Holt theorizes that the habitual "dependent" subject position that Ben takes is tied to the context of school, the playground, and the relationship with this particular friend. But this social capital acquired through this friendship is sociospatially shifting, where in other spatial contexts (or fields) he might not be portrayed as or take up a dependent position. But furthermore his discourse reveals that this dependence becomes incorporated into Ben's sense of self – as someone who needs to be looked after and cared for – and can influence the position that he occupies within other sociospatial relations, both present and future (the performative habitus).

Individual's capital accumulation then occurs within specific spatial moments – themselves not neutral and preexisting but becoming through everyday performances and within broader power geometries (Holt 2008, p. 239).

So in order to study social mixing and young people's exclusion, it is important to attend to the way that specific spaces (young people's friendship spaces) are produced and stabilized by the dominant groups who occupy them. These dominant groups thus develop hegemonic cultures through which power operates to systematically define ways of being and to mark out those who are in place, or out of place (Valentine 2007).

So it is necessary to hold in tension the fluidity of identities *and* the fact that in particular spaces or fields there are dominant spatial orderings that produce moments of exclusion for particular social groups. Difference is both multiply constituted and locationally contingent (Amin and Thrift 2002; Jacobs and Fincher 1998). Massey (2005 [1993]) coins the expression power geometries to encapsulate this. The particular conditions of (capitalist) modernity that have produced "time-space compression" (the process by which places feel closer together while time feels speeded up) have also placed people in very distinct locations regarding access to power over flows and interconnections between places (Mahler and Pessar 2001). Massey argues that some individuals:

'initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. . .[there are] groups who are really in a sense in charge of time-space compression, who can really use it and turn it to advantage whose power and influence it very definitely increases . . .but there are also groups who are also doing a lot of moving, who are not in charge of the process in the same way at all. (Doreen Massey 1994, p. 149)

So field and the (re)production of space also need to be conceptualized in terms of mobility. Space is produced by the bodies that inhabit it, as well as these bodies internalizing and habituating the space they inhabit.

**Vignette 9** Hollingworth's (2014) analysis of her research with urban young people demonstrates how young people's recreational spaces are constituted by the raced, classed, and gendered bodies that inhabit them, making some people feel more or less included or excluded.

*Damian, a 17-year-old Black Caribbean boy, who lived on a council estate talked about how in school he was able to "jam" and "pop" with the "Smokers" by the school gates, a group of predominantly White middle-class boys. However, he revealed that outside of school, he did not socialize with this group. He said they have "different interests when it comes to outside school." He said the Smokers' group like to "party," whereas people like him tended to "sit around on the block" and "chat": "its more of a casual thing really." Neither did Damian drink, smoke, nor take recreational drugs like the White middle-class students and they listened to different music. Damian admitted that he and his Black friends had been to such parties, but felt like an observer, "going in and experiencing it" in order to "imagine" how the "other side," the "richer ones," live.*

Thus, the "party" and "partying" were a particular White middle-class phenomenon that the Black (working-class) students did not/could not fully engage with. But the "party" becomes constituted as a White middle-class space, where specific spaces are produced and stabilized by the dominant groups who occupy them (Valentine 2007). The "party" is a White middle-class space that is constituted by White bodies consuming alcohol, cigarettes, recreational drugs, and drum and bass and grime music. Black cool is a product to be consumed here, but Black bodies are not at home. The "party" is a space in which Damian and his Black friends are "space invaders" (Puwar 2004): where they are (in their potential) Black bodies out of place in a White middle-class space.

So mixing is informed by the production of the spaces in which it occurs. Capitals can flow more readily in spaces inhabited by a predominance of White middle-class bodies, while spaces produced by minority ethnic and working-class bodies can become sticky and immobile, where capitals flow less freely.

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## 6 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to explicate a theoretical model to approach the study of young people's identities, subjectivities, and processes of inclusion and exclusion. Using examples from the work of key scholars in the geographies of children and young people and feminist studies of intersectionality, a "located micropolitics" of social mixing has been outlined. Using illustrative vignettes, the chapter has shown how a progressive and performative approach to both identity and space (as always becoming) can be generative. Furthermore, how attending to the processes by which

different embodied identities are unequally valued in different fields reveals how classed, raced, and gendered inclusion and exclusion operate.

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## 7 Cross-References

- ▶ [Ethnic Options of Mixed Race Young People in Britain](#)
- ▶ [Faith, Space, and Negotiated Subjectivities: Young Muslims in Suburban Australia](#)
- ▶ [Making Young Subjects: Liminality and Violence](#)
- ▶ [Rethinking Social Exclusion and Young People in Rural Places: Toward a Spatial and Relational Approach in Youth and Education Studies](#)

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# Volunteer Tourism and Nonelite Young Subjects: Local, Global, and Situated

# 13

Ruth Cheung Judge

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	250
2	Toward Considering Young Subjects as Local, Global, and Situated .....	252
2.1	Theoretical Limits: Criticisms of the Elite Global Volunteer Tourist .....	252
2.2	Theoretical Provocations: From Bounded Scale to Situated Globalities .....	253
2.3	Intersections of the Local and the Global .....	255
3	Volunteer Tourism and the Entanglement of Local and Global .....	257
3.1	Urban Safari: Drawing “Global” Experiences into Localized Affective Economies .....	258
3.2	“Worldchangers is the New Gang”: Strategic Fusions of Popular Humanitarianism and Local Repertoires .....	260
3.3	Embodied Transnational Resonances: Dancing the Azonto in Zimbabwe .....	263
4	Conclusion .....	265
	References .....	266

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## Abstract

There is a pernicious tendency to portray particular young subjects as “global” and others as “local.” Although it often emerges implicitly from otherwise valuable academic work, this maps problematic a global-local dualism onto classed subjects. For instance, working-class youth are often cast as “trapped” and subject to localized urban settings, and young people traveling and volunteering abroad are often presumed to be exercising unfettered social and physical mobility across space. This chapter illustrates a more nuanced approach through discussing research on short “volunteer tourism” trips undertaken by young people from lower-income socioeconomic backgrounds. The ways that these ordinary, nonelite young subjects engage with volunteer tourism and its

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popular humanitarian imaginaries reveals how understandings of both “global” and “local” space are always situated amid interconnections between near and distant places. This contributes a grounded analysis of how the seemingly coherent meanings of volunteer tourism are always made through processes that cross multiple scales. Young people from nonelite backgrounds engage with “the global” around the trips in ways that are creative, agentive, and always deeply situated in their navigations of local constraints and opportunities and gendered, classed, and racialized hierarchies. Close attention to the way the global is situated and how transnational connections animate the visceral body also fosters possibilities to see problematic stabilizations of scale and meaning as contested and contestable.

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### Keywords

Youth • Identity • International volunteering • Tourism • Transnationalism

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## 1 Introduction

Oh no, Tarquin, I can't come shopping on the Kings Road today, yah. . . cos I'm still on my Gap Yah, yah. . . this kind of spiritual, cultural, political exchange thing. . . haha. . . and then I just CHUNDERED everywhere! (“Orlando,” from comedy sketch “Gap Yah”)  
 . . . a generation of amoral, uneducated, welfare dependent, brutalised youngsters. . . My dogs are better behaved and subscribe to a higher code of values than the young rioters of Tottenham, Hackney, Clapham and Birmingham. (Max Hastings, Daily Mail, 9th August 2011)

Two caricatured portraits of young Britons which have resonated in the popular imagination during recent years are presented in the quotes above. First, there is “Orlando,” a satirical online video creation who “went viral”: an upper-class idiot boasting about his globe-trotting gap year (“gap yah”), moving seamlessly from recounting voyeuristic encounters with extreme poverty to chortling at binge-drinking exploits (VMProductionsUK 2010). Without any such humor, the second quote is an example of the deeply prejudicial characterizations of young people which circulated around the UK’s 2011 riots, portraying the participants as a mass of nameless, less-than-human urban youth, motivated by nothing more profound than a desire to get a new pair of trainers. Crucially, there is a spatiality to these portraits, as the young elite’s privilege is seen to be expressed and epitomized through global mobility, whereas the abject subject of the riots is seen to be ruled by the denigrated norms and spaces of the “inner city” (Allen et al. 2013).

Extreme though these portraits undoubtedly are, they illustrate a pernicious tendency to map a global-local dualism onto classed subjects, with some young people seen as “trapped” and subject to localized urban settings and others as exercising unfettered social and physical mobility across space. Despite the fact that severe economic disparities do facilitate the leisurely mobilities of some and lead to real vulnerabilities and violence for others, the slippage between “global” with “elite” and “local” with “marginalized” limits our understanding how places

both near and distant are entangled in multiple, complex ways in young people's lives. This chapter illustrates a more nuanced approach through discussing research on short "volunteer tourism" trips undertaken by young people from lower-income socioeconomic backgrounds. The ways that these ordinary, nonelite young subjects engage with "the global" reveals how understandings of both "global" and "local" space are always situated amid interconnections between near and distant places and mediated by gendered, classed, and racialized hierarchies.

The transnational mobility of young working-class people problematizes existing work which – while full of valuable insights – can implicitly strengthen the idea of particular young subjects as "global" and others as "local." On the one hand, work around international volunteering and volunteer tourism tends to highlight the ways in which these mobilities help elite young people to build "cosmopolitan" identities which reinforce their privilege (Heath 2006; Tiessen 2011; McGehee 2012). Young volunteers are predominantly cast as representing an all-powerful global elite, acting upon a powerless locality. On the other hand, images of "marginalized youth" are linked to particular local spaces. In popular imaginations, representations of deviance and social dysfunction are "read" through particular urban spaces – in the UK, the council estate (Nayak 2003). Academic work has provided rebuttals to negative stereotypes of working-class young people and excellent criticism of the way prejudice congeals around intersections of race, class, and gender, as well as comportment, dress, speech, and "attitude" (Allen et al. 2013; Vanderbeck 2008). Yet the overwhelming focus on low-income urban space in studies of working-class youth can reproduce the framing of these young people as living highly localized lives, seemingly determined by economic exclusion, prejudiced policing, and the "codes of the street" (Wilson and Chaddha 2009).

Instead, this chapter contributes to further exploration of the entanglements of local and global in young lives which draw on critical conceptions of scale and subjectivity. Ansell (2009) argues that children's geographies have been limited in its focus on the "micro-sites" of neighborhood, playground, and school. This focus, combined with a preoccupation with children's direct experiences and perspectives within them, has at times obscured a more comprehensive analysis of the influences that span space and affect young people's lives. This is not to say there is no work which brings globality into analysis of young lives. Important pieces of work, summarized in more detail below, have examined the way working-class youth's lives and imaginaries are touched by, and draw on, "global" economic processes or cultural trends (Hörschelmann and Schäfer 2005; Katz 2001; Nayak 2004). This chapter builds on such work, using the grounded example of volunteer tourism to explore how young people relate to distant places through always-situated embodiments, materialities, and practices.

The next section will highlight the problematically dualistic visions of scale, power, and subjectivity that are implicit in much existing work on international volunteering and tourism. It will briefly summarize more helpful conceptualizations drawn from critical theorizations of scale and briefly review some examples of work which inform the chapter's understanding of nonelite globalities and "the global" in young lives. The last section of the chapter presents three vignettes, based on

ethnographic research with volunteer-tourism initiatives and spanning the spaces of London council estates, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and beyond. Each vignette is followed by discussion around the way elements commonly labeled “local” or “global” are fused, mediated, and reformulated in diverse ways in young people’s lives and their negotiations of the constraints and opportunities that they face.

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## **2 Toward Considering Young Subjects as Local, Global, and Situated**

### **2.1 Theoretical Limits: Criticisms of the Elite Global Volunteer Tourist**

The burgeoning academic literature on international volunteering and volunteer tourism provides an illustration of the often oversimplified views of the way space, power, and young people’s subjectivities relate in many accounts of young people’s lives. In the majority of this work, it is clear that the imagined subject partaking in these mobilities is wealthy and elite and uses the experience to solidify their privileged position. For instance, one author writes, “the ‘global citizen’ (read: Western, white, middle or upper class, educated, connected individual). . .” (Tiessen 2011, p. 581). To a great extent, this is a valid statement, in that the majority of young people undertaking such mobilities are wealthy Westerners and within their countries of origin, middle class, and white (Ansell 2008; Heath 2006; O’Reilly 2006). Evidently the transnational power relations that enable these flows for young Britons but not, for example, young Kenyans are of continuing relevance. We must not lose sight of the highly asymmetric nature of global mobility that allows certain bodies to travel and consume for leisure and constrains the movement of others in the service of capitalist production that reinforces the dominance of the global north (Gogia 2006). Within the global north, the experience of international volunteer tourism also fits into a class-making “economy of experience” as travel experiences are “collected” as markers of taste and distinction (Desforges 1997; Heath 2006; O’Reilly 2006).

These critiques of international volunteering initiatives rightly raise the unequal relations behind the claims such initiatives make to facilitate movement, enact development, and foster cross-cultural understanding across a “flat globe of difference making opportunities” (Lorimer 2010). Instead, a central facet of their opposition has been to highlight the ways in which the “the colonial gaze lingers on” (Simpson 2005, p. 456) in international volunteer tourism, which provides consumable experiences of disadvantaged “others” and legitimizes unskilled young Westerners’ abilities to “do development” without thought for sustainability or accountability (Darnell 2011; Diprose 2012; Simpson 2004, 2005). However, despite the fact that the elite, unequal nature of these mobilities is still highly relevant to analysis of these trips, the critiques are problematic in their broadness and bluntness. In particular, this literature often portrays a highly dualistic view of

elite, dominant volunteers, and victimized host-country populations. For example, one author writes:

... the economically and socially *powerful volunteer tourists* (who are, *by nature*, in possession of enough economic power that they have the discretionary time and income to travel to a distant destination)... and the *less powerful host communities* (who are, *by nature*, being exploited or dominated by forces that place them in the position of being “voluntoured”). This relationship in itself shatters any notion of human emancipation... (McGehee 2012, p. 93, emphasis mine)

Even as it illuminates the way volunteer tourist mobilities perpetuate inequalities, such a fixed vision obscures more ambiguous, co-constitutive dynamics in the transnational encounters of volunteer tourism and reifies (even, in the quote above, naturalizes) the power dynamics it seeks to criticize (Griffiths 2014).

This epistemological oversimplification is also highlighted by the empirical phenomenon of widening participation in popular visions of global charity. Imaginatively, there has been a renewed explosion of “popular humanitarianism,” fuelled by celebrity culture (Mathers 2011; Mostafanezhad 2013). In terms of actual physical mobility, amid a huge growth in international volunteering (Heath 2007; Jones 2011), there are increasing numbers of initiatives which explicitly engage those *not* from affluent backgrounds as international volunteers. For instance, Platform2, a 3-year £10 m DFID-funded scheme, ran from 2008 to 2011, linking international volunteering to policy agendas around social inclusion, with the stated aim to “unlock the potential’ within disenfranchised young adults to ‘become better global citizens’” (DFID 2008, in Diprose 2012, p. 3). Beyond this, schools, religious youth groups, diaspora associations, and others are engaging in short overseas trips funded through grants and community fundraising activities which subsidize or cover the costs for a range of young people far beyond those who can afford to pay commercial gap year companies outright. How can we make sense of this? Is the “global” mobility of these young people an indicator that they are simply “by nature” powerful? As indicated in the introduction, much work on working-class young subjects focuses on the everyday challenges they face in low-income settings. Are these young people’s engagements with global charity evidence of an exceptional escape from their locally bounded lives? Or is there a more complex interplay between globality and locality in this story? It is clear that to examine these forms of global mobility and the role they play in these young lives, a more nuanced approach to the relationship between space, scale, and subjectivity is needed.

## 2.2 Theoretical Provocations: From Bounded Scale to Situated Globalities

Work on young people and their geographies might be enriched by the provocations posed by critical theorizations of scale. Though this chapter cannot engage with these ideas in all their complexity, a brief review illustrates their potential to produce

more insightful analysis. Critical understandings of scale see it as socially constructed and have shifted away from an understanding of scale as a series of hierarchically arranged bounded units such as levels or concentric circles which move upward or outward from local to global (Herod and Wright 2008). Instead, metaphors of networks and roots have been put forward: “the global” and “the local” are always connected and scales interpenetrate. Here, thinkers such as Massey (1998) conceptualize space and scale as emerging from complex networks and constellations which connect multiple places. Any particular place or cultural practice is a hybrid mixture, a point of connection between local and distant elements.

With this networked understanding of space and scale, there remain debates about power relations: it is clear that spatial claims are central to power struggles. The dualism between “global” and “local” has been highlighted as particularly problematic. Feminist thinkers highlight that the global is enduringly portrayed as more powerful than the local. Even valuable critiques of global capitalism have still tended to focus on economic processes in the formal sector of institutions and national politics and in spheres associated with the national or supranational, rather than those of households, communities, and bodies (Nagar et al. 2002). This ends up giving “the global” and its associations with globalized neoliberal capitalism a seemingly inevitable power, rather than recognizing the constitutive political power in the small scale and local (Gibson-Graham 2008).

This view of networked space and the importance of the situated shifts our research approaches in various ways. On the one hand, there have been calls for more grounded analysis of “global” processes. Rather than invoking a generalized “global,” implicitly “above” the local, we should build contextualized understandings of how “globalized” social phenomena are produced by processes which cross multiple scales and are always mediated by other social identities such as gender and race and local “structures of feeling” (Nagar et al. 2002). This is the idea that “scratch anything ‘global’ and you find locality” (Gibson-Graham 2008, p. 32) and that “it is not simply globalisation that is important but also its encounter with existing social relations and material social practices in particular places” (Katz 2001, p. 1228). If “the global” is a disembodied totality, inaccessible to experience, we should instead be investigating multiple “situated globalities” which are always particular and realized through interconnections across scales, for instance, linking the body, the city, and globe-spanning institutions (Blok 2010). If “the global is collapsed into and made an integral part of parallel, related local situations rather than something monolithic or external to them” (Marcus 1995, p. 102), one approach is to trace the circulations of meanings, objects, and identities across many sites. Instead of analyzing globalization as producing total victimization or liberation, close examination of practices such as care, consumption, or religion might reveal the contingent, and often ambivalent, outcomes of globe-spanning processes for particular places and actors (Nagar et al. 2002).

On the other hand, work on children and young people has been criticized as confined by a bounded understanding of the local, in terms of the immediate physical locales of everyday life. Ansell (2009) argues that there is a need to engage with the processes, decisions, flows, and events that span space and affect children’s lives.

But rather than propose a structuralist approach, she argues that critical theorizations of scale can help build analyses of the globe-spanning forces which affect young lives while also uncoupling the dualisms which associate “the global” with structure and “the local” with agency. She draws on (without wholly accepting) theorizations of “flat ontology” which refute the existence of scale and hierarchy and privilege a relational view of social life. Here, young people can be thought of as “nodes” in material connections which span space. We can study young people’s embodiment and perceptions while moving beyond simply repeating assertions of young people as liberal, individual agents in the local setting or determined by structure. Wider influences can be taken account of as the way young people are never fully autonomous, always embedded in webs of relation to physical and mediated elements both “near” and “far.” At the same time, certain spaces may have more “intimacy” for young people, who also may not have as much capacity to influence distant locales as adults.

Notwithstanding some distinctions between the positions taken in the work reviewed above, this chapter is grounded in these provocations to look at how young lives intersect with global processes in a way that is resolutely situated and material, but also analyzes the connections and political implications that cross geographical locations. Before turning to further explore the situated globalities of young working-class people’s experiences of volunteer tourism, I briefly summarize some existing work which paves the way for the discussion.

### 2.3 Intersections of the Local and the Global

Despite Ansell’s (2009) critiques of the “parochial” focus of much work on children and youth, there have been important exceptions. Youth geographers have explored young people’s imaginative engagements with the more than local in their everyday lives. This combines an interest in hybridity, fluidity, and creativity of youth cultures, with ongoing attention to issues of power and marginalization. For instance, Nayak (2003) explores how many young white people draw on the signs and symbols of a “global,” “black” urban culture in an attempt to escape denigrated classed versions of whiteness and the way their embodied performances of race and class are deeply shaped by the economic and political context of northeastern England. Hörschelmann and Schaefer (2005) found a contrast between East German working-class girls’ engagements with globalization through the consumption of global brands, with a more overt identity construction by middle-class girls as “cosmopolitan” via their global “dreamscapes” of self-fulfillment. However, my research also presents contrasts to their findings that young working-class East Germans reacted to globalization as threatening, testifying to the creative ways young working-class Britons engage with “global” imaginings in their hopes for the future (Hörschelmann and Schaefer 2005). Other work supports the idea that global dreamscapes are not always the preserve of the middle classes; young refugees in the UK draw heavily on transnational youth culture, global ideals, and “TV talk” in fashioning self-representations which negotiate new contexts and



counter victimization (de Block 2008). The “global” and the “everyday” are not separate in young people’s emotional lives: their fears and hopes represent both a place-based and scale-jumping critical reflexivity as they navigate the present and look toward the future (Pain et al. 2010)

Beyond these explorations of “global” imaginaries in young people’s lives, there has also been exploration of how globalized economic processes associated with neoliberal capitalism play out in young lives. Particularly important is Cindi Katz’s work (2001, 2004). She calls for examinations of social reproduction, childhood, and children’s lives in particular places, which attempt to uncover the “intersecting effects and material consequences of so-called globalisation in a particular place, not to valorise either experience or the local, but, quite the opposite, to reveal a local that is constitutively global” (Katz 2001, p. 1214). She uses the concept of “counter topographies” to conceptualize how the production of detailed knowledge about the features of particular places can draw “contour lines” of analytical similarity across resonant experiences in diverse locales, resulting in critique beyond particularistic identity politics. In her work, she draws connections between the disruptions to social reproduction and de-skilling being experienced by young people in rural Sudan and New York and the diverse ways people enact politics of reworking, resilience, and resistance in response (Katz 2001, 2004).

Outside of work on youth, empirical explorations, the ways ordinary people consume, perform, and enact “global” identities have coalesced around the idea of “vernacular cosmopolitanism.” Work on “grounded”, “vernacular”, and “subaltern” cosmopolitanisms emerged in response to characterizations of “the cosmopolitan subject” which implicitly portrayed a Western, elite, and capitalist consumer (Calhoun 2002). For instance, they explored how boundary-crossing relationships, networks, and cultural knowledge are part of migrants’ everyday lives through a combination of will, enjoyment, and necessity (Kothari 2008) or transnational religious ties can underpin feelings of transnational belonging (Werbner 1999). Identifications with universalist global norms can be a strategic performance for nonelites (Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2012), but are not limited to survival strategies, and can encompass taste for different cultural goods, shaped by the configurations of power in everyday spaces (Datta 2009). This literature also highlights that engaging with objects, imaginaries, practices, and norms from across transnational borders is often ambivalent, temporal, and limited (Jeffrey and McFarlane 2008).

Furthermore, within critical work on international volunteering, there are perspectives which open the way for more nuanced analysis of its socio-spatial politics. International volunteering can be understood as part of a popular imaginary which renews the pathways of colonial relationships. Fuelled by the spectacle of “celebrity humanitarianism,” affective and sentimentalized discourses help constitute the subjectivities necessary to support relations of transnational inequality (Mathers 2011; Mostafanezhad 2013). The important insight for this chapter is that a historicized and postcolonial perspective reveals that the imaginaries and encounters of “distant places” have long been intimately implicated in forming subjectivities at “home.” Colonial encounters worked not as unidirectional exercises of power, but to constitute and police the interior frontiers of citizenship (Stoler 2001). Neocolonial

relations do not only signal dominance of a “global elite” but the mutual constitution of all facets of the (unequal) encounter. Critical explorations have developed insights into exactly what sort of subjectivities “the global” experiences of international volunteering might foster at “home.” These argue that the antipolitical, individualized view of global development in popular humanitarianism plays into making young citizens amenable to norms of individual autonomy, improvement, and responsibility associated with neoliberalism (Ballie Smith and Laurie 2011; Biccum 2007; Cremin 2007). These explorations highlight that engagements with the global are always in conversation with political and economic forces in particular moments and places, reflecting and constituting subjectivities in ways that engage affect, embodiment, and the emotions (Griffiths 2014). Drawing on insights from these diverse bodies of work, I now turn to explore the situated interplay between localities and globalities in young people’s experiences of volunteer tourism.

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### **3 Volunteer Tourism and the Entanglement of Local and Global**

The remainder of this chapter discusses research on short volunteer tourism trips engaging young participants from low-income backgrounds in the UK. This research, conducted from 2012 to 2014, included interviews with 60 individuals – young people, youth workers, and other key informants; focus groups; and participant observation with two youth groups on a weekly basis in London as well as accompanying two short (2–3 week) trips to Kenya and Zimbabwe. One of the youth groups was based in a youth charity and the other in a church, both physically located on council estates and aiming to work explicitly with youth facing the challenges that can accompany socioeconomic vulnerability. These young people might be variously understood as “working-class” or “inner city youth,” but such categorical labels are obviously blunt tools. To give a more nuanced account, the young people in these groups, while not homogeneous in terms of socioeconomic measures, were mostly living in low-income households on the estates. They were ethnically diverse, including white, mixed-race, and second-generation African and Caribbean youth. A significant proportion were conceived of as “vulnerable” or “at risk” by youth workers, teachers, and local authorities in relation to their performance in formal education, proximity to criminal behavior, or difficult familial situations. Clearly, while these young people enjoyed the privilege of British nationality enabling their travel, within Britain, they were certainly not elite subjects. The trips abroad involved a combination of manual labor and childcare-based volunteering, interspersed with leisure and “cultural” activities.

I discuss this research by presenting three vignettes – short narratives which draw interviews and participant observation – followed by analytical discussion of how these illustrate that young people engage with “the global” around the trips in ways that are creative, agentic, and always deeply situated in their navigations of particular constellations of power. The vignettes are constructed from a combination

of material from interview and research diaries. Speech in quotation marks indicates words recorded in audio or full notes taken at the time; indirectly reported speech is as accurate a reconstruction as possible based on research diaries. This presentation style has been chosen with the hope that longer sections of prose, rather than decontextualized quotes, might do more justice to the vibrancy and complexity of young people's experiences, narratives, and performances, though like any presentation of data, the choice of what is included is always selective and partial. The first vignette recounts one young man's emotive narration of the pleasure and thrill of a wildlife encounter and explores how he draws his "global" experience into conversation with the gendered and classed hierarchies in his everyday life. The second vignette traces the circulation of a particular term – "worldchangers" – and how it reveals young people's strategic fusions of social repertoires associated with local constraints and opportunities and popular humanitarian imaginaries. The third vignette explores how influences that span space meet in, and animate, the body and highlights the potential for further exploration of such dynamics.

### 3.1 Urban Safari: Drawing "Global" Experiences into Localized Affective Economies

Richie is an outgoing, fast-talking 17 year-old who has grown up on a large estate in Hackney, living with his mum and younger brother. He describes himself with reference to his passion for studying drama, his high educational and career aspirations, and his Christian faith. He was one of the "big characters" in his youth group, usually first to volunteer, speak up, or start a loud sing-along. A few weeks after our return from a 3-week trip to Zimbabwe, I was interviewing him over a bowl of popcorn in my living room. Part way through the interview, he suddenly recalled the experience we'd had of "walking with lions" during a leisurely section of the trip and exclaimed:

... AH! That was LIVE! WOAAHH – that was *live!* I got to walk with lions! ... I was excited, man! I got pictures which are getting a HUNDRED likes on Instagram! I dunno – walking with lions is a big thing – I *never* thought I would do it. What else-? Ah! I rode an elephant. Ooh – trust me! People think they're friendly – *trust me* – SCARY. Scariest thing ever!...

Struck by the way this memory was so vivid and saturated with emotion, I asked why that was an important part of the trip for him. He simply said, "Lions for me is a big thing. I could die!" Seeking more, I asked him what he thought the photo he posted on Instagram (a photo-based social networking site and app) made people think of him, and he expounded with humorous bravado:

I'm tough. Shouldn't mess with me. I stated on my... little status – 'they're ma boys – they've got my back!' So – you know, touch me if you wanna! Feel free! You know, if you wanna hurt me, hurt me – but I know some *big* people! Big animals!

Interested in whether this image had been accepted in the desired way by his peers, I asked how people had reacted to the photo. He gave an account of a complex reception, saying:

... I dunno, I did get loads of comments like, 'woah, you're seriously brave to walk with lions', like from big boys, [aged] 23, 24, saying like, 'Richie! Are you MAD?! You wanna get eaten! Why you walking with lions for?!' – I nearly got punched up for that! [...] I got a little rumble from my older cousin, saying ... 'coulda lost your life!'... they were most probably thinking that I coulda died... like... felt they could lose me, in a sense.

In this vignette, themes of adventure, risk, and masculinity jump out in Richie's excitement at walking with lions. On the one hand, this anecdote fits theorizations of international volunteering and tourism as reinscribing global privilege. Sensational place-myths around Zimbabwe and Africa as exotic and dangerous and the narrative of an adventurous, conquering Western self-echo are reinforced, and the primacy of the visual in this drama echoes the histories of hunting and safari and wildlife documentaries (Lorimer 2010). On the other hand, these performances of masculinity are not just emblematic of a neocolonial imaginary, but articulated in relation to a lived local context and a particular situated social identity. Richie is mobilizing his experience of international volunteer tourism in a way that has currency in the norms and social networks of his life in Hackney. In narrating the lion encounter as evidence of his toughness, he seeks kudos amid the hypermasculine norms of "street culture" which are a strong influence on the landscape that young people growing up on London estates must navigate (Gunter 2008).

Richie broadcasts the meaning he wants to project around his international experience in the "affective economies" of his digital peer networks (Harvey et al. 2013) through his posting his image and captioning the lions as having "got his back." Photographs can enable particularly strong claims to authenticity, and Harvey et al. (2013) explore the way young men perform "swagger" to gain "ratings" through posting carefully chosen shots and poses around their consumption online. These online projections of swagger gain them situated and relational cultural capital not only through online "likes" and comments but also have an exchange value for young men offline in relation to their local movements and safety amid peer hierarchies. Richie's projection of "swagger" is neither entirely embedded in "street culture" and hyper-consumption nor a pure echo of middle-class volunteer-tourist imaginaries, but something that engages values from multiple spheres.

Richie draws on his mobility to Zimbabwe in a gendered project of the self amid the particular "economies of mobility" of his everyday life in London (Thomson and Taylor 2005), where "hardness" is part of securing local security and mobility. His global travel is experienced and reframed in relation to "audiences" back home and situated attempts to gain respect, social, and cultural capital (Desforges 1998). The negotiations around the values ascribed to his travel are evident in the way that those "above" Richie in his peer hierarchy responded with some admiration, but also ambivalence, expressed through their "rumbling" of him (playfully punching him). Their concern seems to center around their perception he took too high a risk and "could die" or they "could lose him." Here, the bodily and social vulnerabilities for

young black men in Richie's everyday context – who face (but are not determined by) the embodied and systemic violence of prejudiced policing, educational profiling, and conflicts associated with territorial youth cultures – shape the meaning ascribed Richie's volunteer tourist experience.

This complicates a vision of the volunteer tourist inhabiting some “other” realm of global privilege which exists over and above particular situated spaces. The visceral thrill of Richie's memory of the wildlife encounter emerges from a constellation of diverse materialities and relationships which span space and time – from colonial histories, to his classed, gendered, and aged peer networks and the influences of economic insecurity on their norms, to the embodied adventure of proximity to charismatic animals mediated by wildlife shows and the aesthetics of social media platforms (Lorimer 2010). It also complicates our view of young working-class subjects as encapsulated within “the local.” Invocations of “street culture” often reproduce bounded and binding images of young people from marginalized backgrounds as having a distinct and singular sensibility associated with abject localisms. Where Richie is certainly engaging with “street culture,” his swagger is in fact inflected by imaginaries and experiences far beyond “inner city” environments. His peers are also certainly doing so in their everyday engagements with various global imaginaries connected to consumption or transnational family histories, despite the fact they might not have had the chance to travel to Zimbabwe.

### **3.2 “Worldchangers is the New Gang”: Strategic Fusions of Popular Humanitarianism and Local Repertoires**

It's May 2013. I'm about halfway through a year of participant observation and volunteering every week with a youth charity based on an estate in southwest London. As well as regular youth clubs, overseas trips are an established and high-profile feature of their work. A group of older youth have just come back from a trip to South Africa overflowing with a post-trip “buzz.” Overall, they say, the best thing was how the whole group bonded; for instance, they made up a slogan – “worldchangers” – with a hand sign in the shape of a “W” to go with it. They want to design T-shirts and hats with “#worldchangers” on them. I notice “#worldchangers” used by the young people on Instagram to tag photos of themselves with their arms around South African children and of team bonding on safari.

A few days later there is a mentoring evening which includes a talk about the trip. Naz, who went on the trip, gives the talk. Naz is a bit of a poster boy for the youth charity, having been a successful class A drug dealer in the local area and a proponent of the accompanying “gang” identity. Shortly before being sentenced to 2 years in prison, he went on a trip with the youth charity to Kenya which he bills as “life changing.” Indeed, with significant support from the youth charity and their business networks, after his release from prison, he made a successful transition to becoming a “young entrepreneur,” gaining qualifications and initiating enterprises which draw on his own life history as a resource, such as motivational speaking and coaching. Naz summarizes the work the group did on the South Africa trip building a

house for a woman and her family. They show a little film from the trip featuring individual close-ups of each member of the team saying how much they've enjoyed the trip and then signing off saying "worldchangers!." Some shout it in complete earnestness, some look a bit confused, and others say it with a little wry smile, part ironic, part embarrassed.

After the video Naz speaks passionately to the younger guys in the room, working up to a climatic point where he exclaims: "Everyone needs to be down with this! . . . Everyone's heard of this [local gang] but fuck them, you get me? Worldchangers is the new gang, you get me? Everyone get down with it, cos big things are going to happen!" After his talk there's time for others to share their reflections. Gary, the founder of the youth charity, talks about how inspired he was to learn about the pivotal role of the youth protests in Soweto and how that reminds us that young people can bring change, that apartheid ended when "worldchangers" in South Africa said "this isn't right."

A few weeks later, I'm at a meeting for brainstorming social enterprise ideas. Gary is still on the "worldchangers" riff. He semiseriously wonders about the idea of getting young people to sell "#worldchanger" T-shirts and keep a cut – like an alternative to dealing! People laugh at how he can't shut up about it and he jokes, "you know, we want to push the brand out, see a few people with worldchangers tats [tattoos]. . . ." The "#worldchangers" T-shirt finally makes it to the realm of reality at the summer community festival organized by the charity, as a sort of volunteer uniform. As we plan the festival, Caris, another youth worker, grumbles that this "worldchangers" thing doesn't seem to have much substance. Gary is a bit irritated by this, saying, "well, its a movement of positive young people – its marketing something positive – encouraging positive contributions."

What are we to make of the phenomenon of the "worldchangers," tracing the moment's narratives, practices, and objects coalesce around this phrase? Its popularity signals that it has a socially performative power, an ability to mark a set of experiences and individuals' identities in a catchy, "inspirational," and highly visible way. It draws on the sentimental, hyperbolic, and sensational tone of popular humanitarianism, which imagines the Western subject as able to "change the world." This is further evident in the way it is used to label paternalistic images online, as the glossy, sentimental aesthetics of neocolonial generosity circulate across the celebrity culture and social media platforms which enable a "localized fame" (Mostafanezhad 2013). The logic of colonialism is present in the way the "worldchangers" is used to subsume the politics and history of South Africa under a generalized picture of an active Western subject working against the backdrop of needy otherness. The term can therefore be seen as a media-savvy slogan typical of problematic, universalizing visions of global development.

However, deeper understanding is added by tracing the term in a grounded context, which reveals the particularistic nature of this "global vision." Becoming a "worldchanger" can be seen to fit into a dynamic of self-development and the pressure to build a "personality package" (a combination of credentials, skills, and charisma) as a marker of employability in the contemporary UK (Heath 2006; Pedwell 2012). Volunteer tourism can become part of cultivating a certain type of

subjectivity – enterprising, aspirational, and “helping” – amenable to a labor market characterized by flexibility and precarious service sector labor (Cremin 2007). The young volunteers’ affective performances of becoming “worldchangers” can be seen as taking responsibility to position themselves as the right type of citizens in “aspiration nation,” where “. . . charisma might be the only thing that secures your future.” (Lorimer 2010, p. 319). Naz’s story, as a narrative of self-transformation from an exaggeratedly abject “street life” to becoming an active, enterprising, (“globally”) responsible subject, can be understood as shaped by the same “aspirational” context (Cheung Judge 2016). In this same context, Gary embraces a generalized global enthusiasm as a conduit for creating an atmosphere or positivity in his work with young people and for savvy outward representation of the charity. Therefore, we see that the “worldchanger” vision does not come from a generalized, all-encompassing “global” sphere, but is in fact deeply shaped by particular political-economic contexts and is constitutive of forms of selfhood geared toward those contexts.

Furthermore, the idea of the “worldchangers” emerges from – and is shaped by – young people’s creative fusions of specific place-based cultural repertoires with these political-economic norms to navigate opportunities and constraints they face. The way that Naz promotes worldchangers as “the new gang” shows that he continues to draw on the repertoire and resources associated with his prior life in “illicit” cultures as he fashions a new, respectable, enterprising self. The term “gang” is contentious in its use to criminalize young people, but groups of hierarchically organized young people who have a strong, territorial sense of belonging and collective identity do exist. Naz is attempting to “rebrand” these local social formations, making a claim that “gangs” should not be pathologized in themselves, but could potentially be seen as a source of positive social action (Lucas 1998). As he later expanded in an interview: “. . . you can adopt that concept but do it in a positive way, do you see what I’m trying to say? . . . instead of everyone screaming [gang name] everyday, they’d be screaming worldchangers.” Through pushing “worldchangers,” Naz is attempting to mobilize the strong sense of collective loyalty, honor, and passion that are hallmarks of sociality on the estate and position himself as a leader figure in any new movements that emerge.

This example destabilizes “global/structure” versus “local/agency” dualism. Naz’s vision of the “worldchangers” is not a purely responsive import of a globalized “popular humanitarianism” but materially and imaginatively grounded in local specificities and systems of value and for its young proponents, a “strategic resource: as a set of imaginaries and practices that can be used to extend opportunities or consolidate power” (Jeffrey and McFarlane 2008, p. 420; Nava 2002). While clearly this should not be characterized as “resistance” to neocolonial or neoliberal forces, such fusions can be seen as a type of “hustle,” a form of resourceful and resilient agency. The knowing humor woven around the use of the phrase highlights it is as much strategic performance as earnestly held belief (Jeffrey 2012). Naz’s active self-transformation to “young entrepreneur,” drawing value from his “street” pasts, allows him as a charismatic individual to break past racialized and classed experiences of criminalization, even as it reinscribes hierarchies based on having



to “pull yourself up by your bootstraps.” Thus, the “worldchangers” can be seen as a hybridization of local and global, but one which nonetheless can serve a “smoothed over” understanding of global injustice and the valorization of concepts of individuality, autonomy, and responsibility (Ansell 2010; Ballie Smith et al. 2013). This is never totalizing, and ambivalence is also always present, indicated by moments of critical reflexivity around the term as lacking substance.

### 3.3 Embodied Transnational Resonances: Dancing the Azonto in Zimbabwe

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, August 2013. One night, after a day volunteering – painting and cleaning in a primary school – we go to eat dinner with a family from the youth group’s church in Hackney who are coincidentally spending their summer in near where we are based. Nomvula, the mum, is Zimbabwean, and her parents live here. Some of the group know her oldest son, Kingsley, who also grew up in Hackney, but was sent to live and attend private school in Zimbabwe after getting into trouble a few times in his early teens. People are talking about what it will be like to see him again, reminiscing about being in Sunday school together and a dance competition he won.

We pull up on a residential street and go into their compound. Daniel, the father of the family, is roasting a huge leg of goat for us out in the yard, with a big smile on his face. Nomvula gives everyone big hugs. Inside, the table is piled high: rice and peas, salads and coleslaw, chicken, and stew. Everyone is really excited to see such familiar food after eating the Zimbabwean staple *sadsa* and strange sandwiches. One young woman exclaims, “this is a bit like London, but in Africa!” to which a youth leader jokes back, “which is pretty much what church is like anyway!” It’s time to eat. Nomvula says grace in Ndebele; everyone tucks in enthusiastically.

After dinner they say we should make ourselves at home and listen to music, dance if we want to. Kingsley takes the initiative, puts something on, and starts dancing tentatively on his own in the middle; some others test it out for short bursts and then sit back down. People take turns choosing songs to listen to. The songs that get the most enthusiastic reception range from ones by Kendrick Lamar (hip-hop), to Ed Sheeran (indie-pop), and “Waka Laka” (from the video game “Dance Dance Revolution”). Then someone makes a request “Azonto!” and a little ripple of excitement passes round the room; someone shouts “come on Africa!” . . . the song starts – “See I just came back from Ghana/And I wanna show you this dance that everybody was doin’ over there. . . Now watch me do my azonto, azonto, azonto. . .” – three of the lads who are second-generation West African jump up and lead the dancing with crisp, punchy moves, stepping to the left, right, twisting their hips and flicking their hands. Others half-know the moves and are doing them perched at the side of the room; one of the confident girls joins the boys in the center halfway through.

After this, Kingsley puts on the song “Oliver Twist” by Nigerian artist D’Banj and does a dance to it, a sort of awkward solo, but it works as a way to make a



connection; we all cheer him on and give him a big round of applause at the end. After that the party atmosphere gets going; everyone is singing and shouting and laughing and dancing, hot and sweaty, grinning from ear to ear. When it's time to go, no one wants to leave.

This light-hearted break in our voluntary work was suffused by an astounding number of transnational flows and hybrid cultural forms. The group of young volunteers connected within their already-diverse group and with their Zimbabwean friend Kingsley and his family through the affective and vital power of transnational youth culture and food. The vignette points us to further think about the interconnectedness of multiple spaces and scales through the body. A sense of transnational belonging and intimacy was created, through our embodied participation in dancing and eating together. These acts may seem insignificant, and indeed the more egalitarian connections of the evening may not have spilled over into the next day's voluntary work, where encounters were set up to fit into sedimented patterns of dominance. However, attention to the "visceral" can give us a richer view of how social life unfolds in the felt sensations and cognitive meaning-making of the "minded-body" (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes Conroy 2010)

The songs that animated the young people's bodies and emotions traverse national boundaries in their sources. The Hackney teenagers' taste ranged from enjoying the sharp social musings of an African American from Compton, LA County, California (Kendrick Lamar), to pop-ballads penned by a white Suffolk (rural English) singer-songwriter (Ed Sheeran), to the disembodied catchy tune of a globally popular video game for Xbox developed in Japan ("Waka Laka"). Fuse ODG's "Azonto" and D'Banj's "Oliver Twist" are particularly rich examples of a syncretic expressions which connect the UK, West Africa, and beyond. Fuse ODG is a British musician of Ghanaian descent who has lived in Ghana and Croydon, South London. His 2013 hit "Azonto" references a contemporary Ghanaian music and dance style which involves fast, coordinated hand and leg movements. The song incorporates rap, a melodic chorus, instructions on how to do some Azonto moves, and inspired a dance craze. The music video depicts young people of diverse ethnicities dancing the Azonto in various settings, including homemade videos of young people dancing in their bedrooms and "flashmob" style in Trafalgar Square. D'Banj is a best-selling Nigerian artist whose hit "Oliver Twist" topped the African charts and also charted in the UK in 2012. Interestingly, D'Banj can be seen as a "celebrity humanitarian," as the founder of Koko Foundation for Youth and Peace Development, a UN Youth Ambassador for Peace, and having released a song ("Cocoa Na Chocolate) in support of ONE's campaign to boost investments in African agriculture in 2014.

The young people responded to Fuse ODG's Azonto with a visceral excitement, with a bodily spontaneity to their jumping up and moving to the beat, with an exclaimed claim of Pan-African pride and a performance of cool prowess in youth culture by those who knew the dance moves. The Azonto speaks to a British-Africaness which situates the young people's imaginings of globality in both Hackney and Zimbabwe. Rather than looking at how the Azonto might symbolize resistance or accommodation of one culture by another in either the UK, Ghana, or

Zimbabwe, we might see it as an “resonant” object which allows us to trace networks, translations, and relationship across multiple sites (Marcus 1995). Further resonance was found in the food, which functioned to “home” the young people in the familiar tastes of food inspired by African, Caribbean, and Western traditions, reminding them of meals with friends, facilities, and in the church community and thus grounding their sense of belonging to transnational networks of religion and transnational heritage.

Clearly, the blurring of boundaries in this evening does not indicate that transnational power relations lose relevance. It might be tempting to dismiss it as an exceptional “outside” to the relationships and representations which suffused much of the rest of the trip and work to uphold the privilege of the global north. However, recognizing such moments is of importance amid the uneven socio-spatial relationships of volunteer tourism if we wish to take seriously the potential of dynamics that exceed the pernicious forces of dominance and contribute to strengthening those through our representational choices (Griffiths 2014). For instance, Kingsley’s parents clearly see Zimbabwe as a more valuable and effective site for the development of their son’s virtuous subjectivity than London. The fun of dancing to the Azonto has the potential to stretch beyond momentary pleasure and influence new spatial meanings: Fuse ODG turned down an offer to sing on the Band Aid 30 project out of objection to the representations of Africa and the victims of the ongoing Ebola virus epidemic in West Africa. These small details testify to the multiplicity of meanings of Africa and give the embodied fun of this evening a potential to disrupt a sense of the inevitability of the narrative of young Britons traveling abroad for short periods to help the needy and return to develop themselves as productive subjects back in the UK.

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## 4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued, through the empirical example of volunteer tourism, that accounts of young people’s lives often present the relationships between space, power, and their subjectivities in a limited manner. In particular, a local-global dualism is frequently mapped onto classed young subjects. Looking at a more diverse set of young people engaging in international volunteer tourism exposes the inadequacies of analyses which presume that global mobility and eliteness always go hand in hand and rectifies tendencies to represent young people facing socioeconomic marginalization in the UK as bound and determined by their “local” setting. While not discounting the reality of deep national and international inequalities, looking at the actual situated globalities of these young people exposes how these power relations emerge through particular constellations of global and local. Close attention to the way the global is situated at different points also sharpens a recognition of young people’s creative agency at work, only some of it oppositional, and fosters possibilities to see problematic stabilizations of scale and meaning as contested and contestable.

Three vignettes have presented more complex visions of the socio-spatial dynamics of volunteer tourism. The thrilling memory of a wildlife encounter shows how a seemingly straightforward meaning of volunteer tourism as amplifying a sense of masculine adventure is in fact embedded in place-based power relations around age, gender, and race. An account tracing the circulation of a particular term “worldchangers” reveals how popular humanitarian imaginings of “the global” are problematic, but shaped and given power as young people actively and creatively engage them to build subjectivities which fuse local repertoires into attempts to get ahead in neoliberal contexts. In both of these examples, young people draw the “global,” mediated via online representations, into struggles for respect and security. Finally, an account of the embodied pleasures of connection via transnational music and food reveals that multiple sites meet in the body and its affects. Further recognition of this holds the potential to look for dynamics which exceed sedimental spatial inequalities. Combining close ethnographic observation with theoretically nuanced understandings of scale and subjectivity has much to add. It counters neat analyses which associate certain types of young people with certain experiences and scales. Spaces are never bounded, subjectivities never static, and “the global” is always inseparable from the “local” and situated.

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# Eve-Teasing and Education Mobility: Young Women's Experiences in the Urban Slums of India

Kabita Chakraborty

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	270
2	Tackling Eve-Teasing in India .....	272
3	Eve-Teasing and Youth Culture in India .....	274
4	Young People and <i>Purdah</i> in the <i>Bustees</i> .....	276
5	<i>Purdah</i> and Young Women .....	277
6	<i>Purdah</i> and Young Men .....	278
7	Eve-Teasing and <i>Purdah</i> Culture .....	279
8	Education Mobility and Eve-Teasing in the <i>Bustees</i> .....	283
	8.1 Eve-Teasing as an Expression of Wounded Masculinity .....	283
	8.2 Eve-Teasing as Harassment and Violence .....	285
	8.3 Eve-Teasing as Flirting .....	286
9	Conclusion: What we know and what we still need to know about eve-teasing .....	288
	References .....	289
	Works Cited .....	289
	Films Cited .....	292

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## Abstract

This chapter explores the phenomenon of eve-teasing, and presents ongoing research detailing young Muslim people's experiences of eve-teasing in the urban slums (*bustees*) of Kolkata (Calcutta), India. It begins with a review of some contemporary social and political changes occurring throughout India in regards to eve-teasing. Drawing on preliminary research, the chapter describes how eve-teasing is an important marker in young people's transition into the youth period in the *bustees*. It details how eve-teasing has the potential to both curb and expand young women's mobility with a focus on their mobility for schooling. Discourses about eve-teasing in the community are underpinned by

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concerns over young women's safety and young women's own understanding of space. There is also evidence that community acceptance of eve-teasing is contextual, pointing to use of eve-teasing as both a tool of community control over mobile girls and community tolerance of limited forms of premarital romance. This research adds to growing public discussions about gendered experiences of violence and mobility in India and argues dominant narratives of eve-teasing needs to be considered from a youth-centered perspective, particularly in communities where premarital mixed-sex interactions are not the norm.

### Keywords

Bustees • Education mobility and eve-teasing in • Young people and purdah in • Education mobility • Eve-teasing in *bustees* • Eve-teasing • Education mobility in *bustees* • *Purdah* culture • Expression of wounded masculinity • Flirting • Harassment and violence • Definition • Impacts • Youth culture in India • *Purdah* • Young men • Young women • Culture and eve-teasing • Sexual harassment • *Timepass*

## 1 Introduction

Often translated as “sexual harassment” the term eve-teasing is used across South Asia as a euphemism for harassment that is often public and sexual in nature. The Union territory of New Delhi's Prohibition of Eve-teasing Act (1984) defines eve-teasing as “when a man by words either spoken or by signs or by visible representation or by gesture does any act in public space, or signs, recites or utters any indecent words or song or ballad in any public place to the annoyance of a woman” (in Jaishankar et al. 2008, p. 284). Across India there are similar eve-teasing laws (like the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Eve-Teasing Act, 1998, see Rogers 2008). While the term eve-teasing is a familiar and colloquial term used as catch-all phrase when referring to a multitude of acts including catcalls, singing, and groping of females in public by males, the Indian Penal Code does not make specific reference to eve-teasing. In contrast, obscene acts are a crime, punishable under Indian Penal Code Section 294,

Whoever, to the annoyance of others (a) Does any obscene act in any public place, or (b) Sings, recites or utters any obscene song, ballad or words, in or near any public place, Shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three months, or with fine, or with both. (IPC 294)

While the two definitions are strikingly similar, dominant public discourse particularly among youth in the *bustees* (urban slums) of Kolkata (Calcutta) suggests there is a difference between “harassment” and “eve-teasing,” and similar findings have been reported across India (for example see Nahar et al. 2013; Mitra-Sarkar and Partheeban 2011; Osella and Osella 1998). In the *bustees* and in many communities throughout India performances of eve-teasing are complicated because of the

relationship teasing has to do with male youth socialization and their dominance in public places (Jeffrey 2010). Moreover, in the Muslim *bustee* communities where this research is conducted premarital romantic relationships are not the norm, and if these relationships are enacted, they are complicated by the religio-cultural practice of *purdah*, the separation of men and women in public and private places. Limited mixed-sex interactions, as well as popular “modern” youth culture which values love before marriage, sees that eve-teasing can also be read by young people as displays of romantic interest. However, flirting is also not an accurate translation of the act because of the fear that may be associated with unwanted eve-teasing or the hurt of unreturned affections. In the *bustees* of Kolkata, eve-teasing is not viewed with the same lens as harassment, rape, or dowry violence, as these are understood to be “serious issues.” Rather eve-teasing is thought of as an annoying and ordinary aspect of the everyday lives of girls and young women. Importantly, in the *bustees* experiencing eve-teasing as a teaser, bystander, or as an object of teasing is a marker in young people’s transition into the youth period. This chapter will show how eve-teasing occupies a gray area of mixed-sex interactions in the *bustees*, and for many young people this gray area has mobility implications.

This study of how eve-teasing impacts the school-going routines of girls and young women living in urban slum communities in Kolkata takes place in a globalizing India where young people are central to social, political, and economic changes. Nonelite young people and their varied experiences in a globalizing nation, however, are often marginalized in discussions about “changing youth cultures” in India. When they do appear, like in the Verma Committee Report (2013) or in recent global discussions about India’s problem with violent male youth, their lives are viewed through a lens of pathology and poverty. This chapter adds to a growing body of literatures documenting multiple and nonnormative youth cultures across India (Lukose 2009; Jeffrey 2008, 2010, 2011; Dyson 2014; Nakassis 2013), and in particular shares how young people in the urban slums of Kolkata are coming to terms with political, social, and cultural changes occurring in the city and how these impact on the practice of eve-teasing in the *bustees*. Throughout the chapter, experiences of eve-teasing are shown to be highly spatialized and gendered, and it is argued that national discussions about eve-teasing need greater nuance to fully understand the complexities of this act from a youth-centered perspective.

Across India eve-teasing is considered to be an annoying part of everyday life for many young women. The image of a group of boys hanging around in public, staring at passersby, catcalling girls who are waiting for their bus, and singing Bollywood songs loudly for all to hear is a powerful and repeated way to describe male youth culture (particularly in poor communities), and this depiction is plentiful in the films, advertisements, and television. The accompanying silent “good girl” who tries to circumvent teasers by dressing modestly, avoiding eye contact, and swiftly and quietly trying to make her way to her destination reaffirms normative gender roles for many young people. Young men who whistle and sing love songs to passersby draw attention to the female body and their dress sense, and this can be embarrassing. Eve-teasing also has the potential to invade physical space, with a young man grabbing a girl’s hand or her scarf to catch her attention. This physical



interaction leads to speculation about one's morals and values and sexual availability, and can be unpleasant for young women. Eve-teasing also has the potential to be read as flirting, but this flirting may not always be appreciated. In all these forms eve-teasing challenges the public mobility of girls and young women, who may, or may not, find themselves actively managing their public mobility in reference to eve-teasing. Across India while most young women have had many experiences of managing unpleasant or violent episodes of eve-teasing, serious investigation into this matter and advocacy to reduce these acts have not been at the forefront of the national agenda until very recently.

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## 2 Tackling Eve-Teasing in India

In the last decade there have been ongoing attempts by both government and nongovernmental organizations to address eve-teasing and its implication on young/women's mobility across the country. Public transportation was one of the first target areas of intervention, which in the 1980s–1990s saw the introduction of gender segregated transportation, including buses and trains. While drive for gender segregated public transport was to accommodate young/women's greater participation in the workforce and schooling, the move was also recognition that young/women's public mobilities were impeded by eve-teasing (Phadke et al. 2011). The link between eve-teasing and increased public mobility has been reported by Natarajan who argues “eve-teasing of young women was uncommon in the 1970s, because only few women went to college or to work. In the 1980s and 1990s, many young women went to college and to work, and became visible in public when waiting for buses and trains” (Natarajan 2008, p. 54).

The “ladies only” compartment is a phenomenon across Asia (Hori and Burgess 2012; Harrison 2012), as gendered segregated travel is a way many nations deal with girls and young/women's mobility for work and school. The debate about whether gender segregation is an appropriate way to address young/women's mobility in public is well documented across Asia (see for example Harrison 2012; Neupane and Chesney-Lind 2014). In India, one argument in favor of gender segregated transport is that it makes the travel experience safer and less stressful for young/women. In Mitra-Sarkar and Partheeban's (2011) ominously titled chapter “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here” the authors discuss the realities of eve-teasing on public transportation in Chennai (Madras). Their findings show how 40 % of young/women they surveyed “rated their worst [public transportation] experiences in buses and trains with no separate sections for women” (2011, p. 76). The authors point to the state's haphazard planning of public transportation, which does not consider commuting hazards including groping, flirting, and catcalls. Their paper argues for more gendered safe spaces in public transport and better design of the transport itself to minimize harassment (2011, p. 83). The Priyadarshini Taxi Service in Mumbai (Bombay) is an example of civil society activism making a case for gender segregated transportation for young/women (Singh and Singhal 2014). This scheme sees women from lower class communities undergoing training to operate a “ladies only”

taxi service. Training includes comprehensive driver education as well as nondriving related training including self-defense (Singh and Singhal 2014, p. 98). This latter aspect of training acknowledges some of the physical and gendered risks that female drivers might undergo when disrupting the masculine space of the roads in India.

In contrast to these gender segregated schemes, the Blank Noise project argues that gender segregated transport is not the answer to reducing young/women's exposure to eve-teasing in India. *Blank Noise*, a public art initiative founded by students in Bengaluru (Bangalore), is the most prominent youth-led civil society organization addressing eve-teasing in India (Digital Tipping Point 2011). Angelina (2010) argues that the organization's use of digital activism in tackling predominantly youth-centered problems including eve-teasing has led to the initiative spreading to nine urban centers in India by attracting youth who are middle class, English speaking, and tech savvy to share stories of harassment online, as well as participate in public protests and public performance art. The aim of *Blank Noise* is to interrogate the normalization of eve-teasing across India and the project asks young women and men across the country to do more than just ignore eve-teasing, but rather act as "action heroes" and confront public acts of teasing (Blank Noise Blog 2015). As a part of their Safe City Pledge campaign, for example, young women are encouraged to occupy public space including "general compartment" trains and buses, demand their right to ride any form of transport safely, and disrupt normative discourses of safe and unsafe gendered public spaces. The project argues gender segregated transport is not the solution to eve-teasing, as it places an onus on young women to circumvent teasing rather than demanding from men a change in their behaviors. Rather than being silent victims, *Blank Noise* encourages young women to shout and point out eve-teasing, and young men are encouraged to disrupt masculine dominance in various public spaces including trains and buses. As discussed below within the context of the *bustees*, these two responses are not the norm in dealing with eve-teasing.

While public transportation was one of the first areas of political and civil society action to deal with increased young/women's public mobility, it was not until the new millennium that concentrated political action on eve-teasing (specifically) became prominent at the national level. The 2010 Delhi Commission on Street Violence against Women represented at the time one of the earliest political investigations into the matter. Commissioned research conducted by Indian NGO Jagori revealed to the Commission that eve-teasing and harassment is perceived as the biggest risk for women's safety across Delhi, with the roadside seen as the most unsafe place. Importantly, it is young women's mobilities that were found to be the most impeded by public harassment (Delhi Commission 2010). The Commission noted that the dominant discourse surrounding young women's public bodies on the way to college and work are both out of place and a target of "bad boys" (i.e., lower class youth and men) who are releasing their sexual frustrations on female public bodies. Indeed these dominant discourses frame most discussion around the "problem" of eve-teasing in India. This discussion, however, needs a more nuanced analysis, and needs to consider how young people living in communities with limited premarital interactions view teasing, particularly in a globalizing India

where premarital relationships and love marriages are increasingly viewed as a rite of passage for “modern” youth.

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### 3 Eve-Teasing and Youth Culture in India

Eve-teasing is framed in different ways across India, but dominant public discourse suggests that teasing is related to young men’s poor education outcomes, low socioeconomic status, and marginalization. Jeffrey (2010, p. 99) argues that many Indians think eve-teasing is an example of youth *timepass*. *Timepass* is an Indian English term used throughout India to describe a way to kill time. It is often used in the context of male youth being idle, usually as a result of boredom or unemployment. In Jeffrey’s scholarship on contemporary male youth culture in North India he argues that eve-teasing as *timepass* has strong links to class and religion, and throughout India it is understood to be an activity related to lower classes, especially Dalit and Muslim young men (Jeffrey 2011, p. 1995). The reality is young men from all backgrounds, and of all ages, participate in eve-teasing (Puri 1999; Delhi Commission 2010). This dominant discourse that low-class and “backwards” Muslim boys practice eve-teasing is especially felt by local youth living in the *bustees* where this research is conducted. Most young men and women believe that popular perceptions of their poverty, low class and minority status works as a disadvantage to them in accessing various economic, social, and cultural facilities outside of the slums.

The discourse that it is poor men and low class culture at the root of India’s eve-teasing problem is particularly evident in recent public protests against eve-teasing and violence against women across the country. While state and civil society has been working towards tackling the issue of eve-teasing over the last decade, it was the 2012 rape and murder of a college student in Delhi which saw unprecedented national action to change the gendered dynamics of public space and address violence against women. In this incident a group of boys and young men lured a college student into a bus where she and her friend were brutally assaulted. As a result of the sexual assault 23-year-old Nirbhaya died of her injuries, and her death sparked both national and international outrage (see for example Schneider and Titzmann 2015; Sharma et al. 2014; Kabeer 2013). Protests urging safer spaces for girls and women, and changes to Indian laws on gendered violence, ignited the country. Most of these protests were led by young people, college and university students in particular. The guttural reaction of youth across the country saw public space being occupied by hundreds of thousands of young people in large city centers. One of the state’s immediate responses was to organize a committee led by late Chief Justice J.S Verma to review and recommend amendments to criminal laws that impact girls and women in particular (GOI 2013).

The 2013 Verma Committee Report problematically alludes several times within the document that eve-teasing and sexual violence is an issue rooted in low class youth culture (see Chap. 7, “Child Sexual Abuse”, for example) and numerous times makes a call to target socializing efforts to poor and rural communities whose young

men are viewed as wild and uncivilized. While there is no doubt that young people experiencing eve-teasing find the experience violent and obviously young men from poor communities can and do participate in eve-teasing, this is not the only way eve-teasing can be framed. Upper and middle class youth certainly participate in this phenomenon, with college-going, which is very much a normative experience for the middle class, a dominant site of eve-teasing (Phadke et al. 2011). Worryingly, the Verma Committee Report alludes to changing youth cultures that are developing at different paces, in particular how poor young men are “falling behind” middle and upper class (read: urban and Hindu) young men, and how this is a contributing factor to violence against women in India. The Verma Committee Report is not the only state document to discuss shifts in contemporary youth culture, and issues of class and status in the context of youth culture, as a contributing factor for “change” in a globalizing and modernizing India.

Over the last decade, India's National Youth Policy (NYP 2014) also has seen a shift in the category of youth. From 2003 to 2013 the NYP category of youth was defined as those between ages 13 and 35. In 2014, the category includes those between 15 and 29 years. This shift represents important economic and social changes which have been occurring across the nation. What accounts for the narrowing of this category is certainly related to the growth of the middle class social group and the middle class political project which has seen many changes in young people's life course over one generation. For example, policy changes have focused on discouraging early school leaving and incompleteness of primary schooling in favor of work (Balagopalan 2014), as well as discouraging early marriage (Santhya et al. 2010). Some of these changes are linked to the possibility of a larger middle class workforce, which the NYP makes very explicit. Indeed the primary objective of the NYP as discussed in the preface is to “create a productive workforce that can make a sustainable contribution to India's economic development” (NYP 2014, p. 3). Here “sustainable contribution” is read with a globalized lens “India lies on the cusp of a demographic transition, similar to the one that fuelled the spectacular rise in GDP of the East Asian Tigers in the second half of the 20th century” (NYP 2014, p. 3).

Political aspirations that link Indian youth with other Asian youth, and a global middle class, are also reinforced in popular culture. Bollywood in particular fetishizes middle and upper class Hindu college-going youth in contemporary films. We see for example in “superhit” films such as *2 States* (2014) and *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani* (This Youth is Crazy 2013), Indian youth participating in tertiary schooling, global work opportunities and undertaking greater domestic and international mobility than decades past. These representations are a mirror of greater youth mobility and opportunities which are related strongly to new employment sectors and increased social infrastructures (Varma 2007; Donner 2011; Fernandes and Heller 2006). This popular imagery of “modern youth,” however systematically excludes poor, marginalized, and minority communities in India, further limiting understanding of the variety and richness of different youth cultures across the nation.

## 4 Young People and *Purdah* in the *Bustees*

There are many unique youth cultures in India, but the monolithic representation of “Indian youth”, particularly in popular culture, as being middle class and Hindu, and creates misunderstanding about complex youth cultures across the nation, and the lived realities of poor Muslim youth in particular. This chapter draws on research conducted with youth living in the *bustees* of Kolkata, which is in the state of West Bengal in East India. For this study, 50 young women and men between the ages of 16–25 over 2013–2016 used a variety of qualitative and participatory methods including peer-to-peer interviews, focus groups, and walking tours to unpack what eve-teasing meant to them and the role of teasing in the lives. (This research has been supported by a Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Insight Development Grant, and is ongoing.) The *bustees* in which this research is being conducted is a conservative Muslim space, dominated by *Bareilvi* and more middle class *Deobandi* Muslims from the *Hanafi* school. Research in this community has been ongoing over the past 11 years, which has helped to map the changing lives of Muslim young people in a rapidly globalizing India, and these have been discussed elsewhere (e.g., Chakraborty 2016). It is important to note that obtaining young people’s experiences which detail the nuances of eve-teasing, particularly discourses about teasing as a relationship initiator and eve-teasing as a self-conscious reaction to social inequality, was only possible because of this long term relationship with the community. Young people who were not long standing participants did not provide nuanced details and interpretations of this act. This speaks to the sensitive nature of eve-teasing, particularly since the 2012 Nirbhaya case, which has seen greater public discussion about eve-teasing as a problem and urban poor boys as a cause of this problem.

The research took place in what are understood to be large *bustees*. They occupy roughly 2.5 km<sup>2</sup> of area, and local NGOs estimate the combined *bustees* have a population of over 300,000 people (2014 estimate). One of the slums has a longer tenancy history in the area and is made up of established one-room slum homes, as well as built-up family homes, most living in permanent tenancy settlements. Second- and third-generation migrants of comfortable middle class and poor backgrounds can live side by side in this community. While there are multileveled flats, some with middle class consumption goods such as air-conditioning, most homes are single level brick structures approximately 15–20 sq. ft. in size and house an average of seven people, usually members of a joint family. These are one-room homes with a small stoop in the front to conduct cooking, while toilet and water facilities are public and shared. The second *bustee* has larger industries and mixed permanent housing, as well as recent migrants living in squatter settlements (*jhupris*); *jhupri* dwellers live in more precarious situations and are not tenanted. The *bustees* are characterized by class and status specific occupations including rubbish and scrap collection, rickshaw pullers, taxi drivers, and leather works. A young man with significant work experience could make between Rs 5000–6000 (At the time of writing \$1USD = Rs. 60) a month (this is considered a “good” salary). If young women do work they made considerably less, sometimes half of what young men

make. One of the factors contributing to reduced wages is that most young women undertake home-based piecework, such as tailoring and cutting shoe soles. These working conditions are related to both an informal economy where outsourced home-based labor is cheaper than factory labor and because home-based work allows *purdah* to be practiced.

*Purdah* is the separation of males and females in public and private space. In contemporary West Bengal, it is mostly practiced in Muslim communities from a lower-socioeconomic class background (see for example Husain 2005). In the *bustees* children do not practice this separation. It is at the onset of puberty that young people begin to slowly start practicing *purdah*. For many, entrance into the youth period is marked by the oncoming of menstruation for girls and the entrance into full-time paid employment for boys, but the shift is often much more complicated than merely achieving these social and biological milestones. The youth period is one where the community sees childhood “innocence” make way for a slow preparation toward marriage. Innocence is challenged by bodily and mind changes and for most families the changing female and male body is thought to increase desire and possibility for independent romance. Community understanding of heterosexual desire developing during adolescence means many young women are met with a wave of different overprotective measures at puberty. These include monitoring of clothing, mobility, and socialization. Young men experience limited overprotective measures in comparison, but for both groups monitoring has to do with reducing the possibility of self-directed romance and love marriages. This must be read in context; while most families support and prefer arranged marriages, few families will turn away from a self-chosen partner who is comfortably middle class. Curbing independent romance, particularly amongst young women, should be seen as both a family's attempt to discourage relationships with “local boys” who are often un/der employed and a way families control risks related to a developing sexual identity, such as premarital sexual experimentation.

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## 5 *Purdah* and Young Women

Puberty sees a shift from being a girl child to a youth (or the gendered “young woman”), and at this time both physical and symbolical changes are enacted to demonstrate this change. In the *bustees*, the developing body for girls signals an end to wearing skirts and pants and the full-time donning of “modest” clothing (Miller 2011). Geographical innocence is also curtailed, as the developing body sees an end to many unsupervised activities including collecting water from public wells, mixed-sex public playing, marketing, and traveling alone after dusk. Moving into *purdah* also impacts young women's education mobilities and this has been reported throughout India and Bangladesh (see for example Tsujita 2013; Amin and Huq 2008; Asadullah and Chaudhury 2009; Dostie and Jayaraman 2006). Asadullah and Wahhaj (2012, p. 21) argue that in Bangladesh “the social constraint on women's mobility is the strongest between the ages of menarche and marriage [and] the obstacle is most acute in the case of secondary education,” and this also holds true

in the *bustees* in Kolkata as well. In the *bustees*, when public mobility is required for young women they are modestly dressed, including in *salawar kameez* (long tunic and baggy pants), *burqa/niqab* (long robe, with full or partial head covering), and the school uniform. While *burqa/niqab* is related to *pardah*, practicing *pardah* does not always mean donning these garments. In the *bustees* you can still observe *pardah* when in a school uniform. As research participant Suhana explains, you can “keep modesty when you are travelling to school in your uniform by walking modestly” (Suhana, female, 16, focus group April 2015). (Pseudonyms have been used in this paper and all identifying markers have been changed.) Saldanha (2002) reports that clothing, particularly the school uniform, is one of the most important visible markers of both children and youth in South India, and the same can be said in the *bustees*. So important is the school uniform in publicly presenting a “good girl” image that recently large major shopping malls in Kolkata, including the upmarket South City shopping complex, has banned young people in school uniforms from entering the mall during the daytime. This ban impacts *bustee* youth as it is often by cutting school and meeting friends and romantic partners at the mall that young people in the *bustees* try to participate in their understanding of a “modern” Indian youth culture.

Geographically, the youth period sees young women in the *bustees* making greater use the *golis*, a series of intertwined back alleys which crisscross through the slums. These *golis* can connect kilometers of neighborhood, and they facilitate mobility which respects *pardah*. *Pardah* also initiates an increase in homebound duties such as cooking, and homebound leisure such as watching television. It is both in home spaces and *golis* where young women meet friends and gossip and play with peers. A globalizing India has also created quasi-democratic and quasi-public spaces such as shopping malls and theme parks, and these are providing a new space for youth culture to develop in public places. Phadke et al.’s (2011) research on women and loitering in Mumbai shows how the normative nature of “mall culture” in “modern” urban Mumbai sees many young/women often choosing the clean, controlled space of the mall to entertain their friends and find time for themselves. Srivastava’s (2014) participants also viewed these gentrified spaces in New Delhi as safer, with less risk of eve-teasing than other shopping spaces. Importantly in India new mega shopping centers are heavily tied to class status and consumption literacy, making other more traditional public hangouts, such as public parks and *bazaars*, increasingly read as spaces for lower status communities. As a result, when young people from the *bustees* do engage in public mall culture they might find themselves making calculated decisions around dress and consumption to fit into these spaces which do not always welcome them.

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## 6 *Pardah* and Young Men

In contrast to young women entering *pardah* culture by taking on more private roles and changing their clothing, for most young men in the *bustees* the time of puberty may see them withdrawing from school to join the paid world of work. Sarada



Balagopalan's (2014) comprehensive study of the relationship between education and labor in colonial and contemporary West Bengal challenges the reader to think critically about "child labor" and "education." Her scholarship calls to attention how these binary categories are laden with morals and values. She shows how the social construction of the poor uneducated working child is one way that children's lives in the Global South have become "othered" in favor of a universal model of childhood which is very narrow. The impact of secondary schooling incompleteness (i.e., not *Madamik-pass* in West Bengal) has been discussed in other marginalized youth communities in Kolkata (Balagopalan 2014; Husain 2005). In the *bustees* young men face enormous pressure and desire to gain public paid employment after leaving school. While they try to obtain full-time work, it is not always possible in the economically stressed slums. Rather than rooting young men's early school leaving to discourses of underachievement or linking it solely to poverty, it is important to remember that in the patriarchal slums where *purdah* is practiced, public work is also about mobility and access to public space.

Unlike their female peers, even their college-going peers, employment or the promise of employment allows young men public mobility throughout their lifetime. *Purdah* rules sees these young men hanging out in public areas of the slums during the daytime, usually returning home for meals or for rest in the evening time. Both employed and unemployed young men are expected to respect (and enforce) *purdah*, so even if one has no job to go to, hanging about in the home during the day is usually not acceptable. A young man at home during the day reaffirms to the community that this young man is *bekar*, an unemployed person or someone who is not active in looking for work (derogatorily used as "loser"). In other families a young man home for days on end may signal he is spoiled, or perhaps he is unwell. However, this inability to hang out at home during the day needs to be read in context; young men can position themselves both outside and inside the home if need be, where the options for young women in public are much more limited. It is at the transition into the youth period that male youth take-up strongly their role as owners of public space, a role that will continue through adulthood. In contrast, as Phadke et al. (2011) have discussed in Mumbai, the youth transition sees young/women's withdrawal from public spaces and a movement toward passing time in private rather than loitering in public. In their study they show how ownership of public space allows young men to safely loiter, play, and even sleep on the streets, and how young men are both highly visible and audible in public areas during leisure time, and this includes their practice of eve-teasing.

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## 7 Eve-Teasing and *Purdah* Culture

The transition from boy and girl children playing and hanging out together in the streets, to male youth dominating public places and practicing eve-teasing while female youth are in *purdah* is one of the strongest markers of being a youth in the *bustees*. In her research on youth social justice and art advocacy group, The Blank



Noise Project Angelina (2010) found that all of the young women she interviewed in urban Bangalore experienced eve-teasing.

Their first experience is mostly after arriving at puberty, around the age of 13, and it becomes more frequent and intense as they grow older. Many of the research participants became more aware and disturbed by it when they entered university, which means that they live a less sheltered life, start taking more public transportation, and sometimes move to another city. In other words, eve-teasing becomes a day-to-day problem experienced most intensively after childhood ends and youth begins. (Angelina 2010, p. 16)

Similarly this research argues that eve-teasing is a critical event in the lives of youth, one which demarcates the youth period from the childhood period for young people in the *bustees*. Importantly, in the *bustees purdah* does not deter eve-teasing; rather in the slums eve-teasing is understood to be a form of *timepass* for young men – a way to kill time, usually as a result of boredom or unemployment. The acceptability of eve-teasing as *timepass* reminds us that high unemployment, coupled with early school leaving and secondary school incompleteness, has important consequences for young men in the slums.

In the *bustees* eve-teasing as *timepass* is accepted by the community, but this acceptability is bounded by the social construction of youth. The eve-teasing of a small girl child who is clearly wearing a primary school uniform, or of a married adult women who has visible markers of marriage or is pregnant, or eve-teasing by older men who visibly cannot “pass” as youth – while certainly not unheard of – is not met with the same apathy, or the same reprimand, as young male teasing directed to female youth who are mobile in the slums. One of the young men interviewed in the current project is 21-year-old Atif who was accused of “passing comments” on a 10-year-old girl. According to neighbors he had been “harassing the girl” and tried to grab her hand while she walked past him; this was seen by an older member of the community who drew attention to his behavior, resulting in a beating by local boys. When interviewed by the author about the incident he was very adamant that it was not him that teased the child. As his voice escalated he tried to reassure the author “*didi* believe me, that wasn’t me, it was someone else at the [rickshaw] stand and I was the one who got trapped [*phanse gaya*]” (Atif, male, 21). Whether he did tease the girl or not, it was his passionate denial and fear of not being associated with this event that reiterates eve-teasing the wrong members of society, children and adult women, is not acceptable and met with consequence.

While not suggesting that all communities tolerate eve-teasing, it is clear that in the *bustees* public members are more likely to tolerate eve-teasing by male youth if the teasing is not physically violent and if it is targeting the “right” kind of young woman: one who is a youth, unmarried, in public, and mobile. This is best explained by local youth Meena who is an outreach worker at an NGO.

[In this *bustee*] you can’t be a boy and just go up to a girl on the road and ask her for her number and be her boyfriend. Here we need to respect the culture where you can’t just do that. So that is why when we see these boys *timepass* and tease we think ‘he is trying his luck’. That is what the boys here do, but as long as they don’t cross their limits. Staying

within the limits and just doing some harmless joking [in this *bustee*] is almost an expected thing. (Meena, NGO youth worker, female 25)

Meena suggests that because premarital mixed-sex interactions are not permissible in the slums, eve-teasing allows male youth to flirt with young women (“try their luck”) in hopes of having the young woman respond positively to his flirting. This type of teasing-as-flirting is acceptable by some members of the community as long as it is not violent or scary (“don’t cross their limits”). The youth worker also views effortless flirting as a part of an imagined Western culture, where mixed-sex interactions are normalized. This viewpoint is affirmed through Bollywood popular culture which depicts an imagined West where mixed-sex interactions are conducted with ease and with great fluency amongst youth. Analyzing community members who accept or are apathetic to eve-teasing when conducted by, and directed to, youth reveals a strategy by adults to subtly make room for premarital interactions without endorsing dating or love marriages outright. Of course not all community members accept eve-teasing as a gateway to premarital romance.

According to local young women, not all male *timepass* involves eve-teasing. Indeed many young women view eve-teasing as a form of *timepass* by *bekar* boys. Some of the young women interviewed in this research felt “it is the guys with no class [*ghatiya*] that *timepass* like that” (Reema, female, 21). For Reema not all poor and unemployed boys in the *bustees* are the same. According to Reema the ones who do not participate in eve-teasing, actively searching for better work opportunities and are respectful to their female peers are “trying to make something of themselves.” Reema suggests that these are peers who aim for upward mobility even in the face of unemployment and they are different than young men who she feels are cheap minded (*ghatiya*) and aim for “an ordinary low-class lifestyle” in the *bustees*. Reema’s comment shows us that while on the surface large urban slums seem uniform, for many young people there are important status and class differences between their peers. By positioning local peers as different from them, young women like Reema are able to write a higher status identity. These status and class differences are particularly important for young women who are gaining new, and different, schooling opportunities compared to local young men. In addition to education, scholars including Nakassis (2013), Lukose (2005), Osella and Osella (2007), and Miller (2011) have explored how status and class markers for youth are expanding as a result of globalizing consumption opportunities.

While many young men search for work unsuccessfully, many of their female peers are completing secondary schooling. In the last decade in the *bustees* we see a pattern of highly educated girls and lower educated boys emerging. While boys and girls usually have similar primary schooling experience, it is young women’s secondary school completion and (for some) college-going and college completion that creates significant gendered differences in schooling experience in the slums. It is college-going which has been the most challenging outcome in this community. As reported by a local NGO, female college enrollment and completion has tripled in the last decade. Many of the families known to the author understand that this trend is complicated by both opportunities for education for young women and stagnant

labor opportunities for young men. Young women's education and employment opportunities have changed over the last decade because of several factors. One factor is many local NGOs and INGOs with a mandate to "educate the girl child" have privileged female education, with some schemes supporting the higher studies of females only. This focus on the girl child stems from gendered development concerns in the 1990s which saw the emergence of gendered targets for education participation and completion, as well as support for young women in vocational training and employment schemes, offered by international and state sponsors. Campaigns such as the UNICEF International Day of the Girl (Svanemyr et al. 2012) and the national *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* campaign (Dhawan, *Times of India* 2015) aim to close the gender gap in India for girl children in fields such as education and health. In the *bustees*, these numerous international, national, and state initiatives, as well as local schemes, have trickled down through a complicated web of funding into sponsored local gendered programming for schooling, health, and vocational training. In the *bustees*, the support given to girls in schooling in particular has resulted in a gendered imbalance in higher education participation and completion, and this aligns with similar trends in South Asia. For example, Amin and Huq's (2008) research in Bangladesh shows how programs to close the gender gap in education have worked very well including "enrollment drives that target girls, free tuition for girls while boys are required to pay, and, most recently, monetary incentive programs that reward families for sending girls to and keeping them in secondary school" (2008, p. 3). Asadullah and Wahhaj's (2012) research shows how in Bangladesh girl's enrollment and completion in secondary schooling is surpassing boys. Both these trends show a slow but increasing gendered imbalance in schooling, and this is similar to what is occurring in the *bustees*.

In the *bustees* girls' increasing education participation and completion is wedded to employment opportunities for young men being inconsistent and unstable – which is not a new trend in the community. What is a new trend for young men is heroin availability and use, particularly in the *jhupri* community. There are families in *jhupris* that are struggling with male drug use, and this is creating a lot of tension. Nasreen's mother explains, "We used to think that having a girl is a problem, even in my own family it was the boys we preferred. But now look, this sickness is affecting boys" (Interview, August 2014, Nasreen's mother). In her observation, Nasreen's mother explains that boys used to be the favorite child of many families, but since heroin has become so widely available, both boys and men are prone to this "sickness." For many families whose boys have fallen victim to this sickness, girl children seem to be preferred because they are deemed more responsible and more educated. The trend of declining son preference has been reported in neighboring Bangladesh (Kabeer et al. 2014). The discourse of the preferred-female child in the *bustees* must be treated with caution. While some forms of discrimination might be reducing in the slums (in relation to education and mortality indicators for example), other discrimination against young women persists (dowry and dowry violence for example).

This discourse of young men being irresponsible or being addicts impacts young women very closely. As one can appreciate, in a culture where *purdah* is practiced, it

is local boys that most young women have romantic relationships with, especially young women who do not have college-going or even secondary-school going mobility. A reminder that while education imbalances are a new trend, not all young women have the opportunity or permissions required to attend and complete school. For young women who do not have the opportunities to travel for school, families fear it is local *bekar* (useless, unemployed) boys that will be in their daughters' future.

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## 8 Education Mobility and Eve-Teasing in the *Bustees*

A decade ago, when research in this community had just begun, college-going young women in the *bustees* were rare. Very few families supported the proposition of sending young women to private and public colleges far away from the slums. While college-going is still not the norm, and college-completion rates remain weak, of the college-going youth known in this research, all are young women. Supporting young women in college studies, while a source of pride, can be a risky proposition for families. Gossip about “that female college student” can be peppered with accusations of loose character, and this possibility of loose character can lead to eve-teasing. However, for many young women college-going is framed by ideas (and fantasies) of upward social and class mobility and this possibility is articulated by many in the slums, “with college I can try to make something of my life” (Amira, female, 22, Interview January 2014). One way to gain this mobility is through marriage, “We hope to meet decent guys at college; somewhere outside the *bustees* because we hope that the boys there are more educated” (Amira). Families who support young women's further schooling put local boys who have dropped out of school to enter paid work, at a disadvantage.

### 8.1 Eve-Teasing as an Expression of Wounded Masculinity

For the young women who do go to college, they have or are perceived to have an opportunity to participate in different *timepass* than their local male and female peers. College *timepass* is rooted in a national discourse about middle-classness and a national imagination of youth consumption and romance (see also Jeffrey 2010). Depictions of youth hanging around in mixed-sex groups, organizing parties, participating in concerts, playing sports together, and group dating are the dominant images of “the college-years” in Bollywood. For many young men in the *bustees* who have never even had the opportunity to step foot on a college campus, let alone do further studies, local college-going girls are a threat, and are viewed as such; “Sometimes you see them dressed up all *hifi*. . . maybe going to college” (Rizwan, male, 20, Interview June 2014). Here Rizwan sees college-going local girls with different opportunities than boys. Sometimes they wear new or fashionable clothing (*hifi*) and go to campuses far away from the slums, where they presumably meet with peers and continue their studies and engage in an imagined Bollywood-inspired

*timepass* – while he and his friends sit in the slums un/der employed. Rizwan explains that such a *hifi* girl deserves to be eve-teased. “. . . I would say hi, why are you dressed up so.” Rizwan understands that this unprovoked “talking” is a way to not only get to know a local girl, but also a way for him and his friends to make the girl feel uncomfortable, “We know she is going to college. . . who knows what she is doing there, why does she need to dress this way? She should remember her *izzat* (honour).” Here Rizwan suggests that by “talking” to a girl he is drawing public attention to her dress style and body and also drawing attention to the fact he and his friends “know” she must be meeting with other guys at college, possibly engaged in romances or other mixed-sex behavior which they have seen on television (“who knows what she is doing there”).

In this example, Rizwan and his friends know eve-teasing is read and experienced by young women as uncomfortable. Like the scheduled caste boys in Rogers (2008) study of eve-teasing on college campuses in Tamil Nadu, Rizwan feels insecure at the prospect of local young women obtaining higher education and who (in his mind) think they are more superior to local boys. These young women also have potential to develop premarital relationships with potentially higher class males at college. Eve-teasing as *timepass* in the context of college-girl mobility, and un/der-employed young men in the *bustees* can be read as boys trying to assert their power and dominance in public spaces in the face of a wounded masculinity which sees them neither achieving college education nor college *timepass*. In this example, eve-teasing is used when Rizwan’s role of breadwinner is under threat, particularly by upwardly mobile peers, as well as by invisible middle class boys at college. Eve-teasing is also complicated by *purdah*; Rizwan and his friends think it is their duty to remind young women that they should keep their honor (*izzat*) and they do this by being problematic eve-teasers, which in turn, reaffirms their own public dominance in the *bustees*. Unlike Atif who teased a young girl and was beaten, Rizwan and his friends were safe from community violence. We can read community acceptance of Rizwan’s behavior as eve-teasing being used as an extension of community control. Rather than reprimand Rizwan, eve-teasing is partially accepted by the community to keep mobile school-going young women in line with community norms and values as they venture outside of the slum.

Of the limited scholarship that does exist around eve-teasing and nonelite youth in South Asia, most describe how eve-teasing contributes to parental and student insecurities around young women’s educational mobility. Good (2007) and Still (2011), and Derne’s (1994) more historical work, describe how discourses of honor (*izzat*) pepper young women’s mobility around schooling across India, and there are similar findings in Bangladesh (Schurmann 2009). These studies show how young women’s education mobility is viewed with suspicion and fear, as parents worry not only that their daughters would be victims of eve-teasing on the way to and from school, but that eve-teasing may also lead to romance. In the *bustees*, there are also examples of discourses of *izzat* impacting upon education participation and completion.

## 8.2 Eve-Teasing as Harassment and Violence

Noori was 16 when she and her friend had their education sponsored at a government school which was located a distance outside of the slums. Getting a place in the limited “good” public schools in Kolkata is a prestigious feat for any young woman. Both Noori and Lina had worked hard in their studies to get this position, and the local NGO also drew on contacts to secure two spots for the young women. While her family was very proud, Noori's mother discussed with me that even before her daughter started school she had apprehensions about sending her a distance away. She remembers that at the time,

Everyone in this house was under tension. We knew the risks of travelling so far for studies; they have to go out and take the bus, they need to walk there and all the people they meet. . .there are so many ill-mannered guys (*badtameez*) in this world you know. (Noori's mother)

One of the solutions to reduce her daughters' exposure to meeting *badtameez* boys on her travels was to send Noori and Lina with an escort, which is something her family did from time to time; however, she explained: “we were not in the [financial] position to send them with someone every day. Some days yes we could send her [younger] brother, but for how long?” Noori's mother's statement suggests that a male escort is preferred when young women go far distances, but that this cannot always be guaranteed because a male escort takes away valuable employment time from young/men. Noori and Lina ended up traveling as a team, and indeed having each other as a travel companion allowed both families to accept the school spot. Their journey was sometimes uneventful, and sometimes it was not. While on the bus Noori and her friend were exposed to eve-teasing by a passenger that eventually turned into harassment.

We used to go on the bus together, but we faced some problems sometimes. . . one day on the bus this guy rubbed himself down there [penis] and we both jumped off the bus. We didn't know where we went, we both were going to cry. I remember the time, even now telling you my heart is beating so fast, we were so scared [*daar lagta hai*]. I kept my cool, I saw the shop uncle and asked him to show us which bus to take. I told my parents when we went home, which I knew was a risk. . .I stopped at that school about one month later, Lina shortly after that. We both now go to a good school nearby only. (Noori, female, 19)

In this example, the shift from eve-teasing (which is annoying or can be read as a type of flirting) to harassment (which is scary and violent) happened over time, and once they felt they were exposed to harassment they acted quickly, including informing their parents. It was only when the incident was read as harassment, when it “crossed the limit” of acceptability, in this case the young man grabbing his penis, that the space became unacceptably hazardous. These feelings of being unsafe are tied to the possibility of sexual contact and sexual risk. Noori understood that revealing her experience of harassment could result in her family pulling

her out of the good school (“I knew was a risk”), and she was correct. However, 2 years after the incident she felt this was the right decision, “What these *badtameez* boys can do has worse consequences than not going [to a good school].” Here Noori explains that leaving a “good” school is a better choice than jeopardizing her *izzat* as a result of harassment. Noori uses a hierarchy where honor is ranked higher than education, and thus for her it is okay that she left the good school because *izzat* was more important to protect (*izzat ka khayal rakhna chahiye*). In this example eve-teasing is tolerated until it crosses into harassment. Removing oneself from a situation where harassment has the potential to dishonor (dishonor here is the “worse consequence”) is viewed as an appropriate solution, and the onus is on young women to protect themselves from harassment. Unlike Atif who was accused of harassing a small child in the *bustees* and was beat up by locals, the young man on the bus harassing Noori and her friend was not met with reprimand. Asking Noori about this she felt that “in the *bustees* he would have gotten a good beating, but in the bus everyone was probably too scared to speak out.” Her mother echoes this statement, suggesting “those boys who did that were not from here.” Noori and her mother’s understanding that local boys are easier to control than nonlocal boys is another reason why many families struggle with sending their daughters outside of the slums for schooling, and why leaving the *bustees* for schooling, while a source of pride especially if a young woman has gotten into a “good school,” is discussed with suspicion and fear.

Noori’s experience also highlights young women’s spatial understanding in a *purdah* culture. *Purdah* culture has many positive effects for young women in this community. It allows female friendship circles to grow through meeting in spaces off-limits to boys. It has protected young women from the heroin problems which are developing in some areas of these large slums. However, the flip side is *purdah* results in a very limited exposure to spaces outside of the slum. Young women even struggle within the slum itself, especially if places they are traveling to are outside their *goli* knowledge. While this can be true for any space one occupies, in the slums the problem is a lot more felt because the area itself is quite small. When Noori and her friend jumped off the bus, they were very scared because of their unfamiliarity with local roads. In reality they were just two blocks from their school. This poor knowledge of their own local roads and local spaces is an important area of future research and activism, as the chapter later details.

### 8.3 Eve-Teasing as Flirting

Thus far examples of eve-teasing as annoying and eve-teasing shifting into harassment have been related. The other possibility of eve-teasing is teasing as flirting and teasing which results in romance. This is the subject of ongoing research, and preliminary findings suggest that such eve-teasing is contextual to who is performing the teasing, how it is being performed, and how it is being read. An example of

teasing as flirting is shared by research participant Shabnam, who recounts her experience of going to college.

When I first started college it was the first time I started taking the bus on my own. I used to wait at the bus stand and take the bus only to college, but it became a problem because I was facing some teasing from one boy there [at the bus stand]. He liked me too much, but I didn't respond to his requests. I felt sorry for him because I have known him from my childhood days [*bachpan ka dost*], so rather than hurt him I started taking *auto* (auto rickshaw) and then another bus to college. (Shabnam, female, 18)

In this example Shabnam's teaser was an old childhood friend, and a good friend of her older brother. Every day when she passed the bus stand, she also passed her brother and his friends who were *timepassing* at the stand. Her childhood friend engaged in riddles, singing, and jokes with Shabnam and her peers who walked by. In this example, *eve-teasing* is a targeted expression of interest by a known person, which can result in real feelings of love developing. In the *bustees* many known romantic relationships blossomed between youths through the act of walking a similar route and meeting similar people. Shabnam was aware that her admirer could slowly fall in love with her (and she with him) by meeting daily. She also felt that by returning to the same bus stop everyday could be read as leading him on. In a *purdah* culture a young woman returning to the same place to meet the same young man who is *eve-teasing* may be read as returning a young man's expression of interest, especially if the teasing is playful and not violent. Shabnam understood this could be a possibility, so rather than ignite his hopes for romance ("rather than hurt him"), she made a choice to stop using this particular bus stop, and take another form of transportation altogether. While Shabnam's solution to reduce *eve-teasing* required more money for transportation, she looks at her choice positively, "at first I was annoyed I was spending so much on *auto*, but now I feel I know more routes, and it is so much faster, so I think I made a good choice."

Like Rizwan, and the strangers on the bus, Shabnam's "Roadside Romeo" was not beaten or met with reprimand. Tellingly, her own brother was witness to this teasing and seemed accepting of it. We can read this tolerance of *eve-teasing* as acceptance a type of public flirting. Provided *eve-teasing* is not violent and scary, community apathy to this act is a way to tolerate premarital relationships formation that does not challenge the *purdah* culture and gender norms of the slums. In Kerala, Osella and Osella (1998) call this type of nonviolent *eve-teasing* "*tuning*," an exchange of dialogue, which can include disparaging comments about the girl and sexual innuendo, used by male youth to break the normative gender boundaries (in the case of the *bustees*, of *purdah*) and initiate flirting. They correctly argue that "It is often difficult to tell whether a youth's first remark is intended as harassment or as an opening (to flirting)" (1998, p. 193). In the slums many romances begin with *eve-teasing*, but how some *eve-teasing* ends in romance, while others turn to be read as harassment, is a gray area where consent, gender norms, attraction, and patriarchal



power collide. It is this gray area of teasing-as-flirting and not harassment that is the subject of ongoing research.

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## 9 Conclusion: What we know and what we still need to know about eve-teasing

In contemporary India, public discussions and debates about eve-teasing are very topical. Indeed over the last 5 years, eve-teasing has moved from being a petty issue in a hierarchy of issues that affect women, to being central to activism by state and civil society organizations. What is very evident in the current discourse about eve-teasing is that it makes strong links to class, male unemployment, and male rural-to-urban migration. Problematically, we have seen many state and civil society interventions that exclusively target both urban poor boys and rural boys, making interventions inherently classist. A more successful strategy would be to engage youth from across social and economic statuses to understand their meanings and interpretations of eve-teasing. This research points to the importance of a youth-centered dialogue about eve-teasing, particularly in communities where premarital interactions are not the norm. We see how teasing is read in different contexts related to young women's schooling, and there is an obvious gap in research to understand the nuances between eve-teasing-as-romance and eve-teasing that is not pleasant and not appreciated.

This chapter has discussed eve-teasing primarily in relation to young women's educational mobility. Examples of youth experience in this paper reaffirm the importance of gender norms in young people's public mobility. Young men are visible and dominant actors in public space, while young women's public mobility is purposeful, heeding norms of modesty. We see that young women's education mobility in particular is highly framed by discourses of honor. For many young women and their families, the importance of keeping a good public reputation and being thought of as someone who is respectable in moving to and from school can and does surpass the need or desire for education. These findings align with other research done on eve-teasing and its relation to young women's schooling mobility across South Asia (Rogers 2008; Nahar et al. 2013; Good 2007; Still 2011). Eve-teasing by boys who are insecure about their class and status, and who use teasing to bolster a wounded masculinity, also speaks to findings in other places in India (see Rogers 2008).

The chapter shows how subjective interpretations of physical and verbal interactions, as well as feelings of safety and consent, underpin how this eve-teasing is read by both young women and their community. When young women feel unsafe or scared the actions are seen to be scary and dangerous harassment, while if the actions are seen to be joking or annoying they are deemed to be eve-teasing. Some eve-teasing has the potential to cause frustration, while others are read as flirting. Importantly, the chapter shows how the community is coming to terms with changing patterns of courtship and marriage. Giving eve-teasing limited acceptability during the youth period is one way the *bustees* can ease into premarital interactions

that do not overtly challenge *purdah*. However, this acceptance is tricky as the gray area between teasing as harassment and teasing as flirting is not clear to all members of the community, including the subjects and objects of eve-teasing.

Research findings at this stage also strongly show that because of *purdah*, some young women have limited knowledge of public space around their communities. An acute example of this is shared by Kasum (female, 16).

I once was walking back from school [a local school] and I knew that I was being followed. So I sped up my walking and then turned swiftly down the lane way, and then another. Next thing I knew I was totally lost, I was so scared, I had no idea where I was. At first I panicked, but didn't show it on my face. I went to the shop keeper and he directed me, it turns out I was just behind my cousin's house, but I never knew this as this is not the route I know. (Kasum, female, 16)

Young women in *purdah* develop a very sophisticated knowledge of *golis*; however, they often have limited knowledge of other public spaces – a wrong turn off their normal track, even if only 20 m, is completely new territory for many young women. The anxiety that young women feel when getting lost is something that is repeated by all young women in this research. Very rarely did young women talk about being confused or annoyed or frustrated when they became lost, rather words such as panic (*ghabaraha*) and fear (*daar*) are most commonly expressed to describe their experiences of being lost. The underlying fear when getting lost is an important insight into understanding young women's relationship with public space.

The language and experience of "panic" reveals young women's fear of exposing themselves to embarrassing or annoying eve-teasing which can turn into more violent harassment. Thus an important ongoing area of this research will be to help young women and young men to map the entire 2.5 km<sup>2</sup> of the community and place this map in the local library run by an NGO. Through youth-centered mapping exercises, going on neighborhood walks, training young people how to read a map and using this for treasure hunts, the research seeks to build the capacity of young people and share their local knowledge with the larger community. Through such action-orientated work this ongoing research aims to create a repertoire of youth-centered knowledge around space and place in the *bustees*.

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David J. Marshall

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	294
2	Gender, Habits, and Social Transformation .....	297
3	Childhood, Family, and Gender in Palestine .....	299
4	Gender and Spatial Differentiation .....	302
5	Playing with Discourse .....	307
6	Conclusion .....	311
	References .....	311

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## Abstract

The lives and bodies of Palestinian young people are overrepresented, at once symbolizing righteous resistance and humanitarian suffering. Palestinian girls, perhaps especially, are subject to these complex and competing forms of representation, simultaneously representing cultural authenticity, religious piety, patriarchal oppression, and objects of “empowerment.” While images of girls, especially Arab Muslim girls, have become familiar to international audiences as symbols of oppression and objects of development, less familiar is how Arab or Muslim girls themselves understand and challenge these representations, articulating their own political demands and subjectivities in the process. Drawing upon research with Palestinian children in Balata Refugee Camp in the occupied West Bank, this chapter examines the ways in which Palestinian refugee girls creatively combine discourses of Palestinian nationalism, child psychology, human rights, and Islamic ethics, as derived from sources as varied as school textbooks and Arabic soap operas, in order to critique inequitable access to space

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and restrictions on mobility that girls face in the camp. Such articulations at once draw upon Western notions of children's rights and gender equality while also challenging them through reference to the Palestinian nation struggle and Islamic ethics. In this way, Palestinian girls draw upon different cultural scripts not only to challenge the cultural and political restrictions placed on their mobility, but also to challenge the representation of Palestinian girls as marginalized victims. Refashioning their identities in this way demonstrates embodied as well as symbolic or narrative agency. By attending to these themes, this chapter examines how different discursive or cultural constructions of childhood shape the spaces of children and how young people in turn creatively shape their own identities and subjectivities through spatial practices that unfold within these spatial and institutional contexts.

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### Keywords

Palestine • Islam • Religion • Agency • Mobility • Gender • Girlhood • Honor/shame • Affect

There was a family that consisted of a father, a mother, two sons, and a girl. The family gave more advantages to the boys in treatment and everything in the family. The girl was prevented from going to the houses of her friends because they thought she would learn bad things from them. They didn't know that rather than protecting her, they were actually weakening her. Rather than doing right, they were causing her to be in error. The reason was their wrong ideas and ignorant thinking. Finally, we address our parents and tell them: "Allah has ordered you not to give advantage to boys over girls." Raghad, girl aged 11, Balata Camp

Fear Allah, the Almighty, and be fair and just to all of your children.  
Hadith recorded in al-Bukhari and Muslim

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## 1 Introduction

The narrative that opens this chapter was written by an 11-year-old girl named Raghad. She participated in a mixed boys and girls research group organized as part of a study on children's everyday space in Balata Refugee Camp in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. She shared this passage from her journal during a week in which participants – girls and boys aged 11–13 – were asked to make notes about their daily routines, the places they visited, and any thoughts, observations, or feelings they had about these places and practices. Like most of the girls who participated in this research project, the issue of *tefriq*, the inequitable differentiation between boys and girls, was an issue of great concern to her (see also Marshall 2015). Given the age of these research participants, on the cusp of early adolescence, it is no surprise that the experience of spatial separation was such a salient topic. Girls and boys at the age of early adolescence undergo a significant shift in

their social-spatial relations (Gregg 2005). Girls find their access to public spaces more limited, their mobility restricted, and the modesty of attire and coverage of their bodies a subject of greater concern. Children's gender identities are (per) formed and sustained through such embodied and relational practices. As Blazek (2011, p. 297) has observed in another cultural context, everyday mobility, household responsibilities, and changing relations with opposite gender peers mark transitions into adolescence and serve as a "medium of differentiation" between boys and girls. In this way, embodied practices are both productive and performative of gender roles and differences (Butler 1990).

As recent critiques have pointed out, research within children's geography has tended to favor an embodied understanding of children's agency, in reaction against modernist liberal notions of political agency, which, often at the exclusion of young people, emphasize the ability to deliberate and speak within the public sphere (Elwood and Mitchell 2012; Mitchell and Elwood 2012). However, research with Muslim women and girls on the tactical and strategic use of clothing to navigate space and refashion women's identities has blurred the distinction between embodied and representational political agency (see Secor 2002). For example, in her research in the urban slums of Kolkata, Chakraborty (2009, p. 422) found that girls "articulate" certain "normative expectation of girlhood" with their "movements and behaviors." However, in their movements between different public and private spaces, young women also "perform multiple identities" thereby challenging "monolithic representations" of young Muslim women (ibid). Specifically, Chakraborty (2009, p. 427) gives the example of the burqa being used as a kind of perruque, an outward performance of piety that conceals private personal expression in the form of jeans and Western fashion. This focus on sartorial micro-politics demonstrates that the body, through both its movements and its accouterments, can be used tactically to navigate everyday space but also strategically to (re)articulate new meanings and identities.

Chakraborty's (2009) work in Kolkata draws, in part, upon earlier research by Dwyer (2000) on young South Asian Muslim women in Britain. Dwyer (2000) too demonstrates how young women, through embodied and semiotic performances of dress, confound both parental and societal expectations by challenging Islamic/Western binaries through their creative mixing of pious dress and fashion. In the case of Palestinian refugee young women and girls in Lebanon, Fincham (2010) points to the politics of dress as opening space for young Palestinian women to construct alternate identities, whether secular or religious, that potentially challenge the narrow constructions of gender offered by Palestinian nationalism. By mixing Western clothes with the hijab or abandoning the veil altogether, Fincham (2010) suggests young women engage in individual self-expression and thereby assert their rights over their bodies. However, Fincham (2010) questions whether such forms of embodied resistance can effectively challenge totalizing and hegemonic narratives of Islamism or the Palestinian national resistance.

What is significant about these examples is that they pose a challenge to the binary of representational/nonrepresentational or embodied/articulated forms of agency that has been the subject of much debate in children's geography.



Fashion presents a useful example of how representational agency is reproduced through embodied practice and likewise how such embodied practices can serve as a form of symbolic performance, whether articulating dominant norms and expectations or challenging them. However, there is a risk that the language of hybridity in these examples, namely, Western/Islamic or secular/religious, reifies the very binaries such research seeks to overcome. Indeed, there are many stripes of secularism and Islamism and other gender scripts available to Palestinian young people beyond religious and national narratives. As Chakraborty (200, p. 428) acknowledges, “In the bustees of Kolkata multiple, and at times competing, discourses exist regarding the expectations of young Muslim women, and their experiences of decent girlhood.” So it is in Palestinian refugee camps. Going beyond secular/religious or Western/Islamic binaries, this chapter explores how Palestinian refugee girls draw upon multiple and competing discourses and expectations of childhood in order to articulate demands for greater access to space in the camp. Fashion here is a helpful metaphor for understanding forms of agency which are at once embodied and tactical, as well as representational and articulatory. However, the subject of the hijab or girls’ attire in the camp is not the main focus of attention. Instead, this chapter demonstrates how girls mix and match different discourses of childhood and gender in Palestine, from Palestinian nationalism and Islamic ethics, to child psychology and human rights, in order to suit their own needs and interests, thereby refashioning their political subjectivity in the process. In doing so, Palestinian refugee girls challenge both spatial marginalization in the form of restricted mobility, as well as symbolic marginalization by positioning themselves as active agents of change and resistance rather than victims.

This chapter draws upon in-depth, long-term ethnographic research conducted with boys and girls in Balata Refugee Camp in the northern West Bank as part of a larger research project on children’s everyday lives and spaces in the camp. Over the course of 2 years, numerous research activities were carried out with boys and girls aged 11–13 in the camp. With the help of three local community centers, research groups were organized in the camp: two groups of boys, two groups of girls, and two mixed groups, consisting of about six children each (though the groups would fluctuate in size over time). Each group met at least twice per week for 2–3 months and engaged in a number of qualitative, creative, and participatory research activities. This included mental mapping, drawing, journaling, photo diaries, child-led photo tours of the camp, and, at the children’s own insistence, video and drama. Such creative methods are well established in children’s geography as being particularly suitable for research with marginalized young people. However, while such methods are valuable for bringing into focus the textures of children’s everyday lives, there is nevertheless a danger in replicating the “through their eyes” trope of research with children, treating such methods as giving unadulterated access to children’s worlds. Taking a performative approach to these methods attends to both the embodied experiences of young people as well as the narrative agency that young people demonstrate by critically reflecting upon and creatively challenging dominant representations of children’s identities (see also Marshall 2013). Moreover, a flexible and participatory approach allows for these

methods to be taken in new and creative directions. For example, children found they were better able to express themselves and issues that mattered to them through fictional drama – using the video function on the digital cameras – rather than the static realism of photo documentary.

All the creative outputs of this research, including drawings, mental maps, photos, and videos, then became the subject of several focus group interviews with the participating children. Discussion focused on the mundane spaces and practices depicted in these outputs and the feelings and emotions connected to these everyday experiences. The Palestinian national struggle, social memories of violence and resistance in the camp, religious temporal and spatial imaginaries, and awareness of an international witnessing audience were all themes that came up frequently in discussion. Further context regarding the changing conditions of childhood in the camp was provided by focus group and individual interviews with parents, teachers, youth workers, and other adults. In addition, participant observation was conducted at the girls' and boys' schools in Balata Camp, the three participating community centers, and other youth-focused NGOs in nearby Nablus serving the camp in order to understand the different, competing discourses that animate children's lives and spaces in Palestine.

Drawing upon this empirical research, this chapter provides examples of how girls in Balata Camp experience and rework *tefriq* and how girls draw upon different and competing discourse of childhood in so doing. While girls use a variety of embodied tactics in resisting restrictions on space and mobility (see Marshall in Volume 7 of this series), this chapter will mainly focus on their embodied experiences of gender discrimination in access to space and the articulatory strategies used to argue against such spatial inequities. This chapter seeks to contextualize these articulatory strategies and the spatial arrangements they confront within a broader historical narrative of the Palestinian struggle against displacements and occupation and the changing role of women, youth, and children therein. Before turning to this empirical material, however, this chapter first offers a brief theoretical discussion on how such social changes occur, with particular attention to the notion of sedimented discourses of childhood and gender.

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## 2 Gender, Habits, and Social Transformation

As Driscoll (2008, p. 14) notes in her study of girl culture and girl studies, “The girl is an assemblage of social and cultural issues and questions rather than a field of physical facts, however much the girl’s empirical materiality is crucial to that assemblage.” In order to unpack this social, cultural, and material assemblage of childhood and gender, a relational, ecological ontology of the self proves useful. Sullivan (2001) provides such an approach in her feminist retheorization of some key ideas from John Dewey’s philosophical pragmatism, including the concepts of transaction, impulses, and habit. To begin with, rather than treating the self as a separate and isolated subject distinct from the objective world, Dewey’s notion of transaction suggests a “dynamic, co-constitutive relationship of organisms and their

environment” (Sullivan 2001, p. 1). This understanding of bodies and their environment as mutually constitutive emphasizes how bodies are shaped by and work to shape their surroundings.

But how are bodies set in motion to begin with, and how is any shape given to this fluid milieu of environmental transaction? According to Dewey, bodies are propelled by impulses. Distinct from instinct, impulses are given meaning through acquired habits that structure and organize impulses (Sullivan 2001, p. 30). Habits, including spaces, objects, bodies, and practices, become solidified over time in what Sullivan (2001) calls sedimentation. While durable habits give the world shape, meaning, and predictability, environments can become cluttered by the sediment of old and new habits. The transaction between these overlapping and conflicting habits can produce unpredictable impulses as well as new contexts or gaps from which the possibility for change emerges.

This notion of sedimented habits helps explain how overlapping and contradictory cultural expectations and norms can compel bodies in different directions and how these habits, such as gender, change and can be changed over time. As we will see in the following section, the environment that children transact with in Balata Refugee Camp is cluttered with the sediment of previous generations, their struggles, and the changes these struggles brought about. For Palestinian refugee girls, competing cultural expectations impel their bodies in different directions: to be polite young ladies, good students, and respectful daughters, as well as to be rights-bearing refugees, youth who resist occupation, children who need protection, Muslims who practice their faith, and tweens who chat online and watch Hannah Montana and Syrian soap operas.

An overriding cultural habit that gives shape to these various impulses, structuring girls’ everyday mobility and practice in Palestine, is the cultural value of familial honor. As Fincham’s (2010, p. 44) study of Palestinian refugee girlhood in Lebanon contends, “It is through narratives of honor and shame and disciplinary regimes of surveillance that Palestinian females are policed into compliance through culture.” Although this observation rings true, Baxter (2007, p. 738) warns that defining honor narrowly as a problem imposed upon women “obscures the rights and strengths of women and the obligations and anxieties of men.” This is not to suggest that there is parity between men and women in the rights and responsibilities they owe one another. Rather, the point is to complicate cultural generalizations about honor as oppression in favor of explanations rooted in everyday experience, thereby accounting for the flexibility and ambivalence that accompanies such values in practice. Specifically, Baxter (2007, p. 738–41) argues that rather than seeing honor as a systematic code, it may be more useful to think of honor as an ideology about “right living” or a “way of life” and of living together that “imparts responsibilities and rights” on men, women, and children (Baxter 2007, p. 745–47). In this way, women and girls are not mere props but rather “principal actors” within the “complex and dynamic ideological construction” that is honor (*ibid.*).

How, then, is honor experienced in everyday life? Honor takes on material permanence in the form of everyday embodied practices and affects or habits.

Bodily comportment, gestures, gaze, attire, and seating arrangements all serve as spatial/embodied performances of honor. Actions, gestures, and modes of dress can likewise be marked as shameful when they transgress the boundaries of appropriateness relative to one's age and gender. These boundary transgressions are experienced as embodied affect, the feeling of shame (Sedgwick 2003; Sedgwick et al. 1995). By living within the boundaries of honorable behavior, one reaps the social and emotional rewards of respectability. In this way, honor and shame are cultural values as well as embodied performances and sensations. While the embodied affects of shame and honor impel bodies in certain directions, other affective impulses such as boredom, curiosity, hope, and desire can propel bodies in other directions, working to bend boundaries of shame and redefine meanings of honor. The next section will explore the changing spatial and embodied performances of gender and youth in the Palestinian context and the sediment such shifts have left on the cultural landscape of Balata Refugee Camp.

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### 3 Childhood, Family, and Gender in Palestine

The spaces, rhythms, and textures of Balata Refugee Camp provide a striking visual metaphor for the notion of layered, sedimented spatial habits. Each generation has left its mark, building upon the layers of the camp. Tents gave way to single-family concrete houses, which families transformed into multistory, multigenerational homes. The camp has seen the building and later expansion of schools – one boys' school and two for girls. There are women's centers and clinics that activists set up during the days of popular organizing that characterized the First Intifada. Children's centers, which community members established during the traumatic violence of the Second Intifada, provide psychosocial relief services, as well as trainings and activities for children and youth, sometimes receiving international donor funds for their efforts. Faded martyr posters, bullet holes, and empty spaces in the camp left by destroyed homes all form part of the spatial sediment that surrounds young people in their daily lives. These material deposits are traces of a history beyond the reach of most young peoples' memories. Yet this sediment shapes the lives and spaces of children, who in turn derive their own meaning and make their own use out of these spaces. Likewise the multiple, competing discourses of the national struggle, women's rights, Islamic ethics, human rights, and Western notions of childhood, manifest themselves in different spatial practices and ways of being, which may allow for novel and unpredictable formations to emerge. In providing some historical background on the significant changes in gender and childhood in Palestine since 1948, this section excavates the sedimented discourses of girlhood in Balata Refugee Camp.

The majority of refugees in Balata camp come from families originally from the Jaffa area of historic Palestine. Following their displacement in 1948, families sustained and supported themselves through the traditional *hamula* or extended family networks that typified village life prior to *an-Nakba* (Abdo 1991, 2000; Feldman 2010; Rothenburg 1990). Today Balata Camp's neighborhoods bear the

names of those villages and the prominent families who come from them. Village associations and extended family networks continue to function in camps throughout the region, providing social support to their members and preserving social memory. The maintenance of extended family networks in exile in this way serves as a means of cultural as well as physical survival (Sayigh 2007). As such, the continuation of rural customs by Palestinian refugees is not a mere by-product of transplanted village life but part of a conscious effort to retain village social organization as a way of resisting the violence of displacement and insisting upon return.

While seeking to sustain the social structure of village life in the camp has been a strategy for collective survival and resistance, other perhaps less progressive aspects of village life have also been preserved. Refugee women have typically borne the burden of reproducing the nation both biologically and culturally, preserving its narratives and customs (Kanaaneh 2002; Sayigh 1998; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). As such, women's bodies have become overinvested with the honor of the family and also the honor and dignity of the nation. However, women are not simply the passive victims of oppressive cultural traditions but are active producers of cultural change (Rosenfeld 2004). One of the most profound changes to Palestinian society was the introduction of universal education for boys and girls by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), responsible for providing services to Palestinian refugees since 1949 (Petee 2005). UNRWA originally built schools at the behest of camp residents, including women who had taken it upon themselves to organize informal camp schools and classes for children. As hopes faded for an immediate return to their land, refugees began to see education as the only resource of value left to bequeath to their children (Sayigh 2007). Within a generation every refugee boy and girl was receiving an UNRWA education, and Palestinians had achieved the highest levels of education in the region (ibid). Moreover, the training of female teachers for girls' schools provided new professional role models for girls (Fronk, Huntington, and Chadwick 1999). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, in addition to contributing to changing gender roles in Palestine, UNRWA teachers – despite the restrictions of the formal curriculum – came to play an important role in the transmission of Palestinian nationalist and revolutionary ideals.

Following the 1967 invasion and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the new Israeli military authority banned political parties and political organizing. Informal family and village networks once again took on an important role in maintaining *sumud*, or steadfastness, in the face of displacement and occupation. Women-led charitable societies and organizations took on the dual purpose of community support and political mobilizing. An entire generation of young Palestinians had grown up under these circumstances of occupation and community resistance by the time of the 1987 *intifada*. Though it spontaneously erupted, the *intifada* was sustained through community networks that had been organized in the years prior. Women, students, and young people played important and visible roles in organizing demonstrations and mobilizing support. Homes and schools became key sites of activism. In this way, the *intifada* posed a challenge not only to the

Israeli occupation, but also to gender and age hierarchies within Palestinian society. As young demonstrators directly confronted Israeli soldiers and police, the balance of political power in the Palestinian struggle shifted from the old revolutionary guard in exile to a young generation of activists who were leading their own revolution. As Sherwell (1996) notes, the intifada was not only a generational shift but a complete disruption of the traditional distinction between the public political sphere, comprised of male political and military leaders, and the private, culturally symbolic sphere of the home, inhabited by women and youth.

However, this challenge to traditional age and gender hierarchies within Palestinian society was not met with easy acceptance. The increased visibility of women led to fears about the feminization and sexualization of Palestinian society and the breakdown of national morality (Amireh 2003). In part, it was this anxiety about unrestrained female visibility in the public sphere that led to the emergence of morality campaigns spearheaded by a burgeoning Islamist movement, encouraging women to take up the veil as an act of national resistance (ibid). Even youths who had participated in the intifada expressed anxiety about the breakdown in traditional family structures and gender roles (Fronk et al. 1999). Although the intifada had raised expectations among female adolescents regarding their participation in the public sphere, greater gender equality, and increased individual autonomy, young women and men alike nevertheless expressed a strong desire to maintain traditional family roles (ibid).

The *nakba* of 1948, the *naksa* (setback) of the 1967 invasion and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the *intifada* of 1987, all represented repeated blows to male authority in Palestinian family and society. The signing of 1993 Oslo Accords proved to be the final emasculation. Having been promised autonomy and an end to the occupation, Palestinians witnessed instead an expansion of settlement building and the fracturing of Palestinian land by checkpoints and barriers. The anger and resentment that developed as a result sparked off a second uprising in September of 2000. The national humiliation of a failed peace process, and the daily humiliation many Palestinian men suffered at checkpoints on their way to work in Israeli settlements, contributed to an uprising that was hypermasculine in nature. The creation of a lightly armed Palestinian security service under the Oslo Accords also made for deadlier confrontations with the Israeli army and more violent reprisals. Meanwhile, the perceived failure of secular Arab nationalism to deliver on its political promises, both in Palestine and the broader region, had contributed to an overt Islamicization of Palestinian society in general and resistance especially. Following the September 11th attacks in the USA, Israel was able to respond to Palestinian suicide attacks with full and unrestrained force under the banner of "the war on terror." These factors together contributed to a closure of space for Palestinian women and children to participate in political organizing and resistance as they once had. The Second Intifada saw the transformation of young people from brave youths defiantly resisting occupation to suffering victims of war in need of humanitarian assistance (Fassin and Rechtman 2009; Marshall 2013, 2014). These political developments and the various discursive and ideological narratives that undergird them have imprinted themselves on the lives and spaces of young people

in Palestinian today, producing complex and conflicting subject positions, as the sections below will illustrate.

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## 4 Gender and Spatial Differentiation

I don't play in the camp. The only place we have to play is the streets, but the streets of the camp are crowded with impolite boys. If I go to my grandfather's house outside the camp, I play outside around his house, in the streets, it's normal. Here in the camp it's a scandal!  
Deema, girl aged 12, Balata Camp

If *tefriq*, or separation, is the term that girls use to describe what they see as the unfair distribution of space between boys and girls, it is also a condition which itself seems to separate camp life from life "outside." Many parents and adults in Balata Camp contend that they strive for equal treatment between their sons and daughters, but that their inclination is to be stricter with girls. While some parents argue that this is a specific cultural trait, albeit not one restricted to Arab Muslims, others suggest the tendency to overprotect girls is universal. Nevertheless, most parents tend to agree that the extra restriction placed upon girls in Balata is, in part, a unique and necessary aspect of life in the camp. For example, parents often argue that girls are subjected to stricter control due to the general lack of space and privacy in Balata. In addition, girls are perceived as needing extra protection given the dangers and precariousness of life in Palestine generally and the camp specifically. There is also anxiety about negative cultural influences and the potential for moral degradation should the interaction of boys and girls go unrestricted. Although most parents agree on the need to enforce extra restrictions on girls, some parents and girls alike nevertheless view these restrictions as being in some way an extension of the restrictions placed on refugees living in exile and under occupation.

Experiences of displacement and destruction in the camp have created a general sense of insecurity and precariousness among Palestinian refugee families, which is compensated for by the restriction of girls' mobility. Many mothers interviewed as part of this research cited the dangers posed by unfamiliar men, and the concomitant threat to family honor and social morals, as their main reason for restricting the mobility of their daughters. As Umm Ali, a mother from Balata explained in a focus group interview:

We're afraid for our girls. We hear stories. Actually, just the other day we heard about a girl who was kidnapped from her school. And you know, in Balata Camp, you have to be careful. Then there's the TV, you know with those TV shows, and the internet, and the new culture, with dating and texting and I-don't-know-what. It's dangerous for the girls. (Focus group interview, 26 September 2010)

A host of external dangers, ranging from kidnapping to TV, the internet, and dating, threatens girls with physical and moral peril. Girls, as symbols of familial honor as well as carriers of cultural tradition, are especially vulnerable to such threats and as such require special protection.

Many other mothers, however, do not share this fearful view, contending that it is precisely the close social relations that typify camp life that provides safety and security for children. Umm Sohaib, a young mother of two from Balata, explains that it is this familiarity between boys and girls in the neighborhood that makes it safe for girls:

The girls of the camp are well-known. They are familiar to the boys of the camp, and none of the boys of the camp would do anything wrong to any girl of the camp. There are borders, you know? They wouldn't do anything because everyone knows what goes on here, you know what happens. The boys and girls here live like a big family [...]. (Interview, 12 October 2010)

Here, the family-like relations between young people in the camp creates protective borders both between boys and girls and around the camp.

However, as Umm Sohaib clarifies, this only applies to the local neighborhood and local neighbors, not the camp as a whole:

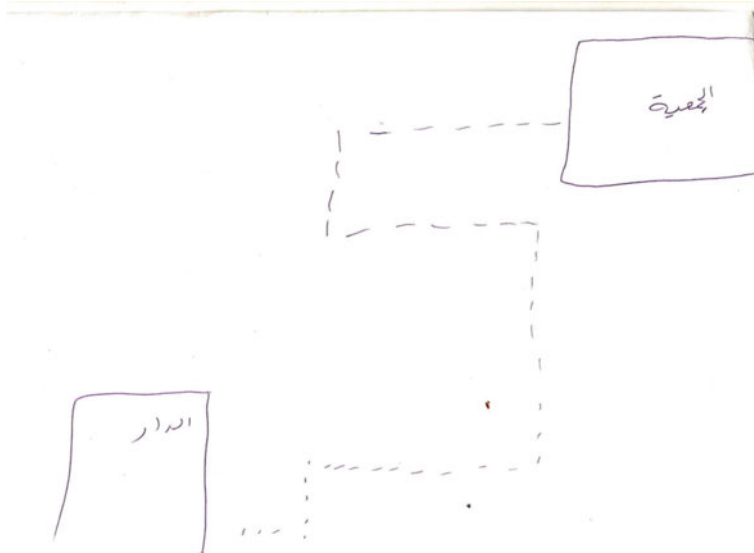
My daughter, she has friends and family in the area but she doesn't leave the neighborhood. I'm afraid for her. That's my right as a mother, isn't it? They say we oppress girls here, but I think all people are more afraid for their daughters. And, really, people in the West give children unnatural freedom, right? I mean, after 18 they make them leave the house and survive on their own. But here, no, this thing doesn't happen in our lives, in our society, neither the boys *nor* the girls. Look, my daughter has a few friends from high school who live in the city. She visits them, but she comes back directly to the entrance of the camp after they finish studying. Her uncles get nervous if she's not back on time, so they're strict with her, which is good, especially since her father isn't around, that means they care about her. (Interview, 12 October 2010)

The stricter control placed on her daughter is again presented as an act of protective care, the prerogative of any parent. The impulse to protect girls is seen as a universal inclination and yet also something that distinguishes Palestinian parental practice from the perceived permissiveness of the West.

In the research conducted with girls in Balata Camp, most agreed with the need to take necessary precautions to preserve privacy and protection. However, for many girls, the issue is not that they do not have the same unrestricted mobility as boys, but that boys have disproportionately more access to space than girls. Many girls see disparity in access to space as being both unfair and harmful to their growth and development. In this way, girls see parents as being misguided by what they call the "old way" of thinking, restricting girls in order to protect them. Moreover, as illustrated below, rather than seeing restrictions to mobility as a necessary outcome of displacement and occupation, girls contend that gender equality in access to space is central to the overall Palestinian struggle for equality, freedom of movement, and self-determination.

Discussing the lack of space for girls in the camp, Taghrid a 12-year-old girl from Balata explained: "We go from the school, to the youth center to home. That's our whole lives. We're not allowed to play in the streets" (focus group, 22 February 2011; see Fig. 1). Her friend Abeer agreed: "if girls go in the streets all the neighbors

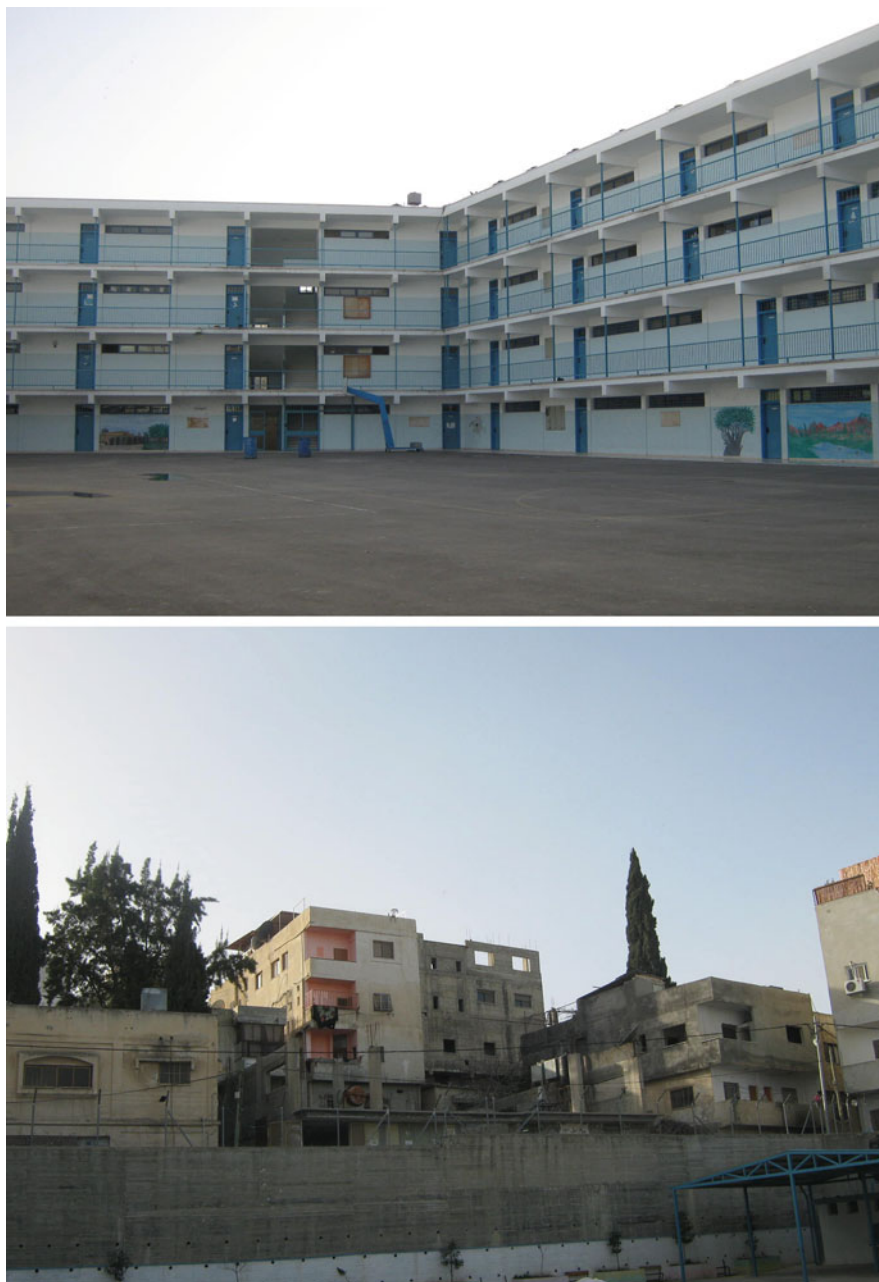




**Fig. 1** A girl's mental map of the refugee camp showing just two places and a path between them: the house and the village association

will talk and say she's a bad girl, or it's shame" (ibid). At this point, Ibraheem, an 11-year-old boy in the group, spoke up: "That's right, because it *is* shame. Look it is taboo in the camp, it just doesn't happen" (ibid). Taghrid conceded that playing in the streets was taboo but argued that if it is shame for girls to play outside, then girls, more than the boys, needed their own private places to play. "Okay, I agree, it's not nice to go around playing alone in the streets," Taghrid argued, "but if all I do is sit at home all day, I'm gonna go crazy. I'll feel so sad if I don't go outside and have fun. We play in front of the house sometimes, or on the roof, but these are small spaces, so if we can't play in the streets then we need our own special/private places [*amakin khasa*]" (ibid). Again Abeer agreed: "Yeah, why should boys have special places to play and not us? There must be equality for boys and girls. Boys must have the same benefits as girls, not more. I'm not saying we should be out in the streets, but give us a private place for us to play equal to the boys" (ibid).

Although there are youth clubs and schools that provide activities for girls, the girls in this group insist that the clubs are small and cramped and thus only suitable for crafts and other activities, not sports. As Taghrid explained "The big outdoor places to play sports are all reserved for boys – girls can only use the playgrounds for organized team sports, but the boys use it for team sports and for just playing whenever they want, and they have more teams than we do, so they get it all the time" (focus group, 22 February 2011). Abeer elaborated, "We can't even use the girls' school. We aren't allowed to. They kick us out. I mean, it's not that it's forbidden, it's just that it's not considered private enough, so we can't use it" (ibid). On a photo tour of the camp, the girls demonstrated what they meant (see Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2** Abeer's photo of the empty playground at the girls' school. Boys use the girls' playground for training after school hours

“You see,” Abeer said, pointing out the space of the school which consists of a big open courtyard, surrounded by adjacent apartment buildings on the street just above and outside the camp overlooking the playground:

There is a big area for boys to use here, but we can’t use it because it’s too open. It doesn’t seem open but look, people can look down at us from their houses up there, you see? We train in the small sports hall inside during PE, and we can only use this big space during school recess, when there are teachers and when we are wearing our uniforms, but it’s so crowded with girls we can’t play anything. Outside of school hours, the boys come in and use this space. (Walking tour, 28 February 2011)

As the girls were taking pictures of the space, the school guards came in to ask them to leave, as a boys sports team was coming in to train. “See?” Abeer says with vindication, “we have a place to play but someone else controls it” (ibid). Just as she had previously indicated, the girls were not being kicked out, but they were putting themselves in a potentially shameful situation by staying.

As the boys filed onto the concrete pitch in their sports gear, they shot curious glances at the girls, whispering about what they were doing there. While Abeer had wanted to capture an image of the boys playing in front of a mural painted on the school wall depicting a little girl and the slogan “security, activities, and freedom from violence,” her friend was becoming increasingly uncomfortable (see Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3** Mural at the 2nd URWA girls school in Balata. Two versions of this mural appear: one in Arabic and another in English for an international audience

On the verge of tears, Taghrid pled with Abeer to leave, grabbing her arm. Once outside, Abeer drew her conclusion from this moment: "We all suffer from lack of space, it is part of the occupation, we can't go back to our land, but we girls suffer the most from this. We must all work together to change this situation. All of us" (walking tour, 28 February 2011; see also Marshall 2015).

In Abeer's view, the scene that she had captured, the lack of space for girls neatly depicted in a biting pictorial juxtaposition of boys freely playing in the girls' school, is framed as being part of an overarching spatial injustice of displacement and occupation. While girls are viewed as the ultimate victims of occupation, suffering restrictions to space doubly as Palestinian refugees and as girls, Abeer sees this intersectional oppression not in terms of vulnerability but instead as putting girls at the center of anti-colonial struggle; the struggle of girls for gender equality in the camp is the same as the struggle of Palestinian prisoners against Israeli prisons or of Palestinian refugees for their right of return. The everyday, embodied experience of gender inequality and lack of access to space is imagined and articulated within the context of the Palestinian national struggle, in a unique representational strategy. In this way, marginalization is experienced and resisted at the level of the body but also challenged through narrative agency which places girls at the center, rather than the margins, of a struggle for freedom and equality.

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## 5 Playing with Discourse

In addition to the use of national resistance narratives to advocate for greater access to space for girls, girls also draw upon their understanding of child psychology and Islamic ethics, as gleaned from a variety of sources, ranging from school curricula to soap operas. Access to sports clubs, youth centers, and playgrounds, girls say, are all essential to a physically and psychologically healthy childhood to which they have a universal right. Likewise, girls maintain that access to such spaces and opportunities must be granted equally to boys and girls, as this is an imperative in Islamic ethics. This discursive tactic of advocating for girls' equality by combining the discourses of human rights, psychological development and Islamic ethics, is the focus of this last section.

After the incident with Abeer and Taghrid at the girls' school, described above, the group, consisting of two other girls and two boys, decided that they no longer wanted to go outside to take pictures and agreed that they could better represent the issues facing children in Balata Camp through short fictional films. Specifically, they wanted to address the issue of differentiation between girls and boys in the style of a *musalsal*, or dramatic series. The children explained that the issue of gender inequity is a common theme in Arabic soap operas, often involving stories about families cheating widows out of their inheritance, for example. They wanted to make similar films about gender issues more directly related to children in Balata. Together the boys and girls in the group wrote and filmed a series of vignettes about the differential treatment that boys and girls receive in Balata Camp and, specifically, the unfair restrictions girls face.

In one story, a brother and sister are preparing for school. On their way out the door, their mother gives the boy 10 shekels and the girl only 5. Naturally, the girl is upset by the blatantly unfair treatment and leaves for school crying. Noticing her depressed behavior in class, the school psychologist intervenes, calling the mother to her office. The mother is at first annoyed that the school psychologist would intrude into her family's private business. However, once at school, the counselor politely explains that her daughter is showing signs of depression because she is being treated unfairly at home and that Islam demands equal treatment of daughters and sons. "Such is our faith (*iman*), and our religion (*deen*)," she explains. The mother is quickly convinced by this psychological and religious explanation. "Your words are true," she says, and accepts the counselor's advice. The next day her mother gives her son and daughter both 10 shekels each on their way to school, to the delight of her daughter.

In another scenario, while eating dinner that night, the same boy asks his parents if he can join a new sports club. The father happily agrees, even offering to pay for new sports gear for him. When the girls in the family ask if they too can join, they are immediately rebuked by both the mom and dad, who exclaim: "What? A girl going to the sports club? No daughter of mine is going to a sports club!" The girls are sent to their room crying. Feeling guilty that he has caused his daughters to cry, the father goes in to check on the girls. They explain to him that they want to grow happy and healthy, and that sport is important to their physical and psychological development, and that God orders parents to treat their children alike. Again, the emotional response of his daughters and the rational appeal to Islamic ethics and child psychology convinces the father who agrees that the girls can go to the sports club after all.

In both stories, it is the "old culture" not a lack of resources or money that prevents the girls from enjoying their same rights and privileges as their brother. The children explained that the stories about unequal treatment between sons and daughters were made up to illustrate a point. Although none of them had directly experienced this kind of overt inequality in the home, they said, this unfair treatment was representative of an old way of thinking that is still prevalent in the camp and that prevents girls from participating in various activities outside the home. On a broader level, the inequitable treatment between brother and sisters serves as an allegory for the unfair allocation of space in the camp, with boys having both the streets and sports facilities to play in and girls having only limited access to space at schools and youth centers. Uniquely, the issue of gender inequality is treated through the combined discursive lenses of Islamic ethics and child psychology. Boys and girls must be treated equally because it is just and ethical according to Islam but also because girls will suffer psychologically if they are treated unfairly and not allowed to play or join in sports activities. Through these scenes, as well as the discussions that followed in the focus group interviews, a persistent undercurrent of children's rights pervaded the discussion, as well: children, boys and girls alike, have the right to play and a right to childhood. The "old ways" of parenting, along with the Israeli occupation, present a threat to these rights.

Since 2000, UNRWA has implemented a human rights education curriculum, and since 2008, this curriculum has been broadened in scope to include education on gender equality (UNRWA 2012). A review of some of the educational material produced as part of this curriculum reveals that Islamic ethics, including references to the Quran and Hadith, help to bolster claims about, for example, a girls' right to education and her right to decide when and whom she marries. Indeed, the vignettes produced in this research group have the pedantic feel of a school ethics lesson. However, when asked about whether these themes, including gender equality and Islam, were discussed in school, the children did not seem to recall it being covered in class, although one girl said that her teacher sometimes talked about such matters. When asked where the inspiration came from for these scenes, particularly the theme of gender equality and Islam, the girls in the group mentioned that this is a common theme in Arabic language soap operas. Usually, the girls explained, there is a story about a husband or his family taking advantage of his wife, for example, refusing a divorce or stealing her inheritance, in contravention of Islamic family law. Whether gleaned from school or the television, what is significant is that the girls in this group have related these discourses to their own everyday, embodied experiences of lacking places to play sports and used them to advocate for greater access to space and mobility in the camp. Moreover, despite the fact that the human rights curriculum in schools studiously avoids mention of the Israeli occupation, the children in this group made connections between human rights, gender equality, and the Israeli occupation.

In the discussion that ensued from the scenes described above, the girls related these themes of Islamic ethics to their own experiences of gender differentiation in the camp. The girls contend that the Islamic command to protect and respect girls, combined with the demand that parents treat their daughters and sons equally, puts the onus on society to create private places for girls to grow and develop, equal to that which the boys have access. As Taghrid explains, boys and girls have equal rights and responsibility toward themselves and each other:

Our religion says that girls, after a certain age, should go out covered, dress and act politely, but this is for boys too. We both have equal responsibility to protect each other together, so why should we be treated unequally? (Focus group, 23 March 2011)

Abeer agreed, emphasizing the importance of equality of treatment in Islam:

Allah orders us to respect and protect both boys and girls equally, so we can't treat people unfairly. Our religion says that no one is better than anyone else except in strength of faith. We're all born equal, at the same level. Boys and girls are equal, so we should be given equal treatment. (Ibid)

Finally, Taghrid stresses that protecting and respecting girls does not mean imprisoning them but rather means giving them access to their own space, equal to that of the boys:

Our religion says that girls should be protected and respected, but that doesn't mean they should be unfairly discriminated against. Maybe we have to protect girls more than boys, but some people go too far. That way of thinking comes from an old culture that doesn't like girls. That's not Islam. We have to balance respect and protection with treating girls equally. Protection doesn't mean imprisoning them or treating them unfairly, on the contrary, it means letting them grow and develop. (Ibid)

Taghrid here is combining childhood development discourse, that children need their own spaces to develop and grow, with an Islamic imperative to afford girls privacy but also treat them equally with boys. She uses this strategy to critique the so-called old culture of restricting girls.

In this conversation, the girls further backed up their religiously based claims with appeals to child psychology. As Abeer added, "To keep girls imprisoned in their homes harms them psychologically; it affects her behavior and emotions, it is not normal" (focus group, 23 March 2011). Taghrid agreed, saying that girls need to go outside and play sports, just as much as boys, and that this is part of developing "healthy children and a healthy society." Raghad added, "sports are important for *all* human beings to be healthy" (ibid). In group discussion, it was noted that, in their story, a school psychologist was the one who solved the family problem of gender discrimination and that she did so by appealing to psychology and Islam. When asked if a school counselor would really do this, Raghad explained: "Actually, we have a psychologist, but her work doesn't have anything to do with the family, or religion, just school problems" (ibid). However, Abeer argued that "Only the psychologist is qualified to solve this type of problem, to explain the error of differentiating between sons and daughters" and that she should do so by "giving examples from the Quran and Hadith, that religion says we should treat people equally" (ibid). Raghad agreed. The psychologist, she said, "can explain that the girl will get a complex if she's treated differently. It's not just religion that tells us this, but science. Islam and psychology both say that" (ibid).

The examples above show how girls combine the discourses of Islamic ethics and psychology to promote greater access to space and mobility for girls in the camp. An apparent theme of human rights is threaded through these comments. The appeal to psychology is particularly interesting, especially given the setting of these research activities, a local neighborhood center that also functions as a clinic for both physical therapy and psychosocial counseling. Since the Second Intifada, the discourse of psychological trauma and trauma relief has provided the basis for international humanitarian intervention in the territories, and the lasting psychological effects on young people exposed to violence remain a concern. Again, what is unique is that the discourse of psychological damage is being used here not to expose the unseen scars of war and conflict but rather to bring to light inequalities between boys and girls in the camp. These examples show of children who do not merely reproduce the cultural gender scripts they are socialized within but instead creatively combine the many overlapping and conflicting discourses and practices that clutter their cultural and physical environment and refashion their own identities and political subjectivities in the process.



## 6 Conclusion

Young people generally, and girls especially, often serve as a “site of concern” about the effects, both positive and negative, of social change (Driscoll 2008, p. 16). In Balata Refugee Camp, girls are seen as being put at risk by what is called the “new culture” of text messages and dating. However, girls have also long been viewed in the Palestinian context as being at the forefront of advancements in girls’ education, employment, and social empowerment in the region. As Driscoll (2008, p. 17) notes, girls are often “caught in heterogeneous ways between representations of girls as repositories of tradition and belonging and girls as icons of Western modernity” (2008, p. 17). The girls who participated in the research presented above, who argue passionately about the need for gender equality in access to space, do not fit the representation of girls trapped by tradition or wounded by the scars of war in need of external empowerment and healing. And yet, their appeal to Islamic ethics, the accommodation they seek with gender separation, and the commitment they show to the national struggle does not signal a wholesale acceptance of Western ideals of childhood.

In her study of young Palestinian women’s lives in Lebanon, Fincham (2010, pp. 49–50) suggests that women may find empowerment through their Islamic identity by being connected to a global community of believers, even if such an identity must necessarily resign itself to restricted “movements, activities, goals and aspirations,” as Islam relegates women to the private sphere and sanctions men’s control over their lives. The study presented above suggests the opposite. That young women find Islam empowering when it helps explain and confront material injustices and embodied inequalities experienced in everyday life. Moreover, rather than a restriction on their movements, activities, goals, and aspirations, girls in this study see Islam as a means of expanding their movements and activities and achieving their goals and aspirations. Finally, and crucially, the girls in this study refuse what they see as a false choice between obedience to the national struggle and religious ideals of femininity on one hand, and gender equality on the other. Instead, they see the struggle for girls’ rights as indistinguishable from and indeed central to the struggle for national rights. Likewise they see religious ideals of gender equality as wholly compatible with their own demands for greater mobility and access to space. These findings point to the need for more nuanced studies about the diverse meanings and experiences of girlhood. Likewise, they suggest the need to be attentive to how the many, competing representations of girls are reproduced by, played with, mixed, and contested through the everyday embodied and narrative performances of girls themselves.

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Sun Sun Lim and Becky Pham

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	316
2	The Migrant Student of Today .....	317
3	Acculturation and Integration of Migrant Students .....	318
3.1	Aspirations and Expectations .....	318
3.2	Acculturation Strategies .....	320
3.3	Exclusion and Discrimination .....	321
4	Mediated Communication in Migration .....	323
5	Conclusion .....	327
	References .....	328

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## Abstract

The market for international education is sizable, with more students traversing borders than ever before. Armed with skills, knowledge, and ambition, migrant students often venture to their host countries with the intention to upgrade themselves and raise their qualifications so as to improve their employment prospects and overall quality of life. Yet the growing tide of anti-foreigner sentiment in many countries around the world severely undermines the hospitality of host countries for migrant students. The challenge of adapting to a potentially hostile environment, coupled with the difficulties of living independently for the first time, compounds the sense of alienation that can beset migrant students as they grapple with life in a foreign land. Communication with family and friends who can help them through this process of adaptation, in both home and host countries, is therefore crucial for enhancing migrant students' sense of well-being. This chapter undertakes a systematic review of the research literature to understand the role that technologically mediated

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communication plays in facilitating migrant students' adaptation and acculturation to their host countries in light of their particular circumstances. Specifically, it seeks to identify which types of technologically mediated communication can be leveraged to enhance migrant students' intercultural communicative competence. It outlines how technologically mediated communication channels feature in migrant students' acculturation practices and explores how technologically mediated communication can be optimized for acculturation strategies that prevent cultural polarization and intercultural conflict.

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**Keywords**

Students • Migrants • Acculturation • Discrimination • Technologically mediated communication

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## 1 Introduction

Migrant students are one of the fastest growing groups of international migrants. Armed with skills, knowledge, and ambition, migrant students often venture to their host countries with the intention to upgrade themselves and raise their qualifications so as to improve their employment prospects and overall quality of life. Yet the growing tide of anti-foreigner sentiment in many countries around the world (see Fox 2014; Marginson 2014; Taylor and Muir 2014; Watts 2014 and the expanding body of academic literature on anti-foreigner sentiment, including Zamora-Kapoor et al. (2013)), severely undermine the hospitability of host countries for migrant students. The challenge of adapting to a potentially hostile environment, coupled with the difficulties of living independently for the first time, compounds the sense of alienation that can beset migrant students as they grapple with life in a foreign land. Communication with family and friends who can help them through this process of adaptation, in both home and host countries, is therefore crucial for enhancing migrant students' sense of well-being. Indeed, by dint of their youth and relatively high educational achievement as compared to low-waged migrant workers, for example, migrant students tend to be adept at technology and well-versed in its manifold affordances. This chapter undertakes a systematic review of the research literature to understand the role that technologically mediated communication plays in facilitating migrant students' adaptation and acculturation to their host countries in light of their particular circumstances.

First, we provide a more comprehensive picture of the migrant student of today, in light of the lack of distinction between short-term exchange students and long-term foreign students in previous literature despite the distinct characteristics of the two groups. Next, we delve into the process of acculturation and integration of migrant students in host countries by reviewing a large body of multidisciplinary research to identify their aspirations, adaptation strategies, and challenges. We then discuss the crucial roles that technologically mediated communication plays in

migrant students' intercultural communicative competence and acculturation processes as they move between cultures and experience ambiguities in their own identities in both home and host countries.

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## 2 The Migrant Student of Today

The term international students is usually used to refer to all students who are foreign to the host institution's country, and this can include both short-term exchange students and long-term foreign students. However, there are significant differences between these two groups. Exchange students visit host institutions overseas to study for brief periods, ranging from several weeks to a year, and their stints do not culminate in the conferment of an educational qualification by the host institution. These overseas sojourns, characterized by their brevity, are therefore likely to take less planning and preparation. While overseas, exchange students' activities are more oriented toward cultural exchange and exploration rather than necessarily on academic achievement, thus translating into less pressure to study and a reduced need for long-term cultural integration in the host country. Exchange students also have few opportunities for employment or of extending their stay in the host country beyond the period of their exchange programs. Without any formal educational qualifications conferred by the host countries' institutions, exchange students' long-term life trajectories are unlikely to be practically influenced by their exchange experience.

In contrast, foreign students are those who apply to study in host institutions in foreign countries with the intention of attaining formal educational qualifications. Consequently, they are committed to the full course lasting several years including being subjected to rigid academic assessment, and they have to acquire a requisite amount of knowledge and training related to host countries' languages, cultures, and educational systems in advance. In most cases, the possession of language skills is required for admission into foreign institutions to begin with. In some cases, foreign students are personally motivated to learn the language of the host country when their decision to relocate stems from a desire to be exposed to a new culture and an attraction to the country's lifestyle (Eder et al. 2010). The financial investment for foreign students is also considerably higher than that of exchange students. Since tuition fees for overseas education can be high, especially in the case of tertiary education, and foreign students typically pay more than domestic students (Beine et al. 2014), foreign students are often compelled to compete for scholarships, seek financial support from their families, or work to raise their own funding. Given that their venture to a new country involves such high stakes, foreign students tend to be better prepared for their arrival in host countries than their exchange students counterparts. In light of this confluence of factors, foreign students have been observed to set ambitious goals for themselves during their stay in host countries compared to exchange students: they strive to quickly adapt to their new environment, seek good academic qualifications, and pursue employment opportunities. Notably, many foreign students worldwide also seek long-term

residence in their host countries to acquire more extensive overseas employment experience for improved economic prospects, often with a view towards permanent emigration.

Undoubtedly, foreign and exchange students do share certain similarities. Both groups of individuals leave their home countries to pursue an overseas education. While studying, they cannot be permanent residents of their host countries (Morrison et al. 2005; Spencer-Rodgers 2001) but are granted student visas for the duration of their academic program (Andrade 2006). However, the two groups of students differ fundamentally in terms of the durations of their overseas sojourns, the amount of investment involved in the move, and their long-term life goals and trajectories. While the term “international students” has been more widely used in previous literature to refer to all foreign students, we prefer to use the term “migrant students” to refer specifically to foreign students so as to highlight their migrant status and to better distinguish them from exchange students. That being said, prior research on exchange students is still able to shed light on the foreign student’s experience, and our review also includes such literature.

This chapter therefore defines “migrant students” as highly mobile, educated, and goal-driven individuals whose experiences in their host countries extend well beyond their academic work and whose identities are co-constituted by the cultures of both home and host countries. Even as they strive for permanent residency in their host countries, foreign students continue to connect with their home countries. Despite their diverse backgrounds, hailing as they do from different countries around the globe, migrant students and exchange students are a fairly homogenous group compared to other migrant groups because they are typically young and educated.

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### **3 Acculturation and Integration of Migrant Students**

#### **3.1 Aspirations and Expectations**

While an overseas education can certainly be a life-changing experience, migrant students are in a privileged yet unenviable position. Typically, they pursue academic opportunities in countries that are more developed than their own and thus benefit from exposure to a more advanced education system and a higher quality of instruction. The qualifications they attain in the process would enable them to seek more attractive job opportunities that may previously have been inaccessible if they had remained home. This is especially true of international students who enroll in institutions in the USA, where the strong reputations of American universities hold considerable allure (Lee 2008). The same can increasingly be said of universities outside of the USA, such as those in Asia and Europe, which are highly ranked internationally and vest their graduates with a strong cachet. On top of these coveted educational qualifications, the host country can also offer migrant students more varied and promising employment options than their home countries. Regardless of whether migrant students choose to remain in the host

country or return home, their overseas stints should in principle help them to boost their competitive edge and serve as a springboard to more exciting job opportunities.

However, even while the migrant students' lot seems ripe with promise, their journey is not without adversity. Taking into account the typical age at which migrant students venture overseas, these young people are also likely to still be in the throes of identity experimentation and formation. In such circumstances, the experience of being uprooted and transplanted to a strange environment may be alienating and unsettling. Furthermore, in light of the considerable family investments pumped into their educational endeavors overseas, migrant students bear the burden of parental expectations (Li et al. 1996; Mazzarol and Soutar 2002). Notably however, there is evidence to show that migrant students who seek a foreign education of their own accord, rather than doing so at the behest of family, are most likely to successfully adjust to the overseas environment (Chirkov et al. 2008). Even so, there is considerable pressure on migrant students to make the most of this hard-earned opportunity, further heightened by the difficulties they face in coping with an unfamiliar education system (Smith and Khawaja 2011). For example, one study of African and Western students in China found that academic difficulties such as attaining lower grades, missing too many classes, and working with unfamiliar people were the most common stressors for these international students (Hashim and Yang 2003). Academic challenges aside, the task of navigating a foreign country with a different language, culture, and value system can also be monumental for someone who has just made it through adolescence and is transitioning into early adulthood (Sherry et al. 2010). As one study of Taiwanese students in the USA found, those who had lower-perceived English fluency and lower-perceived social support were more likely to experience depression (Dao et al. 2007). But even facility in the language of the host country was no assurance of a seamless entry into the host country considering how the initial settling in process is generally a difficult period of transition. For instance, yet another study of international students in the USA reported sharp declines in psychological well-being during the first 3 months of their stays, even for international students with considerable English language skills (Cemalcilar and Falbo 2008). Furthermore, the cultural backgrounds of the students can also have a bearing on their ability to cope with the acculturative stress they experience. According to Smith and Khawaja (2011), many studies have found that Asian international students tend to suffer more acculturative stress than European international students. The authors posit that Asian students may tend to keep their negative emotions to themselves rather than seek external help due to Asian cultures' emphasis on emotional control and the perception that needing help signals one's failure to handle their own emotions (Smith and Khawaja 2011).

And yet, unlike low-waged migrants who are fundamentally transient workers and less likely to permanently settle in the host country, migrant students often seek to sink roots overseas after completing their studies. Among their motivations is a desire to explore career-enhancing opportunities (Eder et al. 2010) and, ultimately for many, long-term residency or citizenship (see, e.g., Mazzarol and Soutar 2002

on the factors motivating international students from China, India, Indonesia, and Taiwan to study abroad). According to Baas (2014), study-abroad destinations that offer clear pathways for international students to stay on after graduation such as Australia, Canada, Malaysia, and New Zealand have in fact seen a substantial increase in international student enrollment numbers in recent years. The desire to sink roots overseas could be so strong that the ultimate goal of securing permanent residency overshadows international students' preferred choices of courses and universities. Indeed, they are prepared to take courses they are not interested in and even enroll in low-quality institutions just so that they have a valid reason to stay on in the host country (Baas 2006). This intention to permanently relocate to the host country heightens the pressure for migrant students to successfully adapt by understanding the country's culture and language, as well as to blend in and be accepted. However, achieving acceptance by the host community is by no means a cut-and-dried affair, particularly as migrant students may be viewed as interlopers who threaten the interests of the locals, presenting competition for jobs, housing, and other social benefits (Li et al. 1996). It is these very contradictions that have impelled extensive research on the migrant student's situation.

Primarily, one dominant research node focuses on adaptation by migrant students to their new milieu (see Smith and Khawaja 2011). Acculturating to the host community is the foremost challenge that migrant students encounter, and it is a multifaceted process of "cultural and psychological changes that involve various forms of mutual accommodation, leading to some longer-term psychological and sociocultural adaptations between both groups" (Berry 2005, p. 699). Intercultural contact between immigrants and locals must occur for acculturation to take place, involving learning one another's language and familiarizing oneself with one another's culture through social interaction. However, such exchanges may result in misunderstandings and conflicts that lead to "acculturative stress" (Berry 2005, p. 700). The "acculturation strategies" (Berry 2005, p. 700) that are practiced differ among individuals and groups depending on the objectives they wish to achieve, ultimately translating into varying degrees and forms of successful adaptation. Another critical factor to take into account is the overarching attitude of the host country toward immigrants. While some societies are embracing of cultural diversity, instituting policies that respect cultural differences while promoting interethnic engagement, others seek to minimize differences through assimilating immigrants. Yet other societies actively segregate new immigrant groups and diminish their status through policies that actively subordinate them to the majority.

### **3.2 Acculturation Strategies**

On an individual level, as migrants adapt to their newly adopted environments, acculturation toward the home culture and toward the host culture occurs (Berry et al. 1987). Among the many adaptation frameworks that have been developed over time (see Smith and Khawaja 2011), Berry et al.'s four mode acculturation model posits that there are four acculturation strategies – integration, assimilation,



separation, and marginalization. Integration refers to the state where individuals conform to both home and host cultures. Assimilation occurs when individuals imbibe the host culture but eschew their home culture. Separation is used to describe the strategy of retaining the home culture but not absorbing the host culture. The last strategy, marginalization, describes the individual's rejection of both home and host cultures. Prior research indicates that of the four strategies, integration has the greatest positive impact on migrants' psychological well-being because it allows migrants to behave in accordance with the norms of both home and host countries and to reconcile dissonances between the two (Kim 2007). The final results of this adaptation process could either be psychological or sociocultural – psychological adaptation relates to well-being and self-esteem, while sociocultural adaptation refers to the effectiveness of individuals in interacting with the new intercultural environment (Smith and Khawaja 2011; Ward et al. 2001).

For international students in general, their initial experiences of acculturation will largely take place in the school environment which is overlaid with its own traits, norms, and practices. Extant literature provides many insights into the acculturation processes of exchange students, which while not entirely applicable to migrant students given their different long-term goals and which has not taken into consideration the important roles of technologically mediated communication, can still help illuminate the migrant student experience (see Smith and Khawaja 2011). The growth in global international student numbers is not surprising in light of emerging trends in higher education. Many universities worldwide espouse cultural diversity as an important component of a well-rounded educational experience and seek to have a student body that comprises local and international students. Indeed, international rankings of universities often include student and faculty diversity as an indicator of quality. Such diversity is known as the “international outlook” criterion by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings which includes a university's ability to attract students from all over the world, its ratio of international to domestic staff, and its academic staff's level of collaboration with international colleagues (Times Higher Education n.d.). Similarly, the QS World University Rankings incorporates ranking indicators such as “international faculty/students” and “inbound/outbound exchange students” in its assessment every year (QS Intelligence Unit n.d.).

### 3.3 Exclusion and Discrimination

Nonetheless, even while exposure to cultural diversity is a purported advantage for students, its benefits are neither guaranteed nor clear cut, and migrant students often bear the brunt of exclusion and discrimination in their host countries (Baas 2014; Leask and Carroll 2011; Poyrazli and Grahame 2007). International students may find themselves in situations where local salesclerks assume they do not understand the local language and give them poor customer service, or local people may call them names and treat them like potential terrorists if they look Middle Eastern

(Poyrazli and Grahame 2007). More egregiously, international students may encounter verbal confrontations, direct mistreatment (Lee and Rice 2007) or violent attacks, and negative media representations (Baas 2014) because of their international background. The experiences of Indian migrant students in Australia offer compelling insights into the marginalization that international students are vulnerable to. According to a recent study by Baas (2014), because more low-quality, low-cost colleges or “PR (permanent residency) factories” sprang up to cater to international students’ desire to migrate, there was a significant surge in the number of Indian students in Australia between 2006 and 2009. A sizable proportion of these students were from smaller towns in India and coming from predominantly lower middle-class families that had scrimped and saved for their overseas education; these students were willing to take up jobs in fast-food restaurants, supermarkets, and petrol stations or to serve as drivers, thereby fueling locals’ perception that new entrants were essentially unskilled laborers. Given their disempowered state, they often encountered problems with housing, language, illegal employment, and poor qualifications, thus attracting negative media attention. At the same time, Indian students were also involved in racially motivated attacks which the local media reported using conflicting frames. While initially portrayed as “victims” of these violent racist attacks, media representations of Indian students gradually became problematic, to the point that they were depicted as having only themselves to blame for their difficulties, thus reinforcing negative stereotypes of these students in the eyes of the local community. As the experiences of these Indian migrant students show, prejudices toward migrant students can be deep-seated and become easily inflamed.

The lack of facility or fluency in the language of the host country is another distinct impediment to greater integration with the local community, resulting in “gaps in communication effectiveness” and a deficit of “intercultural communicative competence” (Lewthwaite 1996, p. 182). Indeed, other studies further note that students from cultural or linguistic minorities are often negatively perceived as outsiders who lack the interest and/or ability to engage with the dominant majority. As well, international students encounter discriminatory and racist treatment from other students and even from professors and other members of the community (Hanassab 2006; Lee and Rice 2007; Poyrazli and Grahame 2007). In such circumstances, even when cross-cultural group work is required in the classroom, the adverse stereotypes that local students have of international students impede genuine and meaningful interactions. International students’ inputs may be taken lightly or dismissed by their local project mates, while their foreign accents may elicit derisory responses from other students (Poyrazli and Grahame 2007; Sherry et al. 2010). Such negative encounters or racially stereotypical media presentations can certainly result in international students experiencing a sense of disjuncture from their immediate environment, translating possibly into acculturative stress (Yeh and Inose 2003), depression, and low self-esteem (Smith and Khawaja 2011). Felicitously however, some other studies have found that over time, international students do eventually adapt to the host culture, thus developing the “intercultural competence” to reconcile worldviews and practices that conflict with their own

(Pritchard and Skinner 2002). At the same time though, other studies submit that international students themselves contribute consciously or unwittingly to their own exclusion. One study found that in orientation programs, migrant students chose to fraternize and collaborate with co-nationals (Brown 2009). Another study of international Asian students in South Korea revealed that these students were “intensely goal oriented” (Kim et al. 2009, p. 160) about attaining their academic degrees and could not afford the time or effort to socialize and build close relationships with local students, although they acknowledged the benefits of doing so. Such behavior translated in some cases into the creation of “cultural silos” where study and work alliances closely parallel the students’ nationalities (Maundeni 2001). In other cases, international students’ origins could also play a role. Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) found that being international students from Europe predicted lower levels of perceived discrimination than being international students from other parts of the world.

In this regard, several questions that communication scholars can helpfully address with regard to migrant students are as follows: *Which forms of technologically mediated communication can be leveraged to enhance migrant students’ intercultural communicative competence? How do technologically mediated communication channels feature in migrant students’ acculturation practices? Can technologically mediated communication be optimized for acculturation strategies that prevent cultural polarization and intercultural conflict?*

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## 4 Mediated Communication in Migration

Scholars of media and intercultural communication, as well as from disciplines such as psychology, geography, and sociology, have conducted extensive research on migrants’ use of technologically mediated communication to maintain ties with family and friends back home, to foster links with people in their newly adopted homes, and to build up their economic and social capital (see Lim et al. (2015) for a comprehensive review). Research that focuses specifically on migrant students’ use of mediated communication is fairly extensive, although many issues still remain unexplored.

Prior research on international students’ adjustment to their host countries shows that as these students leave the comforts of home and adapt to their new abodes with their identity formation still in progress, it is their left-behind family and friends who provide them with a sense of belonging and emotional anchoring (Cemalcilar et al. 2005; Constantine et al. 2005; Kim et al. 2009; Lin et al. 2012; Sandel 2014). Through the mutual sharing of emotions and updates on everyday details, such communication can positively affect the overall well-being of international students. To this end, long-distance communication with left-behind networks has been revolutionized by different media platforms and devices that provide a rich variety of affordances that can be tapped for maintaining ties. Specifically, mobile phone calls to left-behind families and/or friends are popular among international students (Cemalcilar et al. 2005; Constantine et al. 2005; Hjorth 2007; Kline and

Liu 2005), proving more advantageous than online communications despite their higher costs because Internet access may not be widespread in their home countries or is too daunting for parents who lack the requisite technological competencies (Cemalcilar et al. 2005). Besides mobile communication, international students also use Internet-based platforms to share news and updates with left-behind families and/or friends using free and unlimited services (Cemalcilar et al. 2005; Lim and Pham 2014) such as SNSs like Cyworld minihompy (Hjorth 2007; Lim and Meier 2012), Facebook (Lee et al. 2012; Lin et al. 2012) and Renren (Li and Chen 2014; Sandel 2014), instant messaging (Kim et al. 2009; Kline and Liu 2005; Lim and Meier 2012), emails (Kim et al. 2009; Kline and Liu 2005), and web meetings (Kline and Liu 2005; Sandel 2014). Besides left-behind families and friends, another thread that connects international students to their home countries is their continual online consumption of home countries' news, radio programs, and other forms of entertainment (Cemalcilar et al. 2005; Kim et al. 2009; Sandel 2014; Sin and Kim 2013). International students have been found to actively surf the Internet for diverse content from both host and home countries, thus creating for themselves a transcultural, hybridized online cultural space in which they can learn about the world from multiple angles (Kim et al. 2009). In this way, technologically mediated communication with home countries can have a positive impact on international students' adaptation to their host countries, while also offering channels for greater identification with their home cultures (Cemalcilar et al. 2005).

In addition, being separated from their home countries implies that international students may lose the social status and network of connections that they had built up back home, neither of which they have yet to establish in their new destinations (Al-Sharideh and Goe 1998; Burkholder 2010; Smith and Khawaja 2011). As a result, international students inevitably have to interact with people in their host countries to cope with the new environment and fulfill their personal needs. They are also inclined to make their first connections with co-nationals/co-culturalists due to the shared nationalities or cultural backgrounds between them (Al-Sharideh and Goe 1998), particularly if there is a large number of co-nationals in the same area (Sherry et al. 2010). Notably, a recent study also revealed that besides the reputational strengths of universities and the costs of living, the presence of co-national networks in the host countries also heavily influences international students' decision to move there (Beine et al. 2014). More specifically, international students' interactions with co-nationals/co-culturalists in ethnic communities at school have been shown to significantly help them emotionally and academically during the adaptation process, as in the case of international students in the USA (Al-Sharideh and Goe 1998; Lin 2006; Lin et al. 2012), international students in Britain (Brown 2009), Turkish international students in the USA (Burkholder 2010), and Vietnamese international students in France (Brisset et al. 2010). Specifically, Cao and Zhang (2012) found that Chinese international students in New Zealand used Social Networking Sites (SNSs) such as QQ to keep in touch, discuss assignments, and share study tips among themselves. Similarly, Kim et al. (2009) discovered that Asian international students in Korea found co-national friends in online communities and subsequently maintained these relationships offline. Apart from academic

and emotional help, Lin (2006) further found that a Chinese student organization in the USA provided valuable information through its website's frequently asked questions (FAQ) and answers for the Chinese newcomers that significantly scaffolded co-national members' adjustment process. This FAQ was aimed at reducing culture shock for Chinese international students by providing detailed information on airports and plane tickets, housing problems, weather conditions, and living expenses. Unlike the school's official advisories, this FAQ featured the viewpoints of senior Chinese students who were already enrolled and thus offered intimate and insightful first-person accounts that the prospective students could better relate to (Lin 2006). In sum, international students' communication with their co-nationals/co-culturals can help to alleviate homesickness, create a sense of home, and supply useful advice and information for daily life problems, thus paving the way for their adaptation to unfamiliar host cultures (Brown 2009). In other words, such evidence shows that "identification to one's original culture rather than abandonment of one's original culture is desirable for acculturating individuals and groups" (Brisset et al. 2010, p. 423).

Apart from their social circles of co-nationals/co-culturals, some international students also make active efforts to befriend local people. While earlier research evinced that consuming host countries' mass media could help with acculturation, more recent literature on international students shows that their adaptation and social capital building rely much more on interpersonal communication channels. This is because in the current media climate, young students rely much less on traditional television or newspapers for information or entertainment (Park et al. 2014). Instead, they use the Internet and Facebook to learn about online groups and events organized by their universities and make more local acquaintances (Cao and Zhang 2012) or use SNSs to ask local friends about useful information and resources (Kim et al. 2009; Li and Chen 2014; Phua and Jin 2011). These interactions with local people have been found to increase resilience and prevent depression/stress for international students (Cheung and Yue 2013; Kline and Liu 2005) or provide them with higher levels of satisfaction and contentment compared with students who tend to fraternize more with co-nationals (Hendrickson et al. 2011). Since international students are in between the cultures of both their home and host countries, they tend to also use SNSs from both sources. A recent study of East Asian college students in the USA found that students who used only Facebook experience less acculturative stress and a greater sense of psychological well-being compared to groups that used both Facebook and ethnic social networks, suggesting that host country-media use facilitates acculturation (Park et al. 2014). However, communication with local people may be at odds with international students' connections to their co-nationals/co-culturals or their adaptation to host country environments. Burkholder (2010) found that Turkish international students actively interacted with local students in the USA to improve their English and integrate into American culture, but ended up with less time for other Turkish friends – a situation which occasionally led to experiences of loneliness. As well, Brown's (2008) study showed that interacting with co-nationals too frequently caused international students to feel that they had not left their home countries at

all. Yet their efforts to break away from co-nationals so as to assimilate more into host country cultures might lead to criticism or dilemmas if they did not wish to be separated from either co-national or local friends. In the same vein, Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) explained that international students with links to co-culturals are wedged uncomfortably between the two cultural contexts. In order to effectively balance the two, they suggested that an international student's personal networks of close co-culturals should not be larger than 32 people so that they have enough time and energy to learn about new host country cultures (Al-Sharideh and Goe 1998).

Above all though, migrant students' lifestyles and use of mediated communication platforms for social interaction are still influenced by their overarching life goals. Notably, international students have been found to prioritize their academic studies in their host countries and to study harder than local students (Burkholder 2010; Kim et al. 2009). Consequently, this academic focus deprives them of international student experiences which include socializing with other co-nationals/co-culturals or locals (Burkholder 2010). Accordingly, their Internet use would be mobilized for academic purposes rather than social ones. For example, one study found that instead of using the Internet to befriend more people, international students in Korea use the Internet primarily for academic pursuits, such as to research or complete their assignments (Kim et al. 2009).

As the above-mentioned body of literature shows, migrant students have the capacity to appropriate various communication platforms for everyday interactions. While such mediated communication evidently empowers migrant students to acculturate to their host countries, it also reflects how challenging and demanding a migrant student's life can be and the extent to which migrant students have to make strategic efforts in choosing the right means of communication for different social circles.

#### **Vera's Experience**

Vera is a 21-year-old student from Medan, Indonesia. Bright and ambitious, Vera won a full scholarship to study at a prestigious university in Singapore at the age of 18, with strong support from her left-behind family. Yet her experience as a migrant student in Singapore was not without its challenges. Far removed from her networks of friends and familiar environment in Indonesia, Vera had to make new friends all over again and to quickly adjust to the demanding education system in Singapore, a process in which various ICT-facilitated communication channels play a crucial role. Before she came to Singapore, Vera sought other Indonesian friends in Singapore with the help of Facebook and emails. She continued to keep contact and strengthen her friendship with these co-national friends both offline and online until now. At the same time, Vera actively appropriated other online-based communication channels to keep continual ties with her family and friends back home, which provided her with a sense of belonging and a comforting space for her to

(continued)

escape especially when her overseas stint became too daunting. Vera kept updated with news from her friends in Indonesia through the WhatsApp group function, which put Vera back to her comfort zone and helped relieved stress from coping with her “foreigner” status in Singapore. Despite her busy schedule, Vera and her left-behind parents always made sure they could video-call each other through Skype at least once every fortnight, and they could also send short text messages and photos through WhatsApp at their own convenience. This two-way communication allowed Vera and her parents to keep track of both sides’ well-being with efficient transmission of images, voice, and information at low costs, while Vera could seek emotional support and advice from her parents for her everyday problems. In particular, some local students had negative stereotypes about Indonesian students, such as Indonesian students having poor English language, presentation, and report-writing skills. This caused Vera to feel excluded sometimes, but she gradually learned to take charge during group project meetings and proved to her classmates that she could be a helpful teammate.

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## 5 Conclusion

Ultimately, migrant students inhabit a liminal space. When they embark on an overseas education, they are venturing into uncharted terrain – physically, emotionally, intellectually, and ideologically. While they may yet fully understand who they are and where they come from, they will have to contend with alternative and possibly conflicting perspectives of their new abode which may trigger a sense of confusion and disjuncture. They also have to reconcile the aspirations they have for themselves, with the expectations that others have of them. They may not feel entirely welcome in their host countries, but may also begin to develop feelings of estrangement from their home countries. Strong familial and social networks can serve as a psychological bulwark against these feelings of ambivalence. Technologically mediated mobile and online communication is a critical apparatus for helping to foster and sustain these social ties, enabling a constant link between migrant students and their support networks. However, technologically mediated communication is by no means a perfect salve for the problems of adjustment and acculturation that migrant students may encounter. Migrant students need to strike a strategic balance between exploiting mediated communication links for holding on to their home identities, while affording room for personal growth and self-discovery as they explore their host cultures. An over-immersion in either environment may not contribute to successful acculturation. To the best of our knowledge, there has been no systematic review of whether student orientation programs for migrant students are designed in cognizance of such factors and whether these young people are fully advised of the implications that their technologically

mediated communications can have for their overall well-being during their stints overseas. Considering how commonplace and taken for granted mobile and Internet communications are (Ling 2012), the issue of migrant students using technologically mediated communications strategically and judiciously may well be overlooked. Further efforts must be made by academic researchers to better understand the unique circumstances of migrant students so that their orientation and mentorship programs can be enhanced, and their acculturation efforts be robustly supported.

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# Rethinking Social Exclusion and Young People in Rural Places: Toward a Spatial and Relational Approach in Youth and Education Studies

# 17

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## Contents

1	Introduction .....	334
2	Definition of Rural .....	335
3	The Intersection of Youth and Education Policies .....	337
4	Social Inclusion/Exclusion .....	338
5	Youth, Mobility, and Rural Places .....	340
6	A Spatial and Relational Approach to Youth and Education .....	342
7	Place-Based Knowledge .....	343
8	Conclusion .....	345
	References .....	346

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## Abstract

This chapter focuses on a range of concepts borrowing from disciplines such as education, sociology, and geography to examine how the intersection between youth and education policies and place can be a central aspect of processes of exclusion for young people in rural areas. The chapter argues for the need of a spatial and relational approach to education and youth studies in rural places that moves beyond universal constructions of youth transitions that reflect certain dominant values of prescribed policy patterns that are understood as normative, neutral, and natural. It proposes that to understand and interrupt these processes of exclusion, it is essential that biographies, identities, relations, and localities are rendered visible. The chapter highlights different studies and conceptualizations that promote a spatial and relational approach, which work toward

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subverting homogeneous and hegemonic views of youth in rural spaces in favor of multidimensional understanding of what it means and entails to grow up beyond the metropolis.

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**Keywords**

Inequality • Labor market • Modernization theory • Multifunctional rural transition • Place-based education • Poverty • Rural places • And mobility • Definition of • Place-based knowledge • Social inclusion/exclusion • Youth and education policies • Youth transitions • Social inclusion/exclusion

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## 1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on a range of concepts borrowing from disciplines such as education, sociology, geography, youth, and rural studies to examine how the intersection between youth and education policies and place can be a central aspect of processes of exclusion for young people in rural areas. It proposes that to understand and interrupt these processes of exclusion, it is essential that biographies, identities, and localities are rendered visible. This means that youth transitions cannot be presented as homogeneous, universal, and nonspatial. The chapter argues for a spatial and relational approach to education and youth studies in rural places that moves beyond universal constructions of youth transitions that reflect certain dominant values of prescribed policy patterns that are understood as normative, neutral, and natural. For instance, in an increasingly urbanized world, too often when researchers and policy-makers want to understand the lives of young people, they turn their attention to urban lives, where new patterns of identity, learning, production, and consumption are being constructed (Cuervo and Wyn 2012). In a similar vein, this metro-centric focus on youth lives is reflected in education by the paucity of research in rural schooling (Arnold et al. 2005), revealing a “geographical blindness” (Green and Letts 2007) that presupposes that urban and rural are the same and where any urban-rural disparities in educational outcomes reflect individual rather than social differences. A spatial and relational approach are also needed to understand youth lives within specific contexts of interpretation and enactment rather than as part of a transitional and developmental stage (between childhood and adulthood) that sustains approaches to youth based on categorical constructions (such as “me generation,” “delayed adulthood,” or “arrested youth”) that tend to stigmatize young people, particularly those that do not follow prescribed universal policy frameworks, which subsequently are labeled “at risk” and in need of intervention (Wyn and White 1997).

This chapter begins with an analysis of the concept of rural to show that homogenization and universalization of youth lives are conceived from the outset with the mere conceptualization of the term that is the object of study. It is argued here that rural youth and spaces are often viewed only in relation to urban lives and spaces, hence constructed as the perennial “other” out there – an abnormal entity

that needs to be normalized. The chapter then reveals how the intersection of youth and education policies naturalizes and homogenizes young people's post-school pathways in rural places based on cosmopolitan/urban views, which has the potential to hinder the aspirations of those that do not have access to the capital and resources to make this normative transition. Then, crucial here are the concept of social exclusion, narrowly defined by participating in education and work, and the notion of mobility, which contributes to an apparent shrinking and blending of spaces that sustain the prescribed normative transitions. These doxic views about youth transitions are then challenged by providing a rationality for the usefulness of a spatial and relational approach to youth and education, followed by an explanation of the concept of place-based education as a relational strategy that can disrupt normative and nonspatial views of young people lives and can provide an alternative to powerful messages that demand of youth in rural places to see their future detached from people and places that matter to them.

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## 2 Definition of Rural

Debates about how to define "rural" have been ongoing (Rye 2006) with the term being related to places, people, artifacts, lifestyles, moral and aesthetic values, modes of production, and occupations and in opposition to epochs (modernity), places (urban), and socioeconomic systems (capitalism) (Edensor 2006; Luloff et al. 1986; Sarantakos 1998; Short 1991; Waterhouse 2005; Willits et al. 1990; Wirth 1964; Woods 2010). Rural has also been defined through bureaucratic tools that measure population or proximity to regional or urban center, thus focusing on quantity rather than quality of the term and presupposing a deficit with the term by lacking of urban characteristics (Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Vanderbeck and Dunkley 2003). Among these many definitions of what is rural, the sociological work of Ferdinand Tönnies (1957) continues to be a landmark study in the construction of polarity between *gesellschaft* urbanity and the *gemeinschaft* rurality, in which the modern city is depicted as offering the individual disorder, artificiality, and innumerable dangers, while rural spaces provide tranquility, respite, and traditional values of solidarity and social cohesion. This binary construction of urban-rural is usually sustained by historically and culturally ingrained "ideological myths," which portray rural with an idyllic quality of life (and urban as chaotic) or as backward (while urban is seen as a place of creativity and progress) (Bourke and Lockie 2001; Corbett 2013). At the core of this polarity is a problematic construction that defines rural as the different and disadvantaged "other" in relation to privileged urban spaces.

This polarity has also a long tradition in social science and carries an array of problematic issues for the contextualization and understanding of rural lives and of processes of social inclusion/exclusion in these places. Researchers concerned with rural sociology have long argued that rurality has been neglected in the sociological field in great part due to the alignment of the roots of modern sociology

(e.g., Durkheim, Marx) with urban development and modernization (Bonnano and Constance 2003; Cloke 2005; Lockie 2001). Modernization theory assumed rural places as lagging behind their metropolitan counterparts, with the latter as the vanguard of evolution to which the former must follow. Cloke (2005, p. 1) affirms that from modernity's obliviousness of rural spaces, we reach in late modernity another force, that is, globalization, which in this case "absorbs" the rural space not through a negation of it but through the "urbanization of the rural," "via an interwoven tapestry of cultural, social, and economic trends," of which the Internet and its power of penetration have "culturally urbanized" much of the Western rural world. Romantic and melancholic conceptualization of homogeneity of rural life are also a response to perceived "threats," such as the forces of globalization with its time-space compression and the increasing diversity in rural population, to the stability and authenticity of the identity of rural communities (Massey 2005; Sibley 2006).

What these social constructions presuppose is a view of rural places as static and homogeneous entities located out there beyond the metropolis (Kenway et al. 2006; Letts et al. 2005). These static and homogeneous views of rural life, for example, overlook important recent work done by rural sociologists and geographers in the description and analysis of the heterogeneity and complexity of rurality based on different spaces of production, amenity and protection, and how spatiality affects people and places (see Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Holmes 2006). This conceptualization of the rural space, theoretically constructed as the "multifunctional rural transition," enables a greater clarity on the analysis of the complex transformations in the last decades occurring in rural spaces, economies, and relations to include the shift from more traditional (agricultural) production forms to new multidimensional forms of production, consumption, and protection, which includes new social actors and values. Needless to say, these spaces are not static but they are fluid and overlap in different areas. Most importantly, sociologists, educators, and geographers interested in the analysis of these new forms of rural spaces acknowledge the multifaceted types of opportunities and challenges brought by these social changes. For instance, the decline of the traditional family farm businesses, with its secure generational job transition (albeit gendered toward male heirs), and the emergence of service sector industries – particularly in coastal or heritage towns – offer young people in rural places different pathways, challenges, and possibilities in their journey to sustain a life.

Attributing rural communities a homogeneous culture obscures other social realities and fails to acknowledge the diversity and many complex issues faced by rural people. Within rural communities different groups are present sharing the same space and location (Cuervo 2014; Dibden and Cocklin 2004); thus, any rigid definition of the term has the capacity to close spaces of inclusion by generating boundaries of who belongs and who does not. Adopting a homogeneous, universal, and exclusive (rather than heterogeneous, diverse, and inclusive) approach to establish rigid, arbitrary, and formal boundaries leaves aside people, places, and cultures that are part of the subject of the definition.

### 3 The Intersection of Youth and Education Policies

While there is a need to understand the complexity and uniqueness of the diversity of rural places, young people in rural areas have not been alien to the significant changes in the labor market, education, and family relations, to name a few, that have happened in the last few decades. Andres and Wyn's (2010) comparative study of youth transitions in Canada and Australia in the last two decades shows that the generation of young people leaving school in the late 1980s and early 1990s entered a higher and further education and labor market landscape completely different to the one enjoyed by previous generations. These new landscapes were a response to the emergence of global markets and the need for national economies to become more competitive in an increasingly interconnected world. In the sphere of work, the 1980s and 1990s saw the decline of the youth full-time employment market and the rise of flexible, casual, and precarious work (Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Furlong and Cartmel 2007). This shift in the labor market was immersed on the increasing transformation of the national economies from the predominance of the agricultural and manufacturing sector to an economy based on the service sector, including the deregulation and decentralization of the industrial relations system, impacting on employment arrangements, particularly for those most vulnerable to work negotiations such as young workers.

In the sphere of education, the radical changes to the economy and the labor market signified, firstly, a closer alignment of education policies with the needs of the economy and, secondly, an increasing pressure on young people to gain post-school qualifications and skills that would enable them to secure a place in the labor market (Andres and Wyn 2010; Bessant and Cook 1998; Ball et al. 2000; OECD 2007; Rizvi and Lingard 2010). Indeed, education policies, circulating through international policy networks, have increasingly placed the emphasis that a central goal of education systems is "the production of young people who have the appropriate skills and dispositions to serve post-industrial economies" (Wyn 2009, p. 5). Wyn (2009) argues that these policies of the last two decades informed by neoliberal discourses position young people as students and workers by prioritizing the production of human capital outcomes. They frame youth through their status within educational institutions and as "flexible" workers capable of navigating the challenges of an increasingly deregulated and precarious labor market.

This conceptualization of youth through the domains of education and work also places education as a personal choice and investment, rather than a public good, and affirms that the failure of achieving the right educational qualifications and becoming a "mobile" and "flexible" worker on the individual rather than on the existing economic, financial, and labor capitalist system, which is generally un-interrogated and presented as the only viable and inevitable possible system (Corbett 2007b; Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Nairn et al. 2012). Anchored in previous generational views of what youth transitions consist of (linear and smooth transitions to full-time employment and family formation), new understandings of what means to be young offer a limited view of youth by overlooking important social, cultural, health,



political, and spatial domains, while framing positive youth transitions in relation to participation in educational institutions and labor market attachment (Corbett 2007a; Furlong and Cartel 2007; Howley et al. 2014; Shucksmith 2012; Wyn 2009). Indeed, researchers argue that while the youth of the last two decades have been defined through the twin trends of extended study (well into their twenties) and insecure work (precarious, casual, nonstandard), there is a need for a greater acknowledgment of the impact that these social components in youth lives, study, and work have on their well-being, health, and social relations. These include the struggle to balance work and social life and a decline in well-being and mental health related to the stress of juggling paid work and study combined with financial hardship – particularly for those with fewer personal resources – and a fragmentation of time with significant others (Woodman 2012; Wyn et al. 2015).

To this need of understanding youth transitions through a multidimensional lens (e.g., through study, work, health, relationships), the concept of place needs to be put at the center of any analysis of young people's lives. This means that for young people in rural communities that lack further and higher education institutions and meaningful employment, achieving normative policy prescriptions of what means to actively participate in society, study, and work demands greater personal resources than for their urban peers (Carr and Kefalas 2009; Corbett 2007b; Cuervo and Wyn 2012). The political and policy demands of society and the state (see Levitas 2005; Mizen 2004) of social inclusion through study and work are not easily accessible for some young rural people that lack local institution and spaces of education and employment or personal resources to draw on and migrate, generating, unsurprisingly, views of exclusion and disadvantage that have to do more with structural inequalities than individual deficiencies. Despite this seemingly obvious challenge faced by youth in rural places, too often policy and research in the fields of education and youth studies continue to universalize transitions and pathways to adulthood without taking place into account (for a critique of this issue see Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Corbett 2007b; Hall et al. 2009; Howley et al. 2014). In other words, without structural resources and opportunities in place (educational institutions and meaningful work), young people wanting to stay in rural places are subject to live in the margins of social inclusion unless they can provide the means for themselves.

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## 4 Social Inclusion/Exclusion

The above described social constructions of “rural” and “youth” are reflected in contemporary understandings of social inclusion/exclusion. Levitas (2005) in Great Britain has argued that discourse around social inclusion/exclusion equate positive youth engagement in and contribution to society with the acquisition and development of labor market skills, by becoming flexible and productive subjects and by participating in paid work. However, according to Levitas and others (see Armstrong 2006; Béland 2007; Long 2010; Silver 2010), very little attention is paid to what kind of social inclusion is needed to respond to the necessities of the multiplicity of social actors that are marginalized in increasingly unequal societies.

These policies share some traits of neoliberal sensibilities toward youth and social inclusion/exclusion discourse with its explicit contractarian approach and its relationship between the state and young people where welfare support for youth is conditional to participating in education, training, and work. The irony lies in the call for those marginalized to actively participate in education and work, in the social and economic mainstream – without fully revisiting any of the structures and relationships that created inequality and brought some sectors of youth to the margins (Armstrong 2006; Shucksmith 2012; Sibley 2006). Phil Cohen (1997) and Phil Mizen's (2004) analysis of the relationship of the state and youth, particularly in New Labor's Great Britain, argues that this kind of welfare contract dependent on "good citizen" behavior in the fields of education and work most commonly refers to the needs of the state (and the national economy) rather than those of young people. Smyth (2010) asserts that in Australia, social inclusion approaches, policy borrowed from Labor's Great Britain, do not focus on the structural social forces that are the root of causing the exclusion and calls for approaches that listen to the voices of youth to understand their needs and generate trust between the socially excluded and the institutions that aim to help them. Other researchers have stressed the need to broaden the concept to include a minimum income (a "citizen income") not only for young people but for all members of society which will recognize the multiple forms of participations and belong beyond paid work (Buckmaster and Thomas 2009). This argument anchors social inclusion to an "inclusive social citizenship" approach, which places the emphasis on participation as being a right rather than solely a responsibility (Long 2010).

Concerns about poverty and inequality have a long tradition in the social sciences, with recent approaches using the terms interchangeably (Shucksmith 2012). However, the last few decades, with the advances of neoliberal policies and increasing levels of inequality, have seen the term social exclusion rather than poverty as the organizing concept in debates about inequality (see Levitas 2005; Jentsch and Shucksmith 2004). Shucksmith (2012, p. 379) traces the genealogy of the term social exclusion, with an implicit reference to rural places, arguing that its appealing has been its, supposedly, multidimensional character which unearth "the dynamic process underlying inequality and poverty." He reveals that in the literature critics of social exclusion depict it to be a contested term, a concept associated with technocrats' work, undertheorized, and a euphemism that diverts attention from redistributive to cultural analysis and actions, while advocates of it affirm that the term provides a relational understanding of inequality and poverty which enables policies to focus on causes rather than symptoms of disadvantage. Most importantly, Shucksmith states that social exclusion "unduly emphasises boundary formation and carries an implicit notion that all but a few are included in a cohesive society undifferentiated by class or social division" (p. 380).

Sociologists interested in the notion and issues of social inclusion/exclusion have argued that spatial relations, place attachment, and identity should contribute to already well-established analysis of inequality based on occupation and relations of production and consumption (see Butler and Watt 2007; Habibis and Walter 2009; Savage et al. 2004, 2005). This is no less than a response to earlier calls by

critical geographers to understand space, and place, not as neutral and abstract but as a social construction shaped by different processes and relations, where different social positions produce different spatial, and temporal, arrangements that privilege certain social groups while disadvantaging others (Massey 1994). One of the critical issues that have been shaping spaces, places, and people, while at the same time producing and redressing unequal patterns and power relations, is the concept and praxis of mobility.

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## 5 Youth, Mobility, and Rural Places

Central to the concepts of rurality, youth transitions, educational policy, and social exclusion described above is the idea of youth increasingly becoming mobile in a liquid world (see Bauman 2004). To the notion of a “spatial turn” that has permeated the debate in social sciences and humanities for the last quarter of a century (Thrift 2006), this new century has strongly brought to the fore the concept of mobility, with Urry (2000, 2007) arguing for a “mobility turn” to understand new social, economic, and ecological relations. To put it simply, Urry urges a rethink of societies and economies in terms of mobility (e.g., capital, labor, ideas, information, and lifestyles), which has a particular impact on rural places. Urry (2000, p. 2) aims to generate new understandings of society by considering “how the development of various global “networks and flows” undermines endogenous social structures which have generally been taken within sociological discourse to possess the powers to reproduce themselves.” That is, those concerned with researching mobilities acknowledge that this is not a new historical phenomenon, albeit carrying now a greater complexity and speed, but that new avenues for being mobile create a sharper contrast with those that are immobile or demobilize (Sheller 2004; Adey 2009). They argue that the concept of mobility allows for a greater clarity on which individuals and social groups enjoy the power to exercise the capacity to be mobile and which do not enjoy an equal relationship to it, thus making visible power relations and processes of inequality that generate movement and stasis, scapes and moorings, flow and stillness, and connectivity and disconnection (Urry 2007; Elliott and Urry 2010; Sheller and Urry 2006).

In relation to rural places and people, the reduction or “annihilation” (Castells 1996) of distance presupposes a much closer integration between rural and urban places, however, with the latter more likely absorbing the former (Urry 2007). Sociologists concerned with the relationship between the global and local phenomena have also pointed out to woes that access to resources and capabilities for mobility can increase already existing inequalities and stratification in societies (see Bauman 1998; Dolby and Rizvi 2008; McLeod 2009; Savage 2010). Shucksmith (2012), for instance, is concerned with the impact that theory and praxis of mobilities has on rural areas and the value and role of places. He is particularly worried with “the impact of mobility on ideas of place-based rural communities” and “neo-endogenous rural development” (p. 386), where local contexts are not attended to due to foreign influences that presuppose a more efficient way to

address different issues. Savage (2010) believes that place still has currency for individuals and social groups and remains strongly related to identity formation. However, he acknowledges that some individuals have a greater capacity to choose and move, producing inequalities on who is able to generate “elective belonging” to a place, which is constructed through a “conscious choice to move and settle in” (p. 24). McLeod (2009, p. 280) is concerned with the construction of a “utopian sense of open possibilities” for youth based on “discourses of mobility, translocality, and hybridity” and which overlooks young people’s own particular social circumstances and “materiality of lives.” Finally, Cloke (2005, p. 2), theorizing rurality, subverts and problematizes the one-way movement from rural to urban by acknowledging that current technological developments have produced a “shrink of the geographic distances” between urban and rural places, but they have also been accompanied by other urbanized phenomenon such as the migration of retirees and other city dwellers that gentrify rural places.

Within the realm of youth and education studies, Corbett (2007a, b), in his analysis of Canadian rural youth (im)mobility, argues that being mobile has become an imperative for rural youth, in its social but also spatial sense (see also Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Nairn et al. 2012; for similar analysis in Australia and New Zealand, respectively). The normative expectation, particularly in developed countries, for youth to continue with the pathway from secondary school to tertiary education (Andres and Wyn 2010), implies for young people in rural and remote places that lack of access to local further and higher education institutions equates with leaving their communities. This need to migrate enhances rural youth dispositions to “forget place-based identities and to assume mobile and flexible self-constructions” (Corbett 2007a, p. 772). Drawing on Popkewitz’s (1998) binary construction of a (rural) student that is inward and immobile, hence “stuck” and “deficient,” and another who is (suburban and middle class) mobile and outward, hence “real” Corbett (2007a, p. 773), like other youth and education researchers (see Alloway et al. 2004; Cuervo 2014; Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Howley et al. 2014; McLeod and Yates 2006; Nairn et al. 2012; Tieken 2014), reveals how education policies universalize expectation for youth transitions based on a subject that has to be “active, calculating, mobile and focused on abstract and increasingly virtual spaces opened up by education.” Roberts and Green (2013, p. 769) support this analysis by stating that education is blind to geography (place) and how it “creates different conditions of knowing and ways of being” and is based on a “global outlook and economic advancement, and valuing mobility in a globalised world.” Within a context of rapid social change and apparent open opportunities to become mobile, youth and education policies can work to exacerbate youth outward focus, resulting in a detachment from local subjectivities and places, including a fear of being stigmatized as a “failure” or being left behind (Geldens 2007) for those young people that do not make the spatial transition from rural community to urban space in the search for remaining active in the education and labor sphere. This hegemonic message to young people that their future lies somewhere else than in their local rural community (see Carr and Kefalas 2009; Corbett 2007a, b; Cuervo 2014; Howley et al. 2014) only works to exacerbate processes of social exclusion, an

increasing divide between the haves and have nots, those who can afford dreaming of an education and work in the metropolis and those who are stuck in time and place (Popkewitz 1998).

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## 6 A Spatial and Relational Approach to Youth and Education

Researchers working on the field of sociology of youth have begun to question and transcend the policy overemphasis on the relationship between education and work in youth transitions, which reduces young people's interests, needs, and lives to inclusion and participation in those two spheres (Cuervo and Wyn 2014; Hall et al. 2009). In their study of rural transformation in Great Britain, Hall et al. (2009) argue that an obsessive focus on transition markers, such as obtaining a tertiary education degree or a full-time job, obscures what happens between these markers. They place the emphasis on individual biographies and historical social conditions to affirm that it is between these markers, the "steps" and "stages," that life is built and lived. Youth transitions, with its metaphors of "navigation," "trajectories," and "pathways," (see Furlong 2009; for an analysis and critique) depict the link between education and work as smooth, unproblematic, and normative, which presents those unable to follow this transition as "at risk" and in need of intervention (see Brown et al. 2011 for a critique at a global scale of the complex and problematic link between education and employment).

Hall and colleagues' (2009) study challenges traditional normative youth transition approaches by focusing on the spatial and relational nature of youth lives by exploring the intersection between biography and locality (see also Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Farrugia et al. 2014; Kenway et al. 2006 for other rural studies exploring this intersection), while other youth studies explore this relational nature by focusing on intergenerational relations and family (Hopkins and Pain 2007; Pussey 2007; Wyn et al. 2011), on struggles for identity (McLeod and Yates 2006; Kral 2010; Leyshon 2008), and the relation of the local and the impact of global forces in local lives and how local cultures shape and mediate these forces (Nayak 2003; Nilan and Feixa 2006).

Contributions from critical geography, like Worth's (2009), also challenge the normative linearity of youth transitions. Here Worth is interested in the temporal and relational strength of the concept of becoming as a way of "seeing youth transitions as a constantly evolving experience, embracing its changeability and instability" (p. 1058). Cuervo and Wyn (2014, p. 906) use the metaphor of belonging to transcend the limitations of youth transition approach and bring into "focus the nature and quality of connections between young people and their worlds." They build on their previous study based on a two-decade longitudinal research on youth in rural Victoria, Australia, where they show through powerful narratives of belonging how despite profound structural changes in rural economies and social spaces a generation of young people worked hard to remain connected to the people and places that matter to them and defied normative assumptions of rural spaces as places of disadvantage and deficit (Cuervo and Wyn 2012). These studies and

approaches have in common the disruption of “a transition away from” family, community, and local identity to “open(ing) up an understanding of the ways in which relationships with others (and oneself), with institutions and with places are implicated in the processes understood as transitions” (Cuervo and Wyn 2014, p. 907). Leyshon (2008, p. 22), and his study of youth identity formation in rural Britain also looks at issues of belonging by examining how youth address and manifest the complex relationship between the local and the global within the current environment of rapid social change and mobility. Leyshon (2008), also similarly to Dolby and Rizvi (2008), argues that young people in rural areas are bombarded with and absorbed flows of information from urban spaces; however, while “they enjoy “urban” entertainments,” they are also “keen to mark themselves out as different to urban youth and variously locate themselves both within the countryside and beyond.” The studies by Worth, Cuervo and Wyn, and Leyshon reveal that far from simplistic and static spaces, rural places are complex environments for which young people work hard to belong while at the same time remaining open to other spatial influences, thus challenging dualistic ways of being (either urban or rural). These researchers show that normative transition processes that presuppose a linear and uninterrupted pathway to adulthood (whatever that means in today’s world) are far too simplistic and devoid of any of the complex and fluid relations between people and places.

A lack of spatial and relational approach to the study of young people’s lives is not only present in youth studies but, particularly, in rural education research. Researchers working in this field have argued for a greater spatial understanding and differentiation of education (see Arnold et al. 2005; Cuervo 2014; Donehower et al. 2012; Green and Letts 2007; Thomson 2002). Roberts and Green (2013) argue that rural education, and its members, suffers a dualism that reflects ill-considered constructions of space and place in education policy. That is, on the one hand, rural education perennially lags behind its urban counterpart in terms of educational outcomes. On the other hand, the comparison of these outcomes reflect a sameness in research and policy views of urban and rural education, thus negating any spatial differentiation, and inequality, for instance, in terms of access to educational resources to achieve the government-prescribed outcomes. Like Corbett’s (2007a, b) analysis of mobility and rural youth transition explained above, Roberts and Green (2013) affirm that this dualistic and essentialist view of rural education disadvantage is constructed based on the dominant values of cosmopolitan urban elites and without any reference to the complex and heterogeneous reality of the many rural spaces that make “rurality,” thus denying the effects that geography has on the opportunities and challenges on young people’s lives.

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## 7 Place-Based Knowledge

An important example that can provide strategies and ideas to disrupt the pervasive intersection of normative and universal youth and education policies that affect young rural lives is provided by the literature and praxis of place-based education in

rural schooling. Youth and education policy fixations that encourage young people to use education as their personal infrastructure and their “ticket out of town” (Alloway et al. 2004) reveal “place” as a concept and praxis disconnected with school spaces. Post-school education is viewed at a macro-level as a vital ingredient of the national productivity and economic growth and at a microlevel as tool for youth to open up opportunities to “become somebody” (Cuervo 2014). The theory of place-based education aims to subvert this exogenous force that promotes an outward look of the present and future by building strong relations between youth and their local community through curriculum and pedagogy that focuses on the local phenomena of young people’s experiences (Bartsch 2008; Gruenwald and Smith 2008; Smith 2002; Somerville et al. 2011). Against education and youth policies that homogenize and universalize students’ needs, place-based education challenges what kind of and for whom is the knowledge taught in rural communities. Gruenwald and Smith (2008, p. xvi) affirm that “place-based education can be understood as a community-based effort to reconnect the process of education, enculturation, and human development to the well-being of community life.” They argue that by empowering youth connection to their local place, relations, and experiences, it not only enhances students’ academic and vocational competencies but reanimates civic life and social capital and fosters local economic opportunities. Place-based learning is also presented as a successful way of engaging and motivating socially marginalized students or so-called students at risk, by including and valuing their contribution to the school and the community.

Place-based education practices and examples, however, have been critiqued for its anecdotal and transient character and for its oppressive and discriminatory potential. Azano (2011) believes that there is a risk of uncritical views in the literature, movement, and supporters of place-based education, where examples emanating from this practice are based in anecdotal data and taken at face value, thus generating a Pollyanna of rural places and experiences. Jackson (2010) uses Foucault’s work to examine the construction, and negotiation, of power and identity through place-based educational practices in a small rural town in America. There she finds that homogeneous views and values about rural life that serve to counter what is view as a cultural threat from globalization are presented as place-based educational initiatives, which work to exclude and oppress any member of the community that does not share, and practice, the views of the majority. In this rural community, Jackson found that “unity” is fabricated through the construction and control of knowledge, while at the same time creating processes of “othering” those that did not conform to the dominant local values that were put in place. To Azano and Jackson’s concerns, attention should be paid to possible consequences of place-based strategies and programs that might be based in a particular activity (e.g., students in a coastal town studying sea life to open up a fishing business) that advances the interests and needs of one social group (young men) in detriment of other members of the community (young women) (Stokes 2012). In a similar vein, Shucksmith (2012) also raises the important point that place-based approaches to combat poverty and provide youth meaningful local employment opportunities should be attentive to the risk of reproducing inequalities because internal power



relations in the community (for instance, along gender or class lines) are ignored or obscured. Shucksmith (2012, p. 385) affirms that to remedy this and other issues, for instance, lack of endogenous capital or resources, state support in capacity building and investment is needed.

Within the sociology of youth, Punch and Sugden (2013) and Morrow (2013) have also showed ways that universalized youth pathways focused on transitions from school to work are disrupted and contested by local social and individual conditions and knowledge (see also Ansell 2004; Panelli et al. 2007). The researchers show how boundaries between childhood, youth, and adulthood are blurred through the involvement of children in local work and caring of other family members (e.g., younger siblings or elderly relatives). Morrow (2013, p. 89) also reveals how normative transitions from school to work marking a progression to adulthood are far too simplistic and tend to gloss over social or cultural transitions that are subjectively significant. They demonstrate that in developing countries and particularly in rural places, to compartmentalize school and work is to overlook the material and cultural reality of many children for whom work is an expectation as part of being a member of a family unit. To this idea, Punch and Sugden (2013) sustain the impossibility of separating the spheres of play, work, and education in children and young people's lives, as these realms can overlap and be practiced in the same time and space and as they also serve to produce ecological knowledge that animates opportunities for these children and youth to remain in their local communities. Morrow's and Punch and Sugden's work challenges narrow understandings of social inclusion presented above and contests different aspects prevalent in youth transition policy by highlighting the role of informal education, care, and intergenerational relations in the process of "growing up." They show that processes of social inclusion, belonging, and identity formation are spatially and relationally connected to other dimensions in youth lives, such as family and community life (see also Cuervo and Wyn 2012, 2014). Policy documents and research studies that are not attentive to these different spatial and relational dimensions and processes affecting youth are likely to continue to marginalize some individuals and social groups by categorizing them "at risk," thus continuing to sustain patterns of social exclusion and disadvantage.

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## 8 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that universal, neutral, and impartial views on youth transitions can only be sustained through homogeneous, atemporal, and nonspatial understandings of young people's lives. However, these conceptualizations are unhelpful to the understanding of youth lives in rural places. As argued by Ball (2006, p. 4), theorizing enhances our understanding of the social world, while at the same time it does "violence" because they "conjure up" particular worlds. Drawing on different interdisciplinary concepts and tools, the chapter critiques several homogeneous and hegemonic views of rural youth and proposes a spatial and relational approach to it.



Against a societal landscape of greater social change, fragmentation and (im) mobility youth transitions in rural places need to transcend homogeneous, static, and hegemonic views that equate, firstly, youth with a developmental stage in person's lives, where certain norms and values of what a good transition consists of are established a priori, and in which any deviation from the prescribed pathway immediately categorize the youth as "deviant" or "at risk." Secondly, there is a need to abandon exclusive metro-centric approaches to youth and education to open up to different spatial ways of knowing and being. Thirdly, those interested in young people's lives need to challenge limited conceptualizations of social exclusion understood as participating in education and/or work, as well as problematizing the concept and goal of becoming and being "mobile." These challenges are vast and complex, and they might require a greater interdisciplinary approach to youth and social exclusion. Some approaches and theorizing, such as place-based education and the acknowledgment of the blurring boundaries of childhood-youth-adulthood, are right steps toward a better understanding of and support for youth lives in rural places; however, more endogenous and exogenous strategies have to be put in place to support young people in making a life.

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## Contents

1	Introduction .....	352
2	The Construction of Subjects of Government .....	355
3	Border Ethnographies in Tangier .....	358
4	Ismael and Sheimae in the Tangier Port .....	360
5	Conclusion .....	364
	References .....	365

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### Abstract

This chapter provides a reflection on subjectivities and the way in which spaces for children and adolescents are appropriated and considered in migration contexts, where these young people have either gone through the process of migration or find themselves in a border context. Here, migration is just another form of mobility, found in the daily discourses and narratives of the subjects who inhabit it. To that end, the study compiled ethnographies of children and adolescents in migration contexts in the city of Tangier, Morocco. The starting point is a reflection on the subjectivity of the author herself, considering her epistemological reflexivity and how her work has conditioned how she looks at and analyzes the mobility of children and adolescents. This article then takes a closer look at how these children are constructed by forms of government that classify them according to the way in which they move through border spaces and their migration trajectories before analyzing how they understand the Tangier port space where the borders come into play. This article concludes with an analysis of

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their self-perceptions of their mobility through forms of cultural production such as rap music.

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### Keywords

Interstitial subjectivity • Experiences of mobility • Forms of governmentality • Agency • Biopolitics • Migration

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## 1 Introduction

This chapter presents a compilation of ethnographies of children and adolescents in migration contexts in the city of Tangier. The common thread in these narratives is, first, how these children are constructed by forms of government that classify them according to the way they move through border spaces and, second, the way in which they understand and appropriate space and how they carry out their daily lives. These ethnographies were done over a discontinuous period of 17 years (1997–2014). This chapter is based on questions related to the epistemology of mobility and borders. From what position should children who move be analyzed? How should the paradigm of mobility be analyzed? How should border processes be considered? Is it possible to talk about adolescent mobilities (Jiménez-Álvarez 2014)? These ethnographies have been analyzed from my own mobility, and, therefore, the starting point is “understanding understanding” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) and considering epistemological reflexivity as the point from which the mobility of the children and adolescents in these stories is analyzed.

In 1997, the year I went to live in Tangier (Morocco), it took the boat three hours to make the crossing from the port at Algeciras, Spain to the port at Tangier. At that time the city had no cybercafé and the word ‘Internet’ was little known. I was 24 years old and had just finished my studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Seville. To enhance my professional skills, I needed experience in fieldwork and an understanding of other countries and cultures, which is why I went to Morocco. I got a job as a teacher for nine months. With my monthly salary of 200 Euros (around \$240USD) I was able to eat and pay the bills. I was also provided with housing. Once a week, I spoke with my family on the phone from a telephone booth center near my home. Every morning, I asked the doorman if a letter had come for me from Spain. At midday, the mailman came through my neighborhood, known as the Spanish neighborhood for the Spaniards who had lived in Tangier in the early twentieth century. These Spaniards were popularly known as the *bourookaa*, meaning the ragged ones, a term that gives an approximate idea of the disasters that befell the largely Andalusian group of immigrants who went to live in Tangier at that time. Every day I waited anxiously for a letter, which took about a week to arrive from Spain, and I would spend one afternoon a week answering them. From the terrace of my house in this Spanish neighborhood located right above the Tangier port, I could hear the sirens of the boats going back and forth between Spain and Morocco carrying my letters. I could not begin to imagine how the Internet and cell phones would revolutionize the way I communicated with my friends and family on the other shore and on shores even further away.

In the early 1990s, the migration question in Spain began to take shape as a part of the country’s social and economic structure (Izquierdo 1996; López García 1996) and the research work I did during my anthropology studies focused on this question. After Spain

signed the Schengen Agreement in 1991, Andalusia became the southern border of Europe (Checa 1998; Ribas-Mateos 2005; Suárez-Navaz 2004). Ceuta and Melilla, two Spanish cities located on the African continent bordering Morocco, were depicted as the last stop in a long journey for people coming from West and Central Africa. A relocation of the European border regime was foreseen and the two cities raised border perimeter fences to mark where Europe began on African land. One year earlier, I had taught Spanish classes during the month of August to a group of refugees who had made it to Ceuta. In 1995, in the middle of the city and near one of its historical monuments – the Royal Walls – some 300 people, the majority fleeing the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, gathered there. They were blocked at the gates of Europe, on European territory, but unable to cross to the Iberian Peninsula without documentation.

At these borders, minors – both children and adolescents – started to appear on the streets of Ceuta, Algeciras and Seville and in Tangier, Tetouan and Casablanca. Beginning in the 1990s, Moroccan children and adolescents started to cross the borders alone, without their families, becoming visibilized both in southern European protection systems (most notably Spain, Italy and France) and also beyond the circuits of official protection in the streets, parks and squares of some European cities. While they were largely young boys, girls could be found as well. The girls had migrated to Europe in family contexts, mainly as homeworkers, and were often at risk of being exploited for sexual or work purposes. The boys migrated to Europe from the cities of Tangier, Nador or Casablanca, hidden at the bottom of the busses and trucks that transport merchandise from Morocco to Europe, and reached far-away cities in Spain, France and Italy (Jiménez-Álvarez 2003). Both boys and girls also began to make the very dangerous crossing in small boats along with adults, mainly reaching the coast of Andalusia. In 2000, male and female adolescents from West and Central Africa began to appear in North Africa, mainly Morocco, Tunisia and Libya, in their attempt to reach Europe. The European press visibilized the babies and young children traveling with their mothers, both as members of the group of people trying to cross the Mediterranean to reach Spain and Italy and as among the mortal victims of this often perilous journey. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century panorama of migration, children migrating alone and with their families have begun to receive special attention because of the dangers and violations that they may face.

Shortly before I went to Tangier, I collaborated with a labor market integration association in Seville for foreign minors protected by the regional government and for children over sixteen, i.e., of working age. All of the children were Moroccans who had come to Andalusia alone. During their working hours, the boys, all of whom were around 18, told me that they had crossed over hidden inside trucks, some from the port of Casablanca, others from Nador and others from Tangier. Their stories struck me as incredible. I went to Morocco to try to understand in part why 15-year-old boys would risk their lives in this way and also to visit their families. In the early months, I began to plan my first fieldwork project. I handwrote a script with a list of questions for my first interviews, using a battery-powered tape recorder and cassettes, which I later transcribed on a typewriter. I was also able to take some photos with a film camera, recording images of a city that was beginning to emerge from its lethargy in the late 1990s.

At the end of 2014, when I am writing these lines, two low-cost airlines fly between Madrid and Tangier that will take you from one continent to the other in an hour for ten euros, while others take you to Paris, Brussels, London and Bergamo for a similarly low cost. The city also has a fast ferry line that can take a passenger from Tangier to Tarifa in a half hour.

A new port has recently been built some thirty kilometers from Tangier, the Tanger-Med port, which has completely eclipsed the old city port. This region is expected to become one of the most important in the relocation of production in the western Mediterranean. Several shipping companies make the fifty-minute journey to Algeciras from this port, carrying passengers and merchandise on a daily basis. The port's location between the Mediterranean



and the Atlantic has made it a strategic point for the maritime transport of merchandise in the world.

In Tangier, telephone booth centers now offer much more extensive services, from Internet access to selling and recharging cell phones and sending and receiving faxes. In many neighborhoods, it is possible to watch a large number of Spanish and Moroccan television channels and even hear broadcasts from Gibraltar using a television antenna and a decoder that can be purchased in any electronics shop. The number of parabolic antennas has multiplied in all the city neighborhoods. In the areas nearest the coast, different Spanish telephone operators can also be picked up. For the most recent interviews that I did, I used an MP3 audio recorder and stored the data on my computer. Now I can use my digital camera to take photographs of the bay of Tangier; on a clear day you can see the light from the Tarifa lighthouse.

During these 17 years, I have woven together a transnational life between northern Morocco and southern Spain. In my work as an anthropologist, I have done several studies on the educational, family, leisure, and sociability contexts of Moroccan children and adolescents who have migrated autonomously to different countries in southern and northern Europe and the migration and protection systems for children in those countries. I have also worked on the social meaning of this migration, the European control regime and general forms of control applied to deal with this movement of adolescents. I myself have been a foreigner in Morocco and worked as a mediator in my home country, attempting to translate the profound implications of the mobility of these adolescents both for their families and society and for a Europe that is focused on controlling migration and nervous about the arrival of these new protection system users. The story of these boys and girls is my professional life story. It is the story of my maturity as an anthropologist and as a person who also wishes to move beyond borders to get ahead and discover more opportunities. Being able to migrate and move has matured me as a person. I have understood the life stories and journeys of these boys and girls from the perspective of my own experience as a person who also wishes to go beyond borders; this is my border subjectivity. (Jiménez-Álvarez 2011)

The story about my forms of movement that begins the article has clearly conditioned how I analyze the mobility of others and also brings the different borders into question. Since 1997, I have lived between southern Spain and northern Morocco, weaving together a life between two shores, thanks to new technologies that have made frequent and full exchanges possible. This transitional life has determined how I analyze and understand the way in which these children perceive and appropriate the different spaces in Tangier and how they analyze the meaning of the border. During the fieldwork period, I was fully immersed in the research (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004), which shaped the way I evaluated the processes. Moreover, my experience as a foreigner living abroad and my participation in long-term migration, which has produced a sense of belonging to different groups in a transnational border context, have constructed a world of self-references that was called into play during the research. I have lived and participated in the same transnational migration field (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2008) as the migrating boys and girls I studied. Living in a transnational migration field means that I have been affected and conditioned by the ways in which migration is governed and mobility is controlled and has also turned me into just another migrant. While I enjoy a privileged situation with regard to the ease with which I can move around Europe as a citizen of a Schengen member country, I have also faced limitations to my

mobility as a foreigner in Morocco subject to Law 02–03 of 11 November 2003 on aliens in that country. This is the starting point for these stories of subjectivities on the edge.

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## 2 The Construction of Subjects of Government

This chapter analyzes how children are classified. The public policies of states have intentionality and are based on specific considerations; this is true as well about policies affecting children. The term “governmentality” is used here to analyze these processes of control. Any reflection on what is meant by subjects of governance and governmentality leads to Michel Foucault and his reflections on power and the way it is exercised, a central topic in his classes at the Collège de Paris on the history of systems of thought. During the 1978 course on security, territory, and population, he discussed governmentality as the set of institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, tactics, and extended regulatory controls that make it possible to exercise a form of power over the population whose main goal is the political appropriation of life (Foucault 1999). The philosopher also focused on the ways in which this governmentality is deployed, understanding it as a microphysics of power associated with a set of technologies that translate forms of control and discipline and invoke biopower and intervention in the lives of populations and the resistances that they raise (Foucault 2009; Le Blanc 2008). An analysis of the processes that are applied to children and adolescents who are in border spaces or are going to migrate beyond “legal” circuits reveals a policy of border control that can be employed to legitimate the use of force or to infringe upon the rights of children in order to safeguard the country and its borders.

Several authors have studied the way in which governmentality is deployed and there is some consensus about differentiating three key questions: the governmental rationality or reasoning, the governmental technology, and the subjects of government (Inda 2005). In his work, Foucault looks closely at how divisive practices produce a process of classification that constructs subjects of government; these divisive practices refer to procedures of classification and categorization that distribute, contain, manipulate, and control people (Ball 1993).

It is particularly important to understand how this process of classification affects the boys and girls who move around Morocco. This ethnography shows that children are labeled according to how they move, and these names correspond to how they are classified. Some children, like children adopted on the international circuit, are able to move around without difficulty, while others, whose movement is “irregular,” are constructed as a threat. All of these children, however, share the same space. It is the policies that classify them according to the way they move.

Salma is a thirteen-year-old Moroccan girl who was born in a town near Tleta Rissana (Larache, northern Morocco) and came to Tangier to do housework. She never went to school and the Ministry of Social Development’s National Action Plan for Childhood

classifies her as a young domestic worker. Her cousin Amal crossed the border from Tangier to Algeciras in a car, hidden between her aunt's legs and unnoticed by the police. She now lives in a city in northern Spain, in the home of another of her mother's sisters. She is attending her second year of high school while also taking care of her younger cousins, cooking and cleaning the house; she has almost no time to study. At this point, she is an immigrant child, but within a year and a half, when she leaves her aunt's house after a fight, starts living on the streets and ends up in a protection center, the social services will say that she is "an unaccompanied minor requiring guardianship." In the case of Salma's cousin Rachid, who was born in Spain and is in sixth grade, sociological studies will refer to him as a "second generation" minor.

Every morning, Salma prepares breakfast for Kamal, the adolescent son of the family in Tangier where Salma works as a domestic worker. Kamal studies at the Spanish secondary school in that city and just passed his college entrance exams with a 7.4/10. He will cross the border as a minor and go to college in a city in southern Europe. His professors will consider him a newly enrolled student. Kamal will have to complete a number of steps at the Spanish Consulate in Tangier to obtain a visa and then follow more procedures in the Interior Ministry Foreign Nationals Office for his student residency. If he does not pass his classes with good grades, he will not be able to continue living in Spain and will have to return to Morocco. Kamal's cousin of the same age, Khadiya, just went through her parents' separation. They have decided that she will go with her father to study in Brussels where he was appointed ambassador for Morocco, heading the diplomatic corps. As an expatriate with a special passport, she will be able to move around Europe freely regardless of her grades. On the same Tangier street where Salma works, at the bakery on the corner where she goes shopping, every morning she runs into a boy from a rural Moroccan inland area who asks her for some food. His name is Badar and within a few weeks, he will cross the Strait of Gibraltar under a truck. The police will arrest him at a gas station in Spain when he stumbles out from under the truck at a stop. They will take him to a protection center as an "unaccompanied minor" although the police may see him, a hefty boy, as an "irregular immigrant" and will x-ray his wrist to verify his age. Days later, Badar's cousin Taha, who has also been living on the streets for a while, will manage to cross over to Spain. Taha, also 14 like Badar, manages to reach Murcia thanks to his cousin Hicham where he begins to work picking peaches. For his employer, he is a worker who can be paid less money while for the press he is another undocumented worker.

Six-year-old Yousef also lives in Tangier and will soon cross the Strait of Gibraltar. His mother could not take care of him and on the day he was born, he was placed in a center for abandoned children in Tangier. One family from Spain has agreed to sponsor him, making him what is known as a *kafala* child. When he goes with them to Spain, Yousef will believe that at last he has a mom and dad. Also in that boat is Soufiane who is travelling with his father, a retired member of the military who vacations in Malaga using a visa that allows him to enter Spain as a tourist. But Soufiane is not going to return to Morocco. His father is going to leave him with his aunt and uncle in a town in the province of Malaga. The day after the boat carrying Yousef and Soufiane docks in Algeciras, a small craft, a *patera*, reaches the coast of Andalusia with seven women and two babies on board. Two of the women are minors, but nobody realizes that. They were waiting in Tangier for seven months to make the crossing, begging on the street not far from the house where Salma works. (Jiménez-Álvarez 2014)

The following section focuses specifically on migrating children. With regard to the migration of minors and the implementation of these divisive practices, minors who migrate autonomously, without their families, constitute an interstitial subject (Jiménez-Álvarez and Vacchiano 2011), i.e., they are subjects moving between distant and opposing legal systems, the child protection system, where minors are

connected to the family sphere from the perspective of protection and care, and foreign status, where foreigners are treated as “others” with limited rights. Furthermore, the mobility of these adolescents between several EU countries or within the same country challenges the migration control system in Europe, which was designed for adults, who do not have to be protected as a priority and can be expelled. This control system for foreigners clashes with the fact that they are holders of rights that must be respected, leading to a form of classification through which the rights are applied. In other words, since unaccompanied foreign minors have access to a set of rights, they are treated as infra-subjects in practice (De Lucas 1996) through these forms of classification, which are manifested at the contemporary border as a limited form of access to rights more than a physical obstacle. Administrative practices create subjects of governance with limited access to their rights. The border, then, extends beyond its geographical limits, affecting daily life and profoundly determining the subjects’ social characteristics and options (Jiménez-Álvarez 2011). Thus, migrant minors are constructed in multiple ways: minors who have been “sent,” “abusers of public systems,” “escapees,” “immigrants,” and “independent life” minors or “emancipated” minors. These constructions are closely linked to the type of governmentality that underpins them, the management of dependence (Hughes and Sigona 2010) in childhood protection systems with a user profile designed by the protection systems.

Minors who migrate autonomously have a dual legal status. They are both migrants to be controlled and minors requiring protection. According to Sassen (2001), immigrants create tension for states, which are torn between protecting human rights and their sovereignty. This tension is particularly acute in the case of undocumented immigrants in the conflict between the authority of the state to control entry into the country and the obligation to protect those on its territory. In the case of minors migrating alone, this is paradigmatic – in other words, these minors provide some of the best examples of this tension – because the very migrants that must be controlled are at the same time minors requiring protection, which produces a conflict of interests for the states. This paradox is due to the fact that the same person combines the status of minor and the status of irregular migrant. Importantly, according to some immigration laws (in Spain, specifically, Article 35.7 of draft Organic Law 4/2000 of 11 January on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration as expressed in Organic Law 8/2000 of 22 December, Organic Law 11/2003 of 29 September, Organic Law 14/2003 of 20 November, and Organic Law 2/2009 of 11 December), the residency of minor wards is regular for all intents and purposes. Therefore, while the way in which a minor reaches Spain may be “irregular,” their presence in the country never is. However, the clash between two contradicting forms of government – the government’s logic vis-à-vis child protection, which establishes full rights, as opposed to its position with regard to foreign nationals, whose rights are limited in different ways – constantly creates situations in which these rights are questioned and situations of institutional abuse.

Generally speaking, protective legal regulations exist (although each country has different traditions in terms of migration and childhood protection regulations) as do

practices that threaten child protection in the interests of migration control. Thus, some laxness is allowed in applying the law and some forms of institutional abuse are applied as a type of governmental control over/deterrent to the migration of minors. The presence of children and adolescents migrating autonomously threatens the logic of migration control because as minors, they, like indigenous minors, have rights that must be protected and their legal status as foreigners becomes muddled by their status as minors. This condition complicates the government's rationale regarding foreigners, which is based on the status of the "other" being foreign in perpetuum (De Lucas 1996). Furthermore, the presence of foreign minors in protection systems confounds the government's rationale regarding child protection, since the system is designed to protect indigenous minors and not foreigners. The mobility of this group threatens the logic of the governmentality of protection systems, which are closely tied to the territory of the country. Foreign minors are constructed as foreign, not worthy of protection and, moreover, abusers of the public system.

These forms of government do not only exist in the European Union but also in neighboring countries that have taken on the process of border externalization. As a border city, Tangier provides an ideal setting to understand these subjectivities on the edge, particularly with regard to how minors are constructed as intruders in the process of relocating borders and the way in which this governmentality is transnationalized (Ferguson and Gupta 2002) in the processes of border control.

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### 3 Border Ethnographies in Tangier

The mobilization of children, adolescents, and young minors in the processes of international autonomous migration has three common factors. The first is the failure of dependency systems, i.e., fractures in family systems, educational systems, communities, and, in short, public social policies to protect, school, socialize, and care for children. Violence is the highest expression of these fractures, as can be seen in certain countries in Central America, especially Honduras, where many minors migrate to the USA, fleeing the gang violence that threatens the lives of young people or searching for parents who migrated north years earlier. The second element is selective border processes, i.e., the fact that borders are porous (Mezzadra 1995), beyond their formal mandate of control and fortification and that a selective process is applied to who can move around. Selective border processes create profitable subjects, ranging from economic elites who can obtain a visa easily to people who cross the border irregularly to work in precarious conditions, subjects whose presence in the country must be secured, and those whose movement must be impeded, such as individuals who are ill and, thus, unproductive. In this respect, the autonomous migration of minors in the Mediterranean is connected to processes of controlling and deporting adults and opportunity for migrant minors who cannot be expelled from Europe. Finally, the third factor is related to how dependence is articulated as a resource in a transnational migration context. The migration of minors has often been interpreted in the context of a pathological paradigm (Hashim 2006). It is believed that minors only migrate because their parents cannot care for

them, because of disasters, or because the minors themselves want to break off family ties for reasons related to abuse. But beyond this pathological paradigm, it is interesting to consider other situations that may cause a minor to migrate. At times they are better situated than adults; their status as dependents or minors who cannot be deported once they gain access to an EU country can be a resource in a modern transnational migration context where selective borders come into play. Indeed, dependency can be a resource that makes mobility possible (although access to a country does not necessarily mean access to rights and situations of institutional abuse do occur with this form of migration).

Most of the Moroccan minors who have migrated autonomously since the early 1990s and have been in and out of Spanish, Italian, French, and Belgian child protection systems originally left from Tangier (Jiménez 2003). These minors are not eligible to seek international protection or refugee status (except in some countries in Northern and Central Europe) if they are not younger than 12 or in an exceptional situation. Tangier is a border city distinguished by the relocation of production from the northern to the southern Mediterranean, the acceleration of the rural exodus, the progressive depopulation of neighboring rural areas, chaotic urbanization on the periphery, and the articulation of restrictive migration control policies. In the last 10 years, this city has been economically energized by domestic and foreign investment in infrastructure and regional planning projects to consolidate the area as the second-ranked city for the reception of international capital in Morocco after Casablanca. A global city as described by Sassen (1999), Tangier has been depicted by some authors as the paradigm of a border city (Ribas-Mateos 2005) with a local border dimension that reconfigures global processes, translating them into a multitude of forms of mobility for capital and people.

The economy of the city and region of Tangier are engaged in the internationalization of capital. This developmentalism is accompanied by an absence of an overall social policy to match the new social processes. The economy of relocation and the demand for labor have resulted in a steady rural exodus with different population waves dating back to the 1970s that have settled on the outskirts of the city, where sufficient services are lacking and living conditions poor, producing a “ruralized” city. At the same time, the demand for unskilled manpower has feminized the workforce. Furthermore, male unemployment is high, and the informal economy plays an important role in the domestic economy of many families, as do the remittances sent from Moroccans living abroad, despite the current economic crisis. The city has almost a million inhabitants, divided very unequally among four districts. The Beni Makada district has a poverty level of 14 % versus 7 % in the rest of the city. The state’s policies on social services, mainly health and education, do not meet the need, and the policies implemented to support women workers, youth employment, child protection, and housing are deficient. Regional and habitat planning in the area is also very limited, especially with regard to health conditions in some districts like Beni Makada.

Tangier also acts as a juncture where the mandate for control that is a by-product of the process of relocating the European Union borders and the mobility between West and Central Africa and the Maghreb have materialized. On the one hand, the

Tangier-Tetouan region has traditionally sent workers to Europe since the 1980s, mainly to Spain, Italy, and Belgium. On the other, since the early 1990s, Morocco has also served as a transit country for migrants from West and Central Africa, part of their route to Europe. In 2014, the Interior Ministry stated that there were 40,000 foreigners living in Morocco with irregular status. That same year, a campaign was launched to regularize the migrants and nearly 20,000 applications were received. Along with Fez, Rabat, and Casablanca, Tangier is one of the cities in Morocco where migrants seeking to reach Europe settle. At times, 2 or more years may pass before these migrants manage to enter Spain, whether via Ceuta or the coast of Andalusia. In the context of the world economic crisis that began in 2008 and after the beginning of the so-called Arab Spring in 2011, the Mediterranean became the setting for new mobility processes. As a border city, Tangier also receives young and retired Europeans who have migrated to Morocco, some seeking work and others wanting to maximize their retirement funds. In 2012, families fleeing the war in Syria began trying to settle in Tangier and Morocco or passed through on their way to Ceuta and Melilla, two gateways to the European Union.

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#### 4 Ismael and Sheimae in the Tangier Port

The progressive process of relocating the external borders of the European Union has materialized in Tangier. The Tangier port is one of the spaces where it is possible to understand the paradoxical status of migrant minors as subjects of protection and objects of control on the relocated border. Until the Tanger-Med port was built and put into operation some 30 km from the city in June 2010, the Tanger port was the most important international port in northeast Morocco. It was made up of three zones, the first set aside for the transport of merchandise. This zone has been dismantled, with the Tanger-Med port absorbing its economic activity.

The second port zone contains the fishing port and market. Every day, a small inshore fleet departs from this port to go fishing. Finally, a third area inside the port is home to a free zone where companies receiving relocated production – mainly related to food processing (shrimp peeling) and textiles – are also being dismantled.

During the summer, a large portion of MREs (Moroccan Residents Abroad) moved through the old Tangier port. In 2009, the port received 57 % of the vehicles from *Operación Paso del Estrecho*, the annual trip home made by Moroccans living in Europe through the ports of Algeciras and Tarifa for summer vacation, making it the number one port of entry in the country (Directorate General for Civil Protection and Emergencies 2010). In the heaviest period, between mid-June and early August, a device was installed to manage the movement of people. Now this activity takes place at the Tanger-Med port, which is currently being restructured along with the surrounding neighborhood. According to the *Agence de Développement du Nord* (APND), the port will be a multifunctional space catering to tourism, leisure, the restaurant industry, and nautical sports. Some 600 million euros will be invested in a redevelopment project set to conclude in 2016. Plans are in place for the construction of a marina with 1,080 berths, a restructured fishing port, a renovated passenger



terminal, 1,600 hotel beds, a new conference center, and a museum. In short, a new urban center is being built that can accommodate up to 300,000 cruise line passengers in 2016, making Tangier a requisite stopover in the Mediterranean.

Ismael talked about his experience in the Tangier port in 2007. He had managed to cross over to Spain once but had been reunited with his family just before he turned 17. In his words:

Yes, it's true. The call me *sheitan* [the devil], but my name is Ismael. I live near the "plasatoro" [a neighborhood in Tangier]. The neighborhood doesn't have anything, the streets are ripped up, there's garbage everywhere [...] My house isn't finished yet, although they are painting all the houses white now, but only the façade, so it looks nice from far away. Inside things are the same. It's like a movie set. That's what's happening in Tangier. I did go to Spain. I hid under a truck in the Tangier port. The police treated me really, really badly there. They hit the bottoms of your feet with cords. They take your clothes and your money. They have dogs, once named Saddam, all the kids know him. They make the dogs bite us and we throw stones at them. If they catch you, you're lost. They put the *laarobi* [boys who are not from Tangier] in a bus and tell them it's going to take them home. But it's a lie, they leave them in the middle of the highway. They walk or hitchhike back. It's bullshit, the port is bullshit. Children die crushed by trucks and there's more and more police. The kids from my neighborhood are in one part, Dar Baroud, and the other kids don't come near. It's like our territory. Yesterday in the port the police caught me, but I was able to get away. They call me *sheitan* for some reason, right?

So yeah, I made it to Barcelona with a friend. I was lucky, you know? I crossed over under a truck in the space where the back wheels are. After a few months there, one day they told me I had to go back to Morocco and I ran away from the center. How could I go back to Morocco? My father abused us and at home there's no... My mother doesn't work either, my sisters bring some money home, they work peeling shrimp in the port. They are paid crap [...] Imagine working in a place where it's always so damn cold [...] I spent some time on the streets in Spain. Then they convinced me to go back to the center and they told me I only had to go back to Morocco if I wanted to. But one day the teachers at the center told us: "We can't do anything more for you. We're going to send you to Morocco. If you have any family members here, you have to tell us so that we can call them and you can go with them." I gave them my uncle's telephone number and hoped the people at the center would tell him something. One day I was with my friends playing soccer at the center and the director called me in. It was three days before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. They took me to the office. Then three policemen came and handcuffed me and said, "Let's go to Morocco." I didn't want to and I cried, but I knew there was nothing I could do. They took me to a police station and then to the airport. I got into Tangier at 11:00 at night. They took me to the police station and I spent the night there. They put me in a room with other guys, all older than me, who looked kind of strange. I was a little bit scared. The next day, my mother came for me. Two days later, I started going back down to the port [...] I'm going back to Barcelona. I don't have anything here. They don't treat me well. It's as if we're things instead of people. Let's see if you can tell this to the important people you know. (Jiménez-Álvarez 2008)

The port space is mostly filled with boys attempting to migrate. Some girls do try, but they are not found in dangerous public spaces with a heavy police presence. The girls try to access less hazardous spaces like truck cabs (the drivers accept money to take them) or tourist buses, camouflaging themselves among the passengers. The story of Sheimae, a 15-year-old girl who disguised herself as a boy to try to hide under a truck with her friends, is a particularly remarkable one:



Now I'm living with my mother, who cleans houses. My older brother doesn't work; he just smokes hash. There's almost never anyone at home because everyone goes out and leaves me alone at home. That's why I go out onto the street. My father abandoned us when we were very little. He didn't help at all. My mother says he brought us into the world and then left us alone. I've never seen my father. I get along well with my mother, although when I'm bad she hits me, but that's normal, right? The poor thing has to bring food home and has a lot of responsibilities. My brothers don't work, one of my sisters says she works, but we don't know if she's really working or not. My brother Salim doesn't do anything either, he only eats and sleeps. I fight with my siblings a lot. The other day I fought with my sister Milouda about some socks that she tore. Before, when I was little, she used to hit me a lot but not now. I'm older now. I'm 15. My brothers and sisters used to hit me a lot, which is why I ran away from home and also because everyone was outside and I was home alone. I stayed in school until third grade, not here in Tangier, but in my hometown. I was an average student, although I didn't understand French. When we came here to Tangier I didn't go back to school. In Tangier, we couldn't keep studying because we didn't have the documents, the family book, I mean. My father kept it when he left us. Now I'm taking informal classes with an association. I blow it off sometimes, but I like it a lot. They teach us Arabic and French, math and geography. What can I tell you about my neighborhood? There's a ton of drug addicts, there's no light at night, it's a very dark neighborhood, they sell a lot of drugs. There's a park where we go to play and sit. When there's a thief in the neighborhood, the neighborhood boys catch him and call the police, but they beat him up good first.

I want to emigrate because I want to study in a school in Spain for free and eat free and when I'm older I'll help my family. I want to work in Spain. There's a lot of work there and my friends always come back with good clothes. There are a lot of cars, too. I'm going to bring one and bring a lot of money and I'm going to go to the beach and play pool. My brothers hit me a lot, but when I have a car and money they're not going to be able to hit me. I have a neighbor who went to Spain hidden in her uncle's car and she came back four years later with a car and money and her brothers used to hit her a lot, but not now. Now she comes and goes whenever she wants. I heard that if I go to Spain they're going to take me to a center and give me papers. I'll do what they want until they give me the papers and when I have them I'm going to work and send money to my mother so she doesn't have to work any more [...] In Spain there aren't any problems and anyway if there are, I'll go to Italy with my cousin. I have cousins in Italy and other cousins in Spain who are in a center. My mother doesn't know that I go to the port. She knows that I sleep on the street because I run away and when she looks for me and finds me she beats me. I want to go to Barcelona or France or Milan. I don't like Madrid. I've heard there are a lot of Moroccans smoking and selling hash. I don't want to go where a lot of Moroccans are. To get into the port I go with Yacine and Hamza. I get in with them. Not many people know that I'm a girl, most of them think I'm a boy. I put on boy's clothes, a hat and that's that. But I don't try all the time, just sometimes. I try when I run away from home and sleep on the streets. I go with the boys who sleep on the street to get across. I go with them and we try to get under a truck or a bus. One day I was almost going to go into the boat in the port with some tourists since I'm blonde. They think I'm Spanish. **Aren't you afraid?** Yes, but I don't care. The glue takes the fear away. **Do you talk to your family sometimes?** I've been at home for three days now. My mother doesn't let me go out and when I run away, she comes to find me. (Jiménez-Álvarez 2011)

Until 2010, the year that the Tanger-Med port was inaugurated, Tangier, as a dynamic international port, had been one of the main crossing areas for irregular migrants, both adults and minors. The circumstances experienced by the children and adolescents in the port area were included in an investigation done by the AI

Khaima Association and the National Institute for Social Action (INAS) with backing from UNICEF. That report stated that two particular situations were prevalent among the youngsters found in the port. The first applied to minors who were not from Tangier and who, in addition to trying to migrate, were in the port fending for themselves, looking for a place to sleep, shelter from the cold, or something to eat. Indeed, most of the minors begging, living, and sleeping in the Tangier port came from somewhere else. The second situation applied to minors from Tangier, some of whom lived in nearby neighborhoods and would go to the port in an attempt to migrate but did not necessarily spend the whole day there. They would go home to eat or sleep and some even went to school, attempting to cross over on the weekend. Because of their proximity to the port or the amount of time they spent in the area, they had acquired information (boat schedules, trailer types, bus models) that helped them cross over to Spain.

The boys from inland Moroccan usually tried to reach Spain hidden under trucks or buses. They would spend the day inside the port, moving around the less policed areas, the fishing port, the market, or the restaurant area. At night, these minors would seek out some sheltered space to sleep in near the restaurants, on top of buildings, or on the wall that separates the factories from the beach, hidden in small handmade shacks.

These minors were usually organized into informal groups with some adults from the same town or region. Each gang occupied a space in the port and had influence over one area or another. Each group even had its own form of emigration, usually either by hiding among the trailers or under buses and trucks about to enter the boat or as stowaways when the boat was docked, climbing up from the berth. Both of the methods were extremely dangerous and the minors often risked injury or death. Most of the boys from Tangier stayed near the entrance to the port, where they often came into conflict with the other boys. The support and allegiance between boys from the same town or region were fundamental to their survival.

At the end of 2003, Law 02/03 came into force in Morocco. The law, which was designed to regularize emigration and immigration in Morocco, also reinforced the border control mandate from the state. After early 2004, surveillance in the Tangier port increased and a fortification process was implemented. Throughout 2005, the walls around the port were reinforced, and the number of security forces policing the site, both police and gendarmerie, increased. Moreover, a private security company was subcontracted to monitor the area and the parking lots, and a scanner was installed to detect the heartbeat of anybody hiding in the trucks. The international and national audiovisual and printed press (*Thalassa France5*, *TV2 Marruecos*, *TV1 Suiza*, *Tele5*, *Canal Sur España*, *El País*) widely disseminated news about the young Moroccans trying to reach Europe via the Tangier port, concealed between truck axles. Hidden cameras from various television stations showed footage of the critical moment when a minor would climb under a truck to hide followed by images of the children being pursued and beaten by the police before their arrest.

This process is closely related to the hypervisibilization of Moroccan minors in European protection systems. The children in the Tangier port were also visibilized by the press and the international associations that assist them within the framework of projects financed by foreign cooperation. These minors were constructed as potential migrants at the doorway to Europe and, by extension, as a threat, like the boy who wants to sneak in and has to be dissuaded from migrating. The media coverage between 2007 and 2009 resulted in intensified control in the Tangier port. The police were reinforced, and in 2008, the detention area for minors and adults was moved from its location near the port to the distant former bullring. At the same time that control was stiffening inside the port, children and adolescents began to move to the periphery of the city, where they attempted to get into the trucks in places like highway tollbooths where the vehicles arriving in Tangier from southern Moroccan, many transporting fruits and vegetables or products made in Morocco, have to stop. Border control, then, moved beyond the port area, with children being pursued around the city in indiscriminate raids and detentions. During this time, the Tangier port was the setting for a process of relocating the European border and legitimizing a biopolitics that controls and punishes all “potential” irregular migration, regardless of age. Ismael and Sheimae told their stories of the treatment they received at the hands of the police in the Tangier port.

Since June 2010, the creation of the Tanger-Med port has blurred these forms of control. On the one hand, the progressive dismantling of the old port and the reduction of its activity have resulted in a lower surveillance level at the site, making it easier to cross the border. However, there are fewer opportunities than before since most maritime transit now passes through the new port. On the other hand, the ways to cross the border are more complex at the Tanger-Med port and the controls more sophisticated.

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## 5 Conclusion

In Morocco, rap music has provided a form of expression for lower class youth, which they use to criticize poverty, unemployment, and social inequality. In 2011, the Arab Spring arrived in Morocco in the form of the 20 February youth movement, which brought young people together for months to demand structural changes in the country's institutions and politics. One of the most representative rappers of this movement is Mouad El Hacked, whose nickname is “The Angry Young Man” and who has been jailed twice for his lyrics. The 20F movement carried out a campaign to free him that had broad repercussions in Morocco and received international support condemning the attack on free speech. Migration also appears in the lyrics of this new musical movement. The boys from Tangier have their own cultural creation about this form of migration. Bramfori, a rapper from the Beni Makada neighborhood in Tangier, wrote a rap song, *Mzeyra*, after his little brother migrated that can be heard in the streets of

several European cities (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hF4J8PqZ384>). The lyrics describe problems related to a lack of jobs, violence, and drug addiction among young people and says that life in Morocco is tough, which is why migration sometimes provides an opportunity to escape and get ahead. The lyrics of the song, however, also describe the hardship endured by migrants and how difficult it is to feel rootless and homesick. It also talks about police abuse of the children in the Tangier port and, in short, the aggression with which the security forces go after both children and adults.

This form of migration thus takes on meaning, a capacity to question and agency. These adolescents and young people are inaugurating a new way of moving in a context marked by a crisis in dependency systems, selective border processes, and the construction of dependency as a resource for mobility in an international migration context. In the light of this new mode of movement, these minors may be challenging the forms of government that classify them and confine them to the condition of “other.” Analyzing minors’ capacity for agency is related to recognizing these new dynamics of child mobility and their meaning (Honwana and De Boeck 2005) and, consequently, how agency means recognizing a potential for change (Knörr 2005). This autonomous migration could go so far as to reconfigure the processes of government and control that surround them. For example, the repatriations to Morocco without procedural guarantees carried out by the Spanish state between 2000 and 2008 spawned an entire movement to defend the rights of migrant minors. Because of this movement, the *realpolitik* surrounding repatriation has been questioned and audited by the courts, resulting in a group of sentences that have redefined the law on aliens in Spain to protect children vis-à-vis effective legal protection and the right to be heard. These forms of resistance provide a reformulation of governmentality regarding migrant minors and reveal the intricacies of subjectivities on the edge.

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## Part III

# Representations

Kate Cairns

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	372
2	Children and Young People's Foodscapes .....	373
3	Family Food .....	375
4	School Food .....	379
5	Fast Food .....	383
6	Conclusion .....	386
	References .....	387

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## Abstract

This chapter reviews key scholarship on childhood, food, and subjectivity. Popular debates about children and food produce a series of young subjects that are invested with collective hopes and fears, such as the idealized “organic child” (Cairns et al. *J Consum Cult* 13(2):96–117, 2013) or the pathologized fast food addict (Bugge *Food Cult Soc* 14:71–89, 2011). As these young subjects circulate throughout media and policy rhetoric, they provide the discursive context in which young people forge subjectivities through everyday food practices – whether in negotiating meal preferences with family members or trading snacks within the school dining room. The concept of the “foodscape” is used to situate children’s subjectivities within particular food spaces, relations, and practices. Drawing upon research from Europe and North America, this chapter explores three key sites within children and young people’s foodscapes: family food, school food, and fast food. Just as the restaurant “kids menu” specifies a designated array of items from which the young consumer can choose, children’s foodscapes serve up a range of available subject positions – subject positions that

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are relationally constituted and morally evaluated. In keeping with this section's thematic focus on representation, this chapter explores the interplay between the construction of the young subject within dominant food discourse and the formation of young people's subjectivities within everyday food practices.

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**Keywords**

Food • Foodscape • Consumption • Morality • Family • Health • Body • Mothering

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## 1 Introduction

Children's food consumption is the focus of significant public concern. Flipping through the newspaper on any given day, one is likely to find numerous stories about what young people are eating (or not eating) and why we should care about it. These range from panic over childhood obesity rates (Evans 2010), to proposed shifts in school food policy (Pike and Kelly 2014), or parenting columns offering tips on how to shield children from harmful food additives and chemicals (Cairns and Johnston 2015). Prominent figures like American first lady Michelle Obama have targeted children's eating habits as the key to the nation's future health, while British food celebrity Jamie Oliver continues to draw public support for his campaign to get nutritious food into schools. Such public conversations about young people and food draw upon, and reinforce, dominant understandings of children's vulnerability and potential. Indeed, James et al. (2009a, p. 1) note that "ideas of risk predominate as the main way in which children's relationship with food is constructed and as such this constitutes a largely problematic 'child' identity." Food discourses offer a lens into the ways in which young people are figured as the promise or threat of collective futures. Thus, public debates about children's food consumption provide insight into pressing contemporary hopes and anxieties, including issues of health and well-being, family and parenting, and social and environmental justice. At the heart of these debates are deeply interconnected and symbolically laden ideas about food, childhood, and subjectivity. As Pike and Kelly state (2014, p. 19), when we discuss children and food, we are often discussing "the moral project of the self: the types of person we are, that we should aspire to be and the roles that food can play in that ongoing project."

This chapter reviews key scholarship on childhood, food, and subjectivity; in doing so, it takes up Blackman et al.'s (2008, p. 6) invitation to probe the interplay between the *subject* and *subjectivity*. Popular debates about children and food produce a series of young subjects that are invested with collective hopes and fears, such as the idealized "organic child" (Cairns et al. 2013) or the pathologized junk food addict (Bugge 2011). As these young subjects circulate throughout media and policy rhetoric, they provide the discursive context in which young people forge subjectivities through everyday food practices – whether in negotiating meal preferences with family members or trading snacks within the school dining room.

This chapter proceeds in four sections. The first introduces the concept of the “foodscape,” which highlights the interplay between food’s material and cultural dimensions and is useful for situating children’s subjectivities within particular food spaces, relations, and practices. The remaining sections draw upon research from Europe and North America to explore three key sites within children and young people’s foodscapes: family food, school food, and fast food. Themes of morality and relationality run throughout this chapter. Children’s food consumption is a key site where moral boundaries are drawn: between good and bad choices, healthy and unhealthy bodies, responsible and irresponsible subjects. Within the context of such moralizing discourses, children’s food subjectivities are always produced in relation to others, such as the “good mother” who nourishes the child’s growing body and cultivates their developing palate. Just as the restaurant “kids menu” specifies a designated array of items from which the young consumer can choose, children’s foodscapes serve up a range of available subject positions – subject positions that are relationally constituted and morally evaluated. In keeping with this section’s thematic focus on representation, this chapter explores the interplay between the construction of the young subject within dominant food discourse and the formation of young people’s subjectivities within everyday food practices.

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## 2 Children and Young People’s Foodscapes

Children’s food identities are not fixed but are ongoing, spatialized performances. The concept of the foodscape has been used “to denote the various places where children encounter food and eating during the day and where their identities as food consumers are enacted” (Brembeck 2009, p. 132). Consider the particular identity performances available when seated at the “kids’ table” at a large family gathering, where the subject position of “child” is clearly demarcated through mismatched furniture, plastic cutlery, and perhaps a modified menu (Duane 2013, p. 1). Such a setting affords very different subjectivities than are available to young people congregating in a favorite fast food restaurant, where collective food rituals can work to create the feeling of a “kids’ scene ruled by spontaneity” (Best 2014, p. 292). Conceiving of these different performances in relation to foodscapes provides a conceptual lens into the geographies of young food subjects and subjectivities.

Beyond simply demarcating distinct places within children’s food lives, the concept of the foodscape draws attention to the “institutional arrangements, cultural spaces, and discourses that mediate our relationship with our food” (MacKendrick 2014, p. 16). Johnston and Goodman (2015, p. 207) suggest that an analysis of foodscapes highlights the interplay between “food culture (values, meanings and representations) and food materiality (physical landscapes, ecologies and political economy).” For instance, the experience of eating lunch within the school dining hall is shaped by state nutritional guidelines, institutional policies, industry partnerships, and the labor of cafeteria workers, as well as the peer social hierarchies that subtly direct children toward some tables and away from others, and perhaps the embodied

experience of a hungry child who did not have access to breakfast. Also emphasizing the relationality of foodscapes, Brembeck et al. (2013) highlight the interplay of spatial, temporal, and discursive dimensions. Foodscapes bridge multiple scales through global commodity chains, they evoke memories of the past and visions of the future, and they are inscribed with power-laden discourses – gendered, classed, racialized, and generational – that give meaning to particular food subjects and practices. Thus, a foodscape is “simultaneously physical, material, social, routinized, commercial and discursive. It is a scape of things, people, dishes, tastes, shops, restaurants and other aspects. It is embodied as well as intellectual” (Brembeck et al. 2013, p. 86).

A foodscape is not a static backdrop or container for children’s food practices but rather, an ongoing creation that makes possible particular subjectivities. As Brembeck and Johansson (2010, p. 797) state, “in encountering food and eating at various places, different child becomings emerge.” They contrast the subject of the “obedient pupil” who follows adult prescriptions for healthy eating with the subject of the “food monster” who craves the sugary delights on offer in consumer food environments. Frequently represented within advertising and food media, “the food monster offers a way of asserting specific ‘childish’ interests, and of exercising some power in relation to adults, in a way that is acceptable, as long as the performance is done with a humorous twinkle” (Brembeck and Johansson 2010, p. 808). A child may enact the performance of the food monster by grabbing at the colorfully packaged goods on display in the grocery checkout line, where glossy images of favorite cartoon characters beckon. Yet, as Brembeck and Johansson (2010, p. 811) note, “the food monster is not an inherent characteristic of every child, but just a possible performance that is actualized under certain conditions.” This subject is spatially and relationally constituted through the available foodscape.

The remainder of this chapter explores three key elements within children and young people’s foodscapes: family food, school food, and fast food. These are discussed separately here for analytic purposes, but it is important to acknowledge their interconnections. Consider, for instance, the experience of an immigrant child who encounters strange looks from classmates due to the “foreign” smells of her packed lunch. Here, the realms of family food and school food intersect with migration stories, ethnocultural traditions, embodied preferences, and racialized understandings of what constitutes a “normal” or “exotic” meal. Indeed, Metcalfe et al. (2008) describe how the lunchbox bridges the realms of government discourse on healthy eating, parental care work, and school peer cultures. Conversely, consider how media representations of teenagers’ apparently unhealthy eating habits link the rise of fast food with the supposed decline of the family meal (Curtis et al. 2010). Here, a critique of powerful food corporations might be bolstered by developmental assumptions about young people’s poor decision-making skills, as well as nostalgic and highly gendered appeals for a past era when women devoted greater time and energy to their labors in the family kitchen. While this chapter considers family food, school food, and fast food as distinct elements within children and young people’s foodscapes, it is crucial to avoid creating boundaries between these sites, which are deeply intertwined within children and young people’s everyday food lives.

### 3 Family Food

The family meal has assumed mythic cultural status as the foundation of a loving and secure childhood. In popular representations of the family dinner, children not only consume the wholesome foods their growing bodies need to develop, they also learn valuable lessons in taste, etiquette, and respect for authority – all crucial components of a civilizing project that positions child “becomings” on a path to future adulthood. Given the cultural salience of the family meal, evoking ideals of tradition, love, and togetherness (Bell and Valentine 1997; Cairns et al. 2015; Curtis et al. 2010; Valentine 1999), practices of preparing and sharing food do not simply nourish a family's members but actively *constitute* family itself. As James et al. (2009b, p. 46) note, “family food is core to the doing of family and integral to children's identities as family members.”

Feminist scholars have long highlighted the demands of women's feeding work in the production of the heteronormative family (DeVault 1991), and children's geographers build upon this literature by drawing attention to the role that children play in “doing” family through food (Backett-Milburn et al. 2010; Curtis et al. 2010; Jackson 2009; James et al. 2009b; Valentine 1999). Contemporary media frequently lament the loss of the family dinner, yet Curtis et al. (2010, p. 292) note that “the symbolic significance of ‘proper food’ and the ‘proper family’ has endured.” Their interview research with UK children and parents examines “generationally nuanced food moralities” (p. 291) and reveals how “child-adult relations are discursively constructed through the creation, contestation and recreation of particular food narratives” (p. 293). Moral boundaries may be drawn, for instance, to differentiate “children's food” from “proper food,” working to inscribe adult/child subject positions within a generational order (p. 294). Yet, family food negotiations can also alter generational hierarchies in cases when children's food preferences are respected, reflecting a view of children as equal family members with the capacity to actively shape the family diet. Thus, while family food relations are always inscribed with morality, their negotiations are far from uniform and may varyingly serve to “reorder, collapse or preserve the generational order” (James et al. 2009b, p. 44).

This attention to negotiation and diversity in family food practices reveals how the ideal of “family food” functions ideologically to homogenize an array of practices, obscuring inequality and conflict (Valentine 1999). The diverse food identities constructed within the home do not always add up to a cohesive family food identity. A critical perspective on “family food” is particularly important for appreciating children's agency in making food decisions and enacting their own food subjectivities, even when the contents of their dinner plate are dictated by others. As Cook (2009a, p. 115) notes, “in pushing away the spoonful of mashed peas, a child exhibits not just a preference but effectively asserts a right to pleasure, to seek pleasure – a pleasure only oneself can adjudicate and assess.” The process of negotiating such generational power relations through food can be further complicated by dynamics of social class. In a study exploring how Scottish teens and parents negotiate family food decisions, Backett-Milburn et al. (2010) find classed

differences in levels of autonomy and control. Working-class teens in their study reported greater independence in their food choices but encountered a set of options that were limited by economic constraints. By contrast, middle-class teens had access to resources that opened up a greater array of food options, but said that their personal food choices were limited by strict parental regulation. All parents in the study shared a desire for their children to eat healthily, as well as a conception of the teen subject who was easily tempted by unhealthy “junk.” However, the degree of control these adults felt they were able to exert over young people’s food practices varied according to their access to time, money, and the relative privilege of prioritizing food concerns in the negotiation of family life (see also O’Connell and Brannen 2014).

Also analyzing classed dynamics within family food negotiations, Beagan et al. (2014) find a somewhat different pattern in Canadian parents’ responses to teens’ vegetarianism. These authors note that the complexity of their findings defies rigid categorization along class lines, yet they are able to identify a general pattern where resistance to teen vegetarianism was more common among working-class families. By contrast, middle-class families were more prevalent among those who accommodated or even embraced young people’s vegetarian diets. Significantly, both of these strategies were enacted as a performance of good parenting. Those who resisted teens’ desire to stop eating meat expressed health concerns and mobilized narratives of a “proper diet.” These parents drew upon “a cultural repertoire that saw meat as integral to healthy eating, and a parenting mode that emphasized respect for authority” (Beagan et al. 2014, p. 115). By contrast, parents who adapted the family diet to accommodate teens’ vegetarianism drew upon “a middle-class parenting discourse that is intensely child-centred, promoting children’s rights to make autonomous decisions” (Beagan et al. 2014, p. 108). Thus, while family food is a morally charged terrain where clear boundaries are drawn – between healthy and unhealthy choices, and good and bad parenting strategies – the frameworks used make such evaluations are informed by the material and cultural relations of social class.

The ongoing negotiation of family foodscapes assumes additional complexity in the context of migration. Brembeck (2009) shows the important role that children play in shaping the food practices of recently immigrated families to Sweden. She suggests that children act as “integration agents” within the “frontier foodscape,” a concept that refers to “the border zone where immigrant children meet Swedish food habits” (p. 132). Within these families, children lead the way in introducing family members to the new country’s foodscape; their greater exposure to Swedish food practices provides an important source of knowledge that informed food decisions within the home. Thus, while generational power relations are a frequent theme in research on family foodscapes, children’s contributions to family food are not always a site of struggle. As Brembeck (2009, p. 139) writes, “it is normally considered that the children are the ones who are supposed to change – to restrict childish or egoistic tastes and mature to appreciate a broader range of healthy foods. . . [but] in frontier families this synchronization is to a large extent in the hands of the children.” As the frontier foodscape alters the relations of power that commonly organize family food, a different child subject emerges.

In addition to dynamics of age, race, and class, family foodscapes are also gendered. In light of longstanding cultural associations between food and femininity and a gendered division of domestic labor in which women continue to perform the vast majority of family foodwork (Cairns and Johnston 2015), feeding practices are a key site where the subjects of mother and child are relationally constituted. In a longitudinal study in the UK, Murphy (2007) examined the shifting images of childhood mobilized in mothers' feeding narratives. She found that when infants were 2 months old, mothers drew upon discourses of the "innocent, self-regulating child" (p. 111) and trusted infants' embodied cues as the ultimate director for their "baby-led" feeding practices. By contrast, when children reached 2 years of age, these same mothers narrated their feeding practices very differently; at this age, children were described as naughty and any seeming misbehavior was interpreted as willful and manipulative (p. 117). Murphy's research reveals how competing child subjects can coexist within a particular foodscape and may be mobilized in relation to age-based conceptions of children's development. Also examining mothers' feeding narratives, Cook draws attention to the *interpretive* labor of maternal foodwork. Drawing upon interviews with middle-class American mothers, Cook (2009a, p. 120) shows how mothers engage in the "provisioning of meaning as much as the preparing of foodstuffs." By constructing categories that work to delineate "proper" and "improper" food, mothers forged an "alimentary order" to support the formation of children's food subjectivities. "Through such food rules," Cook (2009a, p. 120) writes, "children acquire and reacquire an identity as 'children' – i.e., family members who are subject to categorical strictures." Highlighting the ways in which this interpretive labor bridges commercial meanings with family food, Cook (2009b) challenges the commonly imagined boundary between the "private" sphere of the home and the "public" sphere of the market. His research shows care and consumption to be deeply interconnected and suggests that a key component of mothers' caring labor involves the "semantic provisioning" of children's food.

While mothers have long been deemed primarily responsible for nurturing children through their foodwork, the demands of this responsibility shift historically. Amid contemporary concerns about health risks associated with industrial food production, as well as pressures to consider the environmental impact of consumer food choices, Cairns et al. (2013) suggest that a new child subject has emerged. They analyze the figure of the "organic child," an idealized understanding of a pure childhood that is shielded from the risks of the industrial food system. This idealized child subject features prominently in corporate marketing campaigns that encourage mothers to preserve their children's purity by feeding them an "all natural," organic, ecologically friendly diet. During focus groups and interviews, Canadian mothers in this study expressed feeling personally responsible for protecting children's developing bodies from harmful food toxins, as well as socializing them to become ethical consumers who can promote future ecological sustainability through their food choices. Thus, the organic child ideal expands the geographies of women's foodwork, extending relations of care beyond the domestic realm (Cairns et al. 2014). As the authors note, "in feeding the organic child, mothers are deemed individually responsible for producing a healthy child and a healthy planet" (Cairns

et al. 2013, p. 98). Along with placing additional demands on women's food labor, the organic child ideal sets a classed standard of good mothering that is out of reach for many women. Poor and working-class mothers in this study expressed an awareness of this ideal and experienced guilt, stress, and anxiety over their inability to live up to it. Middle-class mothers also reflected critically on the organic child ideal, sometimes questioning its unrealistic demands, or critiquing its elitist assumptions; however, these same women found it difficult to completely detach from the strong emotions this ideal generated in their daily foodwork. Thus, even when this idealized subject was the focus of reflexive critique, the organic child played a powerful role in women's representations of their own foodwork and mothering practices.

A critical look at "family food" requires examining not only the power relations obscured by this ideal but also the subjects it excludes. Before concluding this section, it is crucial to note that not all children's food subjectivities emerge in the context of the family. In this regard, an important contribution has been made by research on food practices within the context of residential care (Dorrer et al. 2010; Kohli et al. 2010; McIntosh et al. 2010b; Punch et al. 2009). For instance, a study exploring the significance of food for refugee and asylum-seeking children in UK foster care found that "food is related to many aspects of finding sanctuary, negotiating belonging within the foster family, and can powerfully evoke being at 'home' in a new land" (Kohli et al. 2010, p. 233). Yet, others have explored how the sense of "home" associated with family food may be difficult to achieve when such food rituals occur within an institutional setting. In their research in Scotland, Dorrer et al. (2010) explore how residential care workers attempt to mediate competing demands of a food environment that occupies the contradictory spaces of "home" and "work." They argue that food practices offer a lens into "the complexity of the residential home, as well as the use of food as a medium of care" (Dorrer et al. 2010, p. 248). In this setting, food is used as a symbolic resource by both workers and children, not only for negotiating power and authority but also for testing and building new relationships (Punch et al. 2009). For instance, the practice of asking incoming children about their food likes and dislikes can signal the staff's personal attention to young people's individuality within this institutional environment. Similarly, the simple act of making the perfect cup of tea – that is, one that reflects intimate knowledge of a child's specific tastes and preferences – can have immense symbolic significance, conveying a sense of care and connection. At the same time, staff members negotiate a difficult balancing act of expressing care without ceding control; while they sought to form close bonds with children through food, getting *too* close could threaten the authority that was required for their institutional role. Punch et al. (2009) emphasize that children do not passively accept institutional food rules within this environment; rather, children used food to actively test and negotiate relationships with both peers and workers. For instance, just as a personalized cup of tea can signal an expression of care, turning down that same offering – or simply leaving it untouched to go cold – can be a way for children to communicate their feelings and exert a degree of power in their interactions with staff members. While food can be a medium for expressing care, it is also a morally charged site of



surveillance, regulation, and resistance – themes that dominate the literature on school food.

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## 4 School Food

If family food is popularly associated with the warm sensations of a wholesome meal, shared cultural traditions, and valuable life lessons, school food evokes a less appetizing array of images: a procession of blank-faced children shuffle alongside sterling silver counter tops, as bland servings of beige-colored mash are slopped onto orange cafeteria trays. Yet, in recent years, this vision of school food has been changing – or at the very least, it has been publically targeted as something that *should* be changed. The focus of these changes have centered on initiatives to promote “healthy” food in schools – whether by instituting new state-mandated nutritional policies (Metcalfe et al. 2011), launching a school garden and cooking program (Hayes-Conroy 2014), or enlisting the expert guidance of a popular food celebrity (Pike and Kelly 2014). Once again, the moral dimension of children’s foodscapes come to the fore; public debates about school food are commonly bolstered by concerns about children’s poor food choices and unhealthy bodies (Gibson and Dempsey 2013), and sometimes extend to a critique of poor parenting skills that are said to have created a generation of uninformed and unhealthy young consumers (Rawlins 2009). Contemporary efforts to transform school food aspire toward a very different vision than the one described above, evoking images of smiling children who voluntarily *choose* a second helping of colorful, locally grown vegetables. Yet, children’s geographers have identified a key continuity within this foodscape: school food as a site for monitoring, evaluating, and governing the formation of young subjects.

As a prominent figure in contemporary representations of school food, British food celebrity Jamie Oliver has attracted attention from children’s geographers interested in the relationship between “space, the child’s body, and popular discourse” (Gibson and Dempsey 2013, p. 44). Oliver has mobilized massive support for his campaign to improve the nutritional quality of children’s lunches in British and American schools. Analyzing his hit American television show, *Food Revolution*, Gibson and Dempsey use geographic conceptions of scale to demonstrate how poor nutrition is individualized as a problem of children’s poor food choices. As they state, *Food Revolution* draws upon “moralizing scalar discourses of the body [that] frame nutrition as an individual problem of personal choice” (Gibson and Dempsey 2013, p. 44). This representation of the uninformed child consumer leads to a vision of social change that targets the child’s individual food choices as the key to a healthy collective future; in doing so, it obscures the political economic context of US school food, where a profit orientation and longstanding links to industrial agriculture shape the kinds of food that are available. Popular culture plays a key role in perpetuating these scalar food politics by circulating individualizing discourses of child nutrition. Gibson and Dempsey (2013, p. 45) note that “because children are subjects who are socially constructed as both ‘future citizens’ and ‘at



risk’,” young people’s food practices have been identified as a key site for “intervention in the name of the public good.” Contrary to such popular representations, Gibson and Dempsey argue that children’s food choices should be understood as a site of *negotiated* agency; young people make food decisions within the particular constraints and opportunities afforded by their social location, and in a political economic context where school food is deeply shaped by structural forces, including industry relations and agricultural policy. Their analysis demonstrates how political economic factors are often obscured in popular representations of the child subject within school foodscapes.

The dominant institutional focus on health and nutrition can undermine another vital component of school food: the social significance of lunchtime for children’s peer relationships. Contrasting the adult-controlled world of school rules and formal timetables with the child-centered world of school peer cultures, Valentine (2000, p. 259) writes:

The lunch break represents one time/space where the institutional organisation, which is evident in the way that food is organised and distributed and pupils are controlled on the school site out of lessons, is most strongly contrasted with the informal world of children’s peer group cultures and the ways they organise themselves around eating and relaxing.

Daniel and Gustafsson (2010, p. 265) examine initiatives to promote healthy eating within UK schools and argue that while such programs emphasize children’s participation, “current policy is in danger of underestimating the social significance of lunchtimes as ‘children’s spaces’ within the adult controlled school day.” Like Gibson and Dempsey, Daniel and Gustafsson are critical of the way in which policy interventions extract the event of the school meal from the socio-spatial context in which it takes shape. Erasing the material, institutional, and cultural relations that shape school foodscapes, such policies tend to put forward an individualized approach that focuses solely on “what children put into their mouths as opposed to the social context of food and eating” (Daniel and Gustafsson 2010, p. 268). Also critical of this health-oriented approach, Pike (2008, p. 418) argues that “the dominance of the nutritional discourse over the social discourse is maintained through spatial practice.” Drawing upon ethnographic research in a UK school, she highlights material features of this food environment that facilitate nutrition promotion over student sociality, such as seating arrangements designed to maximize order and minimize peer socialization, and walls covered with posters displaying state nutritional recommendations. Within this particular school, children who brought lunches from home were seated separately from those who ate the school dinner and prevented access to the rewards available to students who consumed the institutionally approved “healthy” school meal. Pike (2008, p. 418) argues that “these spatial tactics [were] productive of particular subjective positions,” as they worked to produce the opposition of “the healthy school dinner eater and the unhealthy packed lunch eater.” Thus, in addition to prioritizing the nutritional regulation of lunchtime over its social significance, school foodscapes can also work to arrange particular child subjects within a health-based moral order.

While a great deal of research on school food has focused on the surveillance and regulation of children's bodies and choices, institutional policies and actors do not exert total control over children's food practices. Rather, the school lunchroom is yet another site in which relations of power and authority are negotiated and contested. Pike (2010) proposes shifting away from analytic approaches to school food that focus on the exercise of power *over* children's bodies – a top-down model that implies a passive child subject. Instead, she draws upon a Foucauldian conception of power as something that is exercised (rather than possessed) and productive (rather than repressive), and argues for an analysis of the way in which power relations are *negotiated* in the production of particular subject positions. As McIntosh et al. (2010a, p. 290) note, "space and interactions are constituted, in part, through networks of power and for children lunch-times and dinner halls can be spaces where they can exert a greater degree of agency than is possible during the rest of the normal school day." Close attention to these networks of power reveals how children actively co-construct the space of the dinner hall, for instance, by evading the supervisor's gaze while discarding unwanted vegetables. Such an approach also challenges the assumption that adults in positions of authority constitute a homogeneous group. In fact, Pike found that teachers and lunchtime supervisors held contrasting views on the primary purpose of lunchtime supervision, with teachers set on cultivating children's table manners and social skills, and lunchtime supervisors committed to ensuring that children consumed a well-rounded meal. These differences were rooted in contrasting conceptions of the child; namely, a tension between "teachers' emphasis on skilling up children as adults of the future and the lunchtime supervisors' view of children as requiring protection" (Pike 2010, p. 281). Such nuances are missed when scholars assume a unified "adult" subject who asserts authority over the child eater.

Also emphasizing the negotiation of power relations within the school dining hall, Metcalfe et al. (2011) examine the common conception of the school meal as a site for civilizing children into a particular cultural order. These authors note that while this civilizing project tends to be constructed as a top-down process, in fact, it is the site of negotiation – not only among multiply positioned subjects but also in relation to multiple conceptions of civility. Their research suggests that identity work is at the core of children's efforts to shape their lunch times and spaces – whether through performing friendship by gifting cherished elements of a packed lunch, or reinforcing group boundaries by choosing to sit together (or apart). Given this demonstrated "capacity to manage self-presentation, friendship, and relations with others" (Metcalfe et al. 2011, p. 386), the authors suggest that children are "already performing civility within their own social worlds" (p. 386). This performance of civility may not comply with dominant notions of etiquette in the making of healthy, responsible subjects, but nor is it enacted as a form of *resistance* to such institutional prescriptions. Thus, attending to the complexity of children's lunchtime rituals requires an analysis of power that moves beyond a binary framework of domination and resistance.

Metcalfe et al.'s attention to children's interactional practices highlights an understudied dimension of school foodscapes: young people's negotiation of peer

relationships through food. In an ethnographic study with fourth grade students in two Los Angeles schools, Nukago (2008) explores the complex ways in which children negotiate meaning and identities through food rituals. Over the course of several months, she regularly ate with students during lunchtime, observing and participating in their social interactions, and eventually came to understand how the students had developed a complex system of “ritualized food exchange” (Nukago 2008, p. 351). This system of exchange involved different types of foods, which students referred to as “wet food” (homemade) and “dry food” (mass produced) – and which were shared differently and in ways that held different cultural meanings. Nukago (2008, p. 371) argues that the children in her study “collaboratively created peer cultures that emanate from establishing and participating in food economy, which was hidden from adults’ eyes and thus operated largely on its own.” While students’ ritualized food exchange fostered peer relationships, this was also a way in which “ethnic boundaries and identities were marked and developed” (2008, p. 371). For instance, Nukago observed that Korean American students (who were the largest ethnic group in these schools) explicitly described their own lunch items as “Korean” when they were sharing with friends, and thus performed their ethnic identity through this exchange. Challenging adultist conceptions of racial socialization, Nukago (2008, p. 371) argues that “children do not become ethnic by passively ‘internalizing’ ethnic culture in the adult world. . . rather, children learn to do ethnicity by making use of cultural objects (food) in the exchange system that they collaboratively create.” More broadly, Nukago’s research reveals the complex ways in which children create culture and enact subjectivities through everyday food practices.

While discourses of ethical eating have cultivated the maternal ideal of raising an “organic child” (Cairns et al. 2013), these same set of environmental and health discourses converge to produce an idealized space within the school foodscape: the school garden. As a site where children plant, water, harvest, and eat freshly grown vegetables, school gardens blur the boundaries between food production and consumption in the formation of child subjects. Popular accounts of the school garden suggest that hands-on experience in growing food will advance students’ nutritional knowledge and environmental awareness, fostering healthier and more sustainable food choices (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013). In their research in Canadian and American school gardens, Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy found that change was imagined to occur through the child’s body. They write that school garden and cooking programs “are often considered to be equally accessible to all students, or even more, to be a great equalizer among students from different cultural, racial, or economic backgrounds. The imagined key to this equality is, quite interestingly, the body” (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013, p. 82). Narratives of transformation through the school garden often rely upon a unified conception of embodied taste: after ingesting freshly grown vegetables, the child’s own embodied preferences will be reoriented around healthy, “alternative,” (and thus morally superior) food choices. This narrative assumes that “through sensory perception alone, all students will naturally come to the same (visceral) conclusions about what tastes good” (Hayes-Conroy 2014, p. 18). While acknowledging the educational potential of programs

that provide children with opportunities to grow and cook food, Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy critique the notion that school gardens will magically unlock desired food preferences in students. They suggest that children's food practices are not simply a reflection of knowledge and availability but are shaped by "a more complex kind of visceral access that arises out of specific bodily histories and prior and current affective/emotional relations with alternative foods, which are not easily evaded in the classroom" (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013, p. 82). Hayes-Conroy (2014, p. 149) describes how teachers commonly positioned children as "empty vessels" to be passively filled with desirable food knowledge and tastes, when in fact, students came into the programs with "visceral topographies" that positioned them differently in relation to food practices that were advocated within the program, such as vegetarianism. She suggests that "we can think of food identities as the visceral intersection of social subjectivities and food practices – that which propels judgments like 'This is my kind of food,' or 'I don't eat this way'" (Hayes-Conroy 2014, p. 107). While school gardens are commonly celebrated as sites for children to connect with their food, these authors warn against a simplistic narrative that ignores the complex interplay of factors shaping children's food preferences, as well as the racialized and classed relations of power in which children's food subjectivities emerge.

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## 5 Fast Food

The moralities of children's foodscapes are perhaps most blatantly expressed in media debates about fast food. While fast food outlets provide an appealing choice for many consumers – promising an affordable and convenient way to satisfy salty cravings – as a cultural object, fast food carries significant social stigma. Indeed, fast food has become synonymous with "bad" food, positioned as the unhealthy, immoral Other to the wholesome family dinner. Fast food is depicted as a threat to collective family values, as well as individual well-being, and young consumers are seen as both targets and co-conspirators with the fast food market. Once again, notions of "risk" frame these conversations, from concern for innocent children at risk of corruption by market influences to critiques of young people as risky consumers with disregard for health (Colls and Evans 2008).

Research exploring young people's own perspectives on fast food have called into question the dominant representation of a young subject who is oblivious to, or unfazed by, negative assessments of fast food consumption. Wills et al. (2009) suggest that fast food may have particular meaning to young people as one of the few spaces in which they can act as independent consumers, free of parental supervision. Nevertheless, these authors note that young people's understandings of fast food are shaped by family upbringing, challenging the commonly imagined divide between the "private" realm of "family food" and "public" eating practices in commercial venues. In their interview research with middle-class teens in Scotland, young people demonstrated a high level of awareness of nutritional discourses that designate fast food as "bad" food. Indeed, Wills et al. (2009, p. 65) found that a

narrative of “*avoiding* rather than consuming fast food was a central aspect of middle-class young teenagers’ identity-making work.” Nevertheless, these same young people valued the social dimension of the fast food experience as a site for sharing unsupervised time with friends. Drawing upon discourses of healthy eating allowed them to establish distance from an unhealthy fast food consumer, yet continue to participate in the social ritual afforded by this commercial setting.

Bugge (2011) found a similar engagement with healthy eating discourses in her study of Norwegian young people’s representations of fast food consumption. Through survey responses and interview narratives, teens distanced themselves from the “unhealthy” choice to consume fast food, which they commonly linked to concerns about obesity. For these young people, fast food consumption carried the stigma of a fat body, which was seen as the external product of an individual’s poor food choices and a general lack of knowledge and self-control. Like Wills et al., Bugge draws attention to the significance of food narratives for the performance of identity; by expressing disgust toward commercial food venues that are categorized as unhealthy, young people position themselves as particular kinds of consumers. Managing body size by avoiding fast food was seen as particularly important for girls, given the heightened social pressures to perform femininity through the regulation of appetite and maintenance of a slender physique. Fast food narratives also facilitated the performance of class identities, as “no one was more negative about fast food than the upper-middle/upper class” (Bugge 2011, p. 82). Contrary to popular representations of an unregulated, insatiable teen appetite, young people in this research were highly aware of the social meanings attached to the consumption of fast food. As Bugge (2011, p. 86) states: “From the young people’s food talk, it is evident that the hamburger-eating and Coke-drinking boys and girls were typical examples of *the others*; those to whom the healthy and slim people did not want to be likened.” The performance of self through food narratives was apparent even among the small number of participants in this study who openly embraced fast food. These young people acknowledged the stigma associated with fast food consumption and positioned themselves as “rebellious” consumers who were not constrained by such normative assessments (p. 83). Thus, whether rejecting or embracing a set of consumption practices that are dominantly deemed unhealthy – and thus immoral – young people’s representations of fast food work to produce themselves as particular kinds of consuming subjects.

McPhail et al. (2011) also challenge popular representations of the young fast food consumer and extend this critique to scholarly accounts of an “obesogenic” environment, which suggest that the high concentration of fast food outlets in particular places leads to increased fast food consumption. These authors argue that the discourse of an obesogenic environment disproportionately targets the consumption habits of poor and racialized young people, positioning them as passive subjects whose choices are entirely determined by their surroundings. By contrast, their research with Canadian teens found no straightforward relationship between either geographic location or class status and teen’s fast food consumption. Rather, they found that young people from various class backgrounds engaged in “moral boundary work” in their discussions of fast food (2011, p. 304). Like those in the

Norwegian and UK research mentioned above, these young people constructed fast food as “unhealthy” – and therefore “bad” – and distanced themselves from this mode of consumption. Where McPhail et al.’s research differs from those of Bugge (2011) and Wills et al. (2009) is their finding that such moral boundary work was not exclusive to middle-class teens. Young people from multiple class backgrounds signaled their awareness of dominant discourses linking fast food to obesity by referring to popular representations like the documentary *Supersize Me*, in which a man becomes ill after attempting to eat exclusively at McDonald’s. Some young people in this study expressed guilt for occasionally consuming fast food; in doing so, they preserved moral boundaries by differentiating themselves from consumers who eat such food thoughtlessly and without self-reflection. Demonstrating their awareness of how teen fast food consumption is represented as a collective problem, these young people made an effort to distance themselves from the unhealthy, immoral fast food consumer.

While the above studies examine how young people enact subjectivities through *narratives* of fast food, different insights emerge from research exploring young people’s actual consumption *practices*. Drawing upon ethnographic research in two American fast food outlets, Best (2014) focuses on the emotional and interactional dynamics that work to produce fast food spaces. Referencing the work of sociologist Erving Goffman, Best (2014, p. 296) advocates an approach to youth food consumption that shifts away from a focus on the young consumer and toward an analysis of the *situation*:

a useful way to proceed in understanding youths’ food consumption is not to ask first *what* kids eat but *where*. My answer has been: they eat in situations. Youths themselves play an indispensable role in the consumer food event for other youth, directing our attention to the importance of interpersonal relationships and embodied experience structuring youths’ relationships to objects (food) and consumer space (fast-food restaurants).

Attending to situational dynamics, Best demonstrates how youth co-construct the space of one particular McDonald’s that was located directly across the street from their school. Her fieldnotes capture a boisterous scene, as the space is transformed through the fluid movement of bodies between tables and the constant rearrangement of furniture to accommodate shifting social groupings. This scene marks a clear departure from images of a tightly controlled commercial environment, where the consumer experience is ruled by corporate ideals of efficiency and uniformity. “While places like this McDonald’s may belong to a lexicon of ‘fast food,’” Best (2014, p. 290) writes, “for these youths there really is nothing fast about it. At this McDonald’s, young people linger, stretching not just dollars, but time.” Best avoids characterizing the fast food environment wholly in terms of corporate power or the choices of individual consumers. Instead, she draws attention to the social dynamics of the situation, where the meanings and rituals of fast food are collectively negotiated. In this particular McDonald’s, these situational dynamics create “a sense that ‘anything goes,’ and that the rules belonging to other spaces and other situations do not apply” (p. 293). It is the “emotional energy” fostered within this space that keeps

young people coming back, Best (2014, p. 293) argues, thus “solidifying their place as regular consumers at this McDonald’s.” Rather than centering her analysis on a young consumer subject, Best (2014, p. 286) draws attention to “the emotional charge of situations”; in doing so, she reorients the analytic lens, conceiving of fast food not simply as a commodity that is ingested by an individual young person but as a ritual experience that young people collaboratively perform and consume.

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## 6 Conclusion

Food is a biological necessity required for survival and a cultural object with rich symbolic significance; it is also a key resource in the making of children and childhoods. The young child who obediently finishes his Brussels sprouts might be rewarded with dessert, a gesture that relies upon, and reinforces, the distinction between a “treat” and “proper meal” (Cook 2009a). The mother who cannot afford to purchase organic chicken for her family might read about hormones and antibiotics in industrially farmed-meat and worry about the impact on her daughter’s physical development (Cairns and Johnston 2015). A student who seeks to cement a budding friendship might give away half of her packed lunch, even if it requires passing a sandwich under the table to avoid the watchful eye of the lunchroom supervisor (Metcalf et al. 2011). A news story on rising childhood obesity rates might target poor parenting practices, unhealthy school meals, or young people’s irresponsible food choices as threats to collective well-being (Pike and Kelly 2014). In each of these examples, food provides much more than sustenance; it is a resource for producing and performing particular subjectivities. Children’s food subjectivities are constituted in relation to multiple others – the good mother, the lunch lady, the unhealthy fast food consumer – and are assigned moral value within the contours of children’s foodscapes.

This chapter has reviewed scholarship from North America and Europe exploring three key elements of children’s foodscapes: family food, school food, and fast food. Within each of these realms, food emerges as a site of struggle, where relations of power are negotiated and contested. Much of the literature reviewed in this chapter has shed light on the place of food within adult/child relations, where the child subject is cultivated, nourished, and disciplined. Fewer studies have examined the way food subjectivities are negotiated *among* children and young people, including in the formation and performance of ethnic identities (Nukago 2008) and the collective construction of fast food spaces (Best 2014). Other promising areas of research include the rise of ethical eating discourses that link personal food consumption to broader social and environmental issues; in this context, the figure of the “organic child” (Cairns et al. 2013) and the space of the school garden (Hayes-Conroy 2014) are celebrated as the promise of a healthier, more sustainable future. As new food discourses work to reconfigure the “kids menu,” rituals of feeding and eating will continue to offer a rich lens into the representation and performance of young subjects and subjectivities.



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# Youth Participation in Singapore: The Limits of Approaches Created for Youth Rather Than by Youth

# 20

Jared Wong

## Contents

1	Introducing the Evolving Young Singaporean .....	390
2	Focusing on Young People's Participation .....	391
3	Beyond a Focus on Academics: The Challenges of Learning to Participate at School . . .	392
4	Home as a Place Where Education Takes Priority .....	395
5	Beyond Home and School: Tuition Centers, Enrichment Activities, and Social Participation .....	397
6	Building Public Spaces for Meaningful Participation? *SCAPE and the Youth Park .....	398
7	Conclusion: Empowering Youths' Place(s) as We Move Forward .....	403
	References .....	405

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## Abstract

The article uses Singapore as a lens to explore some of the key issues relevant to scholarship on the geographies of young people and their participatory pathways. Despite a growing desire for greater participation in society, young Singaporeans continue to face challenges in the form of constricted socialities, spatialities, and temporalities that hinder their ability to achieve meaningful participation. The article is therefore framed by looking at young Singaporeans' opportunities for and obstacles to participate in school, at home, and in public spaces as these space-times are integral to the development of a young person's lifeworld. It also draws attention to the multiple actors that entrap young Singaporeans in power matrices which hinder their participatory trajectories. Moving forward, this article suggests that space and time is of the essence to mobilize young Singaporeans' (and more broadly young people's) participation. This will require a conscious and concerted effort on the part of different actors to return Singaporean youth the space and time to discover their participatory potential.

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389

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Education • Geographies of Young People • Politics of participation • Singapore • Space-time • Youth participation

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## 1 Introducing the Evolving Young Singaporean

In 2012, a national project was unveiled by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at his annual national day message. “Our Singapore Conversation” (OSC) engaged over 10,000 Singaporeans of all ages through different platforms such as surveys and focus group discussions to understand their challenges and aspirations for the country. The project in itself was hardly groundbreaking since the government had been (re)creating opportunities for public engagement since the 1980s to ensure the continued relevance of government actions and policies to its citizen’s needs and desires (Tan 2013). However, what perhaps was groundbreaking was a realization of the changing profile of young Singaporeans and the issues that mattered to them.

At a focus group discussion targeted specifically at Singaporean youth, a key issue that emerged was the lack of *space* and *time* for greater youth civic participation (Lim 2013c). This message marked a divergence from the previously understood position that young people held in governmental and media discourses on their participation in Singapore society. While there is a general expectation for a young person to “connect with politics in some shape or form and indeed become politically enfranchised when [he or she] reaches the age of majority” (Skelton 2013, p. 130), the personification of the young Singaporean (or post-65ers generation) has instead been one of great apathy.

In the local media, young Singaporeans were seen to be stricken down with a “*bochap*” virus, a Hokkien dialect term that criticizes young people for their indifferent attitude towards life (Huang 2006; Tarulevicz 2010). Such a perception of young Singaporeans has also featured regularly in government discourse. In 2002, then Prime Minister (PM) Goh Chok Tong shared his concern during his 2002 National Day Rally speech that the coming decade would be a “baptism of fire” that will temper the post-65ers generation (defined as Singapore citizens born after 1965) should their apathetic attitude remain unaddressed. The message was carried forward with the succession of Lee Hsien Loong as Singapore’s Prime Minister in 2004. In his inaugural National Day Rally speech, PM Lee (2004) challenged young people to step forward and play a more active role in Singapore society, voicing a need to:

Give them a say in their lives. . . involve them in the community and in national affairs, to take ownership of the country and of the problems. . . Engage your ideals, your ideas, your energies, build a new generation, build tomorrow’s Singapore. . . Find your own leaders, organise your own solutions, move.

Attempts were made following PM Lee’s (2004) address to tackle the problem through the rolling out of several youth-targeted measures. The first of these measures was the renaming of an existing ministerial body, The Ministry of

Community Development and Sports (MCDS) to the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) in 2004, to make explicit its dedication to youth matters. The appointment of Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, the youngest cabinet minister at that time at the age of 43 years old, was another sign to instill the belief into young Singaporeans that they can make a difference in society (Channel News Asia 2004). In 2012, the ministry was reorganized into three ministerial bodies, with young people's affairs receiving greater attention under the Ministry of Community, Culture and Youth (MCCY).

However, the issue brought forth from the focus group discussion with young Singaporeans, a decade on from PM Goh's assertion, suggests a changing profile of youths in Singapore. Young Singaporeans today have cultivated a desire to participate in society. This is best demonstrated in the two most recent general elections in 2011 and 2015 where analysts highlighted the growing role that young voters, aged between 21 and 43 years old and deemed as more open to political change, are playing in influencing the direction of the country (Leyl 2011; Benner 2015; REACH 2015). Instead, they are now faced with obstacles to participation in the form of constricted socialities, spatialities, and temporalities.

The chapter thus follows from such a premise. Looking at school-going Singapore youth, it analyzes the spatiotemporal challenges faced by them in achieving greater participation in society. The definition of school-going young Singaporeans has intentionally been left undefined as the age to which young people end their phase of education varies significantly in Singapore. Inspired by Percy-Smith's (2010) call for the need to recognize youth participation through the different contexts that they are constructed in, this chapter will analyze young Singaporeans' social, spatial, and temporal negotiations in their everyday settings – namely school, home, and community – and interrogates the lack of (which may be interpreted in absolute terms or in terms of legitimacy and authenticity) participation. It concludes by tracing more recent efforts following “Our Singapore Conversation” to promote civic participation for young Singaporeans and other possibilities for participation among youth in, and of, the future.

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## 2 Focusing on Young People's Participation

In line with their goal of advancing youth voices and agency, research on geographies of young people has paid greater attention to the notion of participation in the past decade. While much theoretical and policy-related analysis on participation has ensued, much less attention has been paid to how these discussions have materialized in practice in young people's lifeworlds. This is important as the practices of young people's participation are diverse and complex.

If children are seen as competent social actors, then they have the right and ability to act as participants. . . However, in any context, how, where and when children should participate is a cultural construction. Their participation thence constructs a particular social practice that in turn can establish the scale and form of children's participation. (Skelton 2007, p. 27)

In particular, Skelton (2012) emphasizes that there has been a lack of work published on young people in Asia. Thus, the chapter serves to fill the void in the literature on geographies of young people, providing a snapshot into the spatio-temporal situation that young people in Singapore face that hinders their participation in society. Uncovering these complexities require attention to the spatiotemporalities and politics of participation. Politics is certainly not a word that is out of the ordinary in the literature on young people's geographies (see Skelton 2013 for review). What is necessarily highlighted for this chapter is recognition that young people are embedded in a web of power relations that involve multiple stakeholders who are critical to their lifeworlds. The politics of young people's participation (or *lack of* participation) that ensues from these relations may take shape in two ways, an official politics concerning that of political institutions or an everyday politics that directly influences the sociospatial negotiations of young people (Skelton 2010). These two spheres of politics are evidently interwoven and subject to change.

While the space of young people's political negotiations has now been well established by geographers, there remains a need to consider their participatory practices, problems, and possibilities. This is not to say that researchers have abandoned the concept of time in their analysis of young people's participation. For example, the debate on young people's positionality as "human beings" and competent social actors as compared to "human becomings" or "adults in waiting" in itself suggests a consideration of their temporal trajectories (Worth 2009). However, attention more explicitly on the interaction between the spatial and temporal presents possibilities for a deeper analysis on the complexities of young people's participation. Hickey and Mohan (2004) highlight three important temporal aspects to participation. First, participation has a historicity that needs to be traced. Second, political processes are overlapping and may unfold at different speeds, thus not taking a linear path as assumed in many developmental discourses. Third, the transformative power of participation lies in critical moments that disrupt a person's seemingly settled cycle of everyday experiences. These three temporal aspects to participation open doors to greater opportunities for analyses on young people's participatory pathways and its effect on their spatialities. At the same time, Massey (2005) asserts that these three dimensions – the spatial, temporal, and political – should not be seen in distinct separates but as co-implicated. As such, young Singapore's participation will be analyzed through the intertwining of spatial, temporal, and sociopolitical relations – at school, at home, and beyond.

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### **3 Beyond a Focus on Academics: The Challenges of Learning to Participate at School**

School can be a time of fun or fear, depending on one's personal experience. Either way, almost every Singapore child is familiar with the school experience; it is an essential part of their lives. (Koh 2013, p. 109)

For a person growing up in Singapore, school is one of the critical spaces and moments that influence his or her lifeworld, as demonstrated above by Koh (2013). As part of a drive to make Singapore a viable economic entity after attaining self-governance from the British in 1959, education became one of the focal points of the ruling government. An intimate link between education and economic development was meted out by the government to its citizens, legitimizing an allocation of around a quarter of the state budget toward education per year in the mid-1960s (Goh and Gopinathan 2008). Today, education comprises 3.1 % of the country's GDP, which is more than many other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (Ministry of Education 2013). At the same time, free universal primary education was provided for all Singaporeans of school-going age. This initiative was reinforced in 2003 when the compulsory education act was implemented, where primary education was made compulsory for all Singaporean children once they reach 6 years old (Ministry of Education 2015). Through the government's continued coupling of education with economic success, Singapore has morphed into an "educational superstar," a term bestowed by Pearson's chief education advisor Michael Barber (Davie 2014). Singapore now ranks third after South Korea and Japan in cognitive skills and educational attainment according to The Learning Curve report published by education firm Pearson (2014). Singapore also emerged top in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment tests in 2014 (Ministry of Education 2014), thus asserting Singapore's reputation as an educational success story internationally.

A majority of students in Singapore move into secondary school education (Grade 7–10 equivalent) and thereafter into a more diverse set of educational pathways that may include junior college, polytechnic, institute of technical education, and/or university education. With greater attention on post-secondary education in recent years, Singapore's higher education scene has seen a wave of expansion. In 2012, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced the addition of two new universities, SIM University (UniSIM) and Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), to the existing four local universities, (National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore Management University (SMU), and Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), at his National Day Rally speech. The move would increase the number of university places to 40 % of each cohort by 2020 from 27 % of each cohort today (AsiaOne 2012). In addition to this, two of its older universities have risen steadily up the world rankings, where the National University of Singapore emerged as Asia's top university in the 2015 Times Higher Education World University Rankings (Davie 2015a), and with both NUS and NTU being placed among the top 15 universities in the world according to the Quacquarelli Symonds rankings for 2015/2016 (Channel NewsAsia 2015). To cope with the fast-developing and evolving scene, the government elected for the first time two full ministers for the Ministry of Education (MOE) after the 2015 general elections, where a ministerial portfolio was carved out that is specifically dedicated to higher education matters. Such a move by the government demonstrates their attention to ensuring that students here receive quality education.

It may seem as if climbing the ladder of academic success has been the sole goal of Singapore's education system in its quest for economic progress. However, the Singapore government has also recognized the value of a more balanced development and has continually restructured its education system to accord greater attention toward enhancing its nonacademic curriculum (Yip et al. 1997). In 1991, the Civics and Moral Education curriculum (CME) was launched. Part of the aim of this curriculum was to cultivate individuals who could "put society before self" (The Straits Times 1990). Through their acknowledgment that "virtue is caught and not taught" (Tan and Chew 2004), the government rolled out the Community Involvement Programme (CIP) in 1997 under the umbrella of National Education (NE) to build social cohesion and instill civic responsibility into students through active participation and involvement in community service (HistorySG 2014). This was in conjunction with a wider shift in Singapore's education system from a concentration on overt teaching of factual information toward a "learning by doing" approach. With such ideas in tow, students were now able to engage in experiential learning participatory activities outside classroom learning requirements. These activities were often facilitated by students' participation in extra-curricular activities (ECAs), a term that was renamed as co-curricular activities (CCAs) in 1999 to send a clear message about MOE's commitment to encouraging young people's participation beyond the classroom (Yip et al. 1997). As stated by Weninger and Kho (2014, p. 618):

What has changed in the past 15 years [of Singapore's educational landscape] is that an additional discourse has appeared that pays increasing attention to students as active participants. . . [An] acknowledgement of the need for students to learn through experience and participation, rather than formal lessons, has intensified in the last 10 years.

Such a means to greater participation among young people has at times been fraught with difficulties. In a 2007 review commissioned by the MOE, NE programs were found to be unevenly implemented by schools, whereby students in some schools felt unexcited, disengaged, and cynical of these programs as they deemed them to be "propaganda" (MOE 2007, p. 4). In particular, the report captured students' desires to "have more say in what they would like to do for NE in school and more avenues to express themselves and to form their own opinions" (MOE 2007, p. 5). The execution of CIP in schools also received criticism for being unable to draw out meaningful participation in community service among young people, where the act of serving the community became either an obligation or serving personal interests such as boosting a student's scholarship opportunities (Kwan 2010; Lien 2010; Lin 2010). Furthermore, Weninger and Kho (2014) argue that NE may only at best be seen as a proxy of participation since it nurtures docile citizens and demarcates what constitutes acceptable civic participation in accordance with governmental ideologies.

On the one hand, NE is a continuation of a disciplinary strategy whose aim is to 'nurture' responsible citizens via regimented participation in socially charitable and morally upright behaviour. But engagement itself needs to be understood as a regulatory mechanism

deployed by the state to control political participation. In other words, the new political rationality of consensus that has supplanted a purely economic pragmatism has necessitated the regulation of the range of legitimate activities that make up participatory politics. (Weninger and Kho 2014, p. 621)

Another hurdle that the NE program has been unable to overcome is sustaining young people's civic participation post-education. Described by Kok (2015) as the "bathtub effect," young Singaporeans who volunteered regularly during the schooling years were found to stop doing so once their career pursuits began in their twenties. All the aforementioned challenges therefore highlight how the space-time of the school has hindered young people from participating meaningfully in society. These challenges faced by Singaporean students as highlighted above concur with Cooke and Kothari's (2001) viewpoint that participatory ideals within institutionalized spaces may instead constrain the possibilities of participation as these participation processes are ritualistically and formulaically undertaken by individuals. Instead, what is needed among Singaporean youth is spatiotemporal pathways that allow for meaningful participation – doing things that young people believe in, that they can make their own decisions and see the task through, and forging long-term connections with their community (cf. Wierenga et al. 2003). Thus, while MOE's intent to offer a more holistic educational experience for Singapore students through a focus on participation is laudable, it is imperative that the practice of participation is constantly reviewed, keeping pace with the changing profile of young people and eliciting meaningful and sustained participation among them.

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#### **4 Home as a Place Where Education Takes Priority**

Young people's participation is greatly molded by parents, and the development of this spirit of participation begins in the home since it is the key physical and emotional setting for the development of young people's lives (cf. Christensen et al. 2000). In their study of civic engagement among American youths, Andolina et al. (2003) found that young people who were raised in homes where someone volunteered were more likely to get involved in volunteering as well. In a similar thread, Ng et al. (2008) study on youth social participation in Singapore found that family environments can both challenge and support Singaporean youths to become active participants in social groups. However, the cultivation of such a conducive space and time for the development of participation is lacking in Singapore as many parents mold the home to be an extension of school. Sharma (2013) argues that parents in Asia (including those in Singapore) suffer from "education fever," a culture of placing great emphasis on children's education to the extent of sacrificing their own space, time, and money in hopes for a better future for their children. In Singapore's case, the "education fever" among parents stems from a wider emphasis on meritocracy as well as educational credentials by the government to achieve social mobility (cf. Lim 2013b). Kwan-Terry (1991) also highlights that Singaporean parents put pressure on their children to perform academically for selfish reasons,



enabling them to bask in the triumph of their children's success. For these reasons, parents are willing to sacrifice their annual leave from work or, to a more extreme extent, quit their jobs to stay at home to supervise their children before major examinations. Their commitment to helping their children achieve academic success has led to a growing phenomenon of parents going for extra lessons in their own time. This may take the form of full-day workshops or weekly lessons organized either by schools or private tuition centers (Toms 2015).

It may be argued that parents are not the only people that gnaw into young people's time at home. Schools also have a part to play in the charge based on the amount of homework given to students. According to the results from a questionnaire conducted in 2012 for the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment, Singapore was ranked third in terms of the longest amount of time spent on homework among 15-year-olds at 9.4 h a week, losing only to students in Shanghai and Russia at 13.8 and 9.7 h a week respectively, and significantly higher than the global average of 5 h per week (Teng 2014). The concern over too much homework being given to Singapore students came to light in a parliamentary speech by Member of Parliament (MP) Lim Biow Chuan in 2013, where he lamented the amount of homework and stress that students face from school and advocated that students "be given time and space to relax and to appreciate other aspects of life" (Lim 2013a). The issue was once again resurfaced in a follow-up parliamentary speech by MP Lim, where he suggested a distinction between the space-times of home and school for students through ensuring that work given by teachers are finished within official school hours for the following reasons:

Sometimes, the child is given so much homework that he has to slog late into the night just to finish the work. So parents fear that even as they . . . set aside time for their children, it is their children who do not have time for them anymore. I am concerned that in our desire to develop children holistically, we may inadvertently take away their childhood. (Lim 2014)

Thus, the amount of (home)workload that students have to grapple with on a weekly basis thus impedes their ability to participate in school-related participatory routes such as CCAs, all the more so for participatory opportunities outside of school (Wong 2012a).

However, relieving young people from homework may not free them up for more participatory opportunities if parents find other routes to pursue academic endeavors for their children. One way in which Singaporean parents have kept their children preoccupied with their studies is through the use of assessment books. At the 2012 Ministry of Education Work Plan Seminar, then Minister of Education Heng Swee Keat highlighted how the largest sections in Singaporean bookshops were for assessment books (Heng 2012). It is thus unsurprising to find assessment books in Singapore's bestseller list (e.g., see Yong 2015). One type of assessment book most commonly used by Singaporean students is the TYS (an abbreviation commonly used among students that refers to 10-year series), a compilation of questions from the national examinations over the past 10 years with a set of model answers (Tan 2009). Often found to be sold out at bookstores months before the examination dates,

the TYS has become ingrained into the educational landscape to the extent that teachers, parents, and students in Singapore swear by these books as the most effective form of examination preparation (Yang 2015). A new trend gaining popularity among both parents and students are e-assessment (or digitized assessment) books (Moorthy and Choo 2013; Liang 2015). While such advancements make learning more easily accessible to both parents and students, it preoccupies students with academic endeavors not only at home, but beyond the home space and therefore further limiting what little time and space that young people have to participate in society more widely.

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## 5 Beyond Home and School: Tuition Centers, Enrichment Activities, and Social Participation

Even on occasions when a Singapore youth heads out of the home, it may still be for academic rather than participatory opportunities. A key space that is frequented by youths in Singapore is the tuition center. As termed by Wong (2012), Singapore has become a “tuition nation”. While previously seen as an added activity for weaker students, the industry has expanded rapidly through targeting a wider profile of young people, extending its services to children as young as preschoolers (Ng 2012b; Philomin 2014; Toh et al. 2012) and students of high academic abilities (Teng and Lee 2014). Through targeting a wider array of Singaporean students, private tuition has grown into a billion dollar industry (Tan 2014). The practice of tuition may also further blur the boundaries between home and school as parents enlist private teachers to conduct tuition lessons in their homes. The decision to participate in private tuition remains greatly influenced by parents. A recent poll conducted by the national newspaper The Straits Times indicated that seven out of ten parents enrolled their children in extra classes so as to stay ahead of the paper chase (Davie 2015b). This is despite parents feeling less confident in the effectiveness of tuition in increasing the academic performance of their children. What continues to encourage Singaporean parents to enroll their children in tuition is a culture of “*kiasu*-ism” – a colloquial Hokkien term that signifies a fear of losing or, in this context, parents’ fear of their children losing out to other students in terms of academic achievements (Heng 2013). As such, parents have increased their average household expenditure on tuition from S\$54.70 in 2004 to S\$79.90 a month today (Tan 2014).

Besides tuition, parents in Singapore may sign their children up for enrichment activities with whatever leftover free time available, spanning across a wide selection that includes both the arts (speech and drama, music, art, dance) and sports (soccer, swimming, and taekwondo are some examples). Research on young people’s participation in enrichment activities in the Global North highlights how such activities have the ability to cultivate young people into competent social actors (cf. Holloway 2014). However, in Singapore’s situation, the verdict is still out on whether these activities have mobilized greater social participation among youths. On the one hand, analysts argue that these activities have the potential to relieve stress from

the pressure-cooker environment that young Singaporeans are exposed to and encourage social interaction among youths beyond the sphere of school (Ng 2013). However, I argue that the latter argument can also be made for tuition conducted in group settings albeit with less focus on academic goals. Furthermore, it is a cause of concern if parents encourage their kids to participate in these activities if they are a mere extension of their obsession over scholastic goals (Tee 2015). Possessing thoughts of building a sterling resume out of not only their child's participation, but *achievement* in these activities makes them fall prey to the criticisms made earlier about both the existing "examination culture" among society and the existing CCA system in schools. Thus, more interrogation is needed into this area before a judgment may be made on whether enrichment activities support or skew the possibilities of meaningful participation among young Singaporeans.

The geographies of "hanging out" for youths in Singapore also present contradictions that impede participation as many of them head out to public spaces to study rather than for play. The popular spaces of choice among students here are fast-food outlets and cafes, having been featured from time to time in news reports as adults complain about their seat-hogging behavior in these public spaces (cf. Chen 2009; Abu Baker 2014). In Skelton and Valentine's (1998, p. 7) introduction of *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Culture*, the authors describe the practice of hanging out among youths as a "form of youth resistance to adult power". Furthermore, Skelton (2009) also emphasizes the capability how hanging out creates a moment of play, which counteracts the need to be productive that is fundamental to spaces of school and work. Adapted to the case of Singapore, studying in public spaces for youth may be seen as an act of resistance as they avoid the surveillance of their parents or teachers should they study in the space of the home or school, respectively. As reported by Ng and Chai (2014), being in the space of public food outlets relieves students from the pressurized environments that the school and home bring. It also acts as a space and time for interaction and establishing community bonds among youths (Abu Baker 2014). However, to describe these places as nuclei for participation is inappropriate as the way in which young Singaporeans use the space provide little respite from school and (home)work since studying forms the central activity that these youths partake in. Thus, hanging out becomes a mere reification of Singapore society's fixation on academic excellence rather than paving routes for participatory development.

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## 6 Building Public Spaces for Meaningful Participation? \*SCAPE and the Youth Park

Beyond the space of the school, the establishment of the National Youth Council (NYC) in 1989 was the government's attempt to create a platform that would "connect with Singaporean youths so that they are able to bring about positive change" (Ho 2013). NYC has recognized the importance of increasing youth participation in Singapore, as seen through its tracking of Singaporean youths' social participation in its regularly published report on youth matters titled *YOUTH.sg: The*

*State of Youth in Singapore* since its inception in 2003 (to date, there have been four editions published in 2003, 2006, 2010, and 2014). In its 2014 report, NYC (2015, p. 05) asserted that “regular and sustained social participation among youths are crucial to enable youths to bridge diverse social groups and foster mutual understanding.” As such, the organization positioned itself as an “advocate, enabler and partner of youths and youth organisations” (Ho 2013). Many initiatives were introduced to promote youth participation in society. Local and international programs including expeditions, internships, voluntary projects, discussion platforms, and a festival for youths were organized to champion youth engagement. An online resource portal was also established to encourage research on youth matters in Singapore. Specific focus was given to youth participation in Singapore for its 2012 edition of *Youth Scope*, the organization’s online publication on youth research, where Ng (2012a) affirmed the potential of youth participation to benefit larger society. Furthermore, grants and awards were given to exemplary youth who were trailblazers in promoting youth participation. While the diversity of platforms that have been put in place by NYC is commendable, the extent to which meaningful youth participation has been achieved through these platforms is a matter that needs to be examined further. As suggested by Ng (2012a, p. 20), many of these beneficiaries of NYC’s programs and awards may have been “mere participants, with little or no say in how things are done [and with] only a few shining stars calling the shots” (Ng 2012a, p. 20).

Another direction that was pursued by NYC to encourage youth participation was the creation of spaces for youth interaction that were carved out of Singapore’s urban landscape. I will be focusing on three of these spaces, namely, the Youth Park, skate parks, and \*SCAPE building. Built at a cost of S\$8.8 million, the Youth Park was officially opened in 1996 (Fig. 1). Located in the heart of Singapore, the park was seen as a testament to the government’s commitment to youth matters as



**Fig. 1** Youth Park on a Friday evening (Images taken by Jared Wong)



**Fig. 2** Somerset Skate Park on a Friday evening (Images taken by Jared Wong)

constructing the park on prime land that is adjacent to Orchard Road, Singapore's shopping district, went against economic logic. However, the park demonstrated a material manifestation of governmental efforts to attract young Singaporeans to participate in youth-focused activities since Orchard Road was deemed as a popular place for them to hang out (Lee 1996).

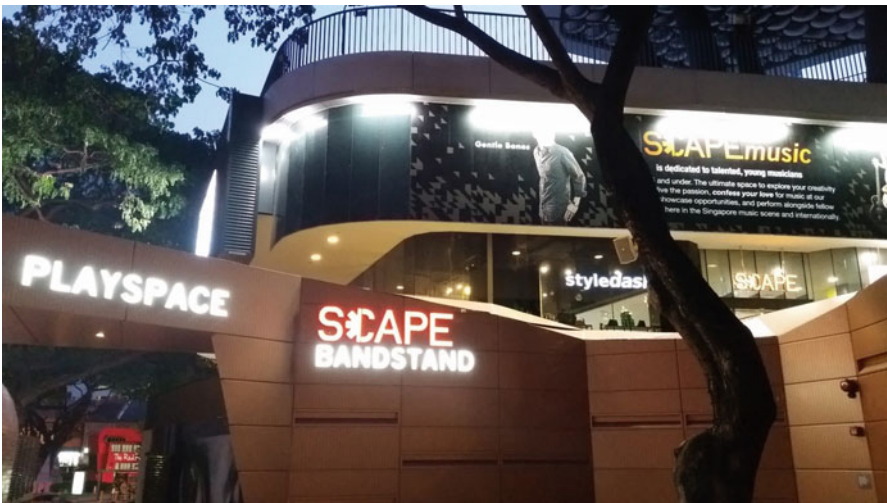
Following its opening, the site was expanded on two occasions. A skate park was added in 2006, the largest skating court in Singapore at the time for young people passionate about extreme sports (Fig. 2). The popularity of the skate park in Somerset soon led to the rolling out of such spaces across various neighbourhoods Singapore. In addition to this, a five-story youth lifestyle complex named \*SCAPE was built across the street from the youth park in 2010 (Fig. 3). The building boasts facilities such as a broadcast station, recording studio, art gallery, and performance theater and hopes to harness the creative energy of young Singaporeans (Fig. 4, see also Loh 2010). The building was an emblem of the government's shift toward taking heed of young Singaporeans' voices more seriously as \*SCAPE was pitched as a space conceived by youth 10 years before its opening (Goh 2014).

However, these spaces failed to generate the hype among youths that NYC had hoped. In Skelton and Hamed's (2011) article on young people's negotiations around public spaces in Singapore, a survey conducted among 80 Singaporean youth found the youth park to be the least used public space for hanging out. One of the reasons that may deter young people from using the park is the presence of closed-circuit televisions and signs in the park that attempts to control the activities that they are allowed to do in the space (Fig. 5). Such surveillance tools, according to Valentine et al. (1998), are counterproductive to the goals of participation, instead highlighting the distrust of youths by society and forming an anxiety among youths that prevents them from using the space.



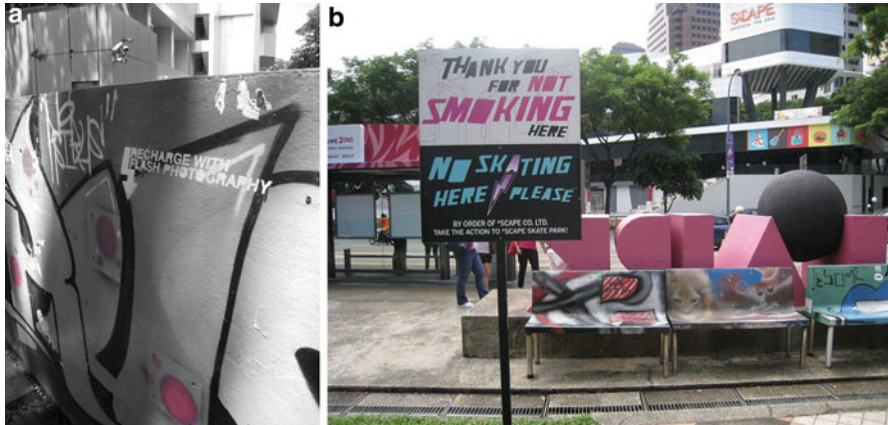


**Fig. 3** \*SCAPE building, a multi-purpose youth facility that is located across the Youth Park (Images taken by Jared Wong)

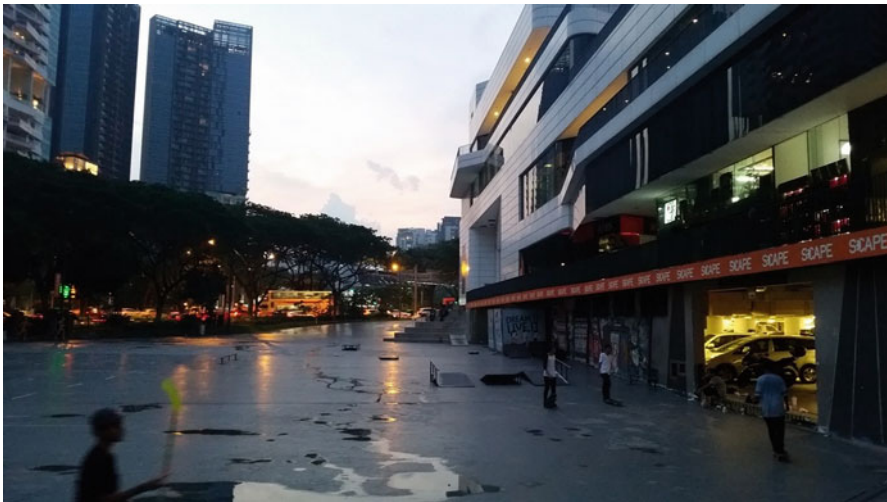


**Fig. 4** Some of the facilities found at \*SCAPE (Images taken by Jared Wong)

While the Somerset Skate Park still remains a popular hangout, the same cannot be said for the other skate parks that dot the Singaporean urban landscape. According to Teo (2011), many of these parks are imbued with negative perceptions due to their small sizes, lack of amenities, poor maintenance, and, most importantly, lacking input from the users themselves. The hype over \*SCAPE has also waned



**Fig. 5** Closed-circuit cameras and signs that are found around the Youth Park which may deter young Singaporeans from frequenting the space (Images taken by Jared Wong)



**Fig. 6** Use of youth community space in front of \*SCAPE on a Friday evening (Images taken by Jared Wong)

significantly and in a fairly short period after its opening, with average monthly footfall hovering at around 440,000 people, a number that falls short of the estimated one million people that malls around the vicinity are able to attract (Tai 2015, see also Fig. 6). A common thread that binds the underwhelming use of these spaces is the inability of NYC in keeping them apace with young people's needs and desires, a point which may be overcome if young people were encouraged to have a greater say beyond the time of opening these spaces.

## 7 Conclusion: Empowering Youths' Place(s) as We Move Forward

Participation is a fundamental right, and, as evinced in the introduction of this chapter, it is a right that young Singaporeans have grown to desire. However, this chapter has also demonstrated that young Singaporeans are beset with a multitude of spatial, temporal, and political challenges in trying to achieve meaningful participation. The space-times that this chapter has looked at – school, home, and public spaces – are integral to young people's lifeworlds as they set the scene where the practice of participation may be materialized and/or cultivated. Yet, the pathway to participation in these space-times for young people remains tangled in a matrix of power involving other powerful actors such as governmental agencies and family, who may directly or indirectly assert their control against granting young people the time and space to participate in society. By looking at the “goings-on” between these actors and spaces-times, we are thus able to move away from static time slices and spatial emplacements that policy makers have constantly drawn upon in advancing developmental discourses, and open up participatory pathways for young people (Aitken et al. 2007, p. 5).

The aim of this chapter is by no means trying to discredit the roles that other actors have played in increasing possibilities for young people's participation. In fact, national platforms such as “Our Singapore Conversation” instill a sense into youths that their voices are being heard and thus may empower them to participate in society with greater eagerness and confidence of their ability to effect change. Several governmental bodies mentioned have also recognized that young people's obstacle to participation is not unified and singular. One of these organizations has been MOE. To ensure more active and meaningful participatory opportunities in school, several of the schemes listed above have been reviewed and refined. MOE has renamed CME and CIP to Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) and Values in Action (VIA), respectively, and revised each of these programs' objectives and syllabuses in a bid to place greater emphasis on connecting students with the community and how they have a power to make a difference (Channel NewsAsia 2012). Ex-Minister of Education Heng Swee Keat also acknowledged the weaknesses of the current CCA system and has promised a review to be conducted on the current grading system used to award CCA points so that participation is viewed in a more holistic and balanced manner rather than its current focus on achievements throughout their educational journey (Mokhtar 2011).

The amount of time that Singapore students have to spend on homework, an issue that had been a concern brought forth by Singaporean parents, has also received the attention of MOE. To tackle the problem, Minister Heng revealed in 2014 that all schools in Singapore have put into effect a policy that monitors and regulates the amount of homework being allocated to students, reminding teachers about the objectives of homework and the need to give students time “to bond with family members, to rest and to pursue hobbies and other social activities” (Channel NewsAsia 2014). Alongside changes to students' (home)workload, a “teach less, learn more” policy that was conceived by MOE in 2005 has led to as much as a 20 %



reduction of syllabus content across academic subjects and a shift away from Singapore's obsession with a cramming, and examination, culture (Ng 2015).

Other governmental bodies have also acknowledged the need to adapt initiatives to suit the needs of an ever-changing profile of Singaporean youth. In 2014, NYC was granted more autonomy from its parent organization MCCY so that it may better fulfill its roles of engaging youths and connecting them with community and other governmental organizations (Goy 2014). Alongside the restructuring of the organization, it was announced by MCCY that \*SCAPE would undergo a makeover so that the space stays relevant to young Singaporeans. The changes at the site will include an addition of a bandstand for music performances, an indoor gallery, and a change of tenants to shops that are popular among Singaporean youth (Tai 2015). Thus, the aforementioned adjustments made to policies and places for young Singaporeans all suggest a shift in governmental efforts toward bottom-up approaches that will sensitize people to youth issues that "need action, as a way [for them] to actively take part in developmental processes, as a way to foster dialogue between different stakeholders and influence decision making, and as a right to influence policy making and processes" (Lund 2007, p. 133). However, a more nuanced assessment of the overall effectiveness of these changes may only be made in due time once these strategies have either been rolled out fully or have gained traction in society. More also needs to be done to on the part of government bodies to ensure that young people participate not only in terms of merely expressing their views, but are fully involved in various phases of the decision-making process. Furthermore, change is not only a reality faced by young people but society in general. With the conclusion of the 2015 general election and the election of new ministers into these youth-related governmental agencies, it remains to be seen how the aforesaid initiatives will continue to evolve and where young people will fit in their broader considerations.

Furthermore, the developmental discourse that limits young people's participatory potential is held not only by the government but also parents. Even with the shift in MOE's direction toward a "teach less, learn more" ideal and advocacy for a better-rounded model of education having been implemented for a decade, parents continue to hold onto traditional achievement-driven expectations. As such, parents continue to turn to other educational platforms such as tuition and enrichment classes despite MOE's efforts to alleviate young people's preoccupation with school. The argument launched by Singaporean parents to justify their actions persists as they believe that, while the day-to-day curriculum has evolved, the examination structure remains fixed for their children (Ng 2012c). The dominance that parents have over their children inevitably leads to the disciplining of young people to accept their existing realities and sharing similar attitudes as their parents that education takes priority over participation opportunities (Woo 2008). This is further elaborated by Chua and Tan (1999), who suggest that the situation is more prevalent for Asian families as youth tend to be more submissive to directive from their parents. Therefore, while the government has made progress in changing its perceptions on young people, effecting more tangible means to participation among them will require other important actors in their lives such as parents to share in these ideals to inculcate a spirit of participation among youths.

And, at the heart of it all, what is perhaps most necessary to encourage participation in Singapore is less direction on the part of the state and parents for young people to *become* productive citizens, and more action on the part of young people to *be* themselves. To make space for young people to discover their own participatory trajectories, time is of the essence. As seen in the United Nations' 2003 World Youth Report, a desire to participate is negligible if young people are not accorded leisure time. The report argues that the use of terminologies such as "leisure" and "play" has received a bad reputation as it implies a casualness of purpose and practice. However, through play during leisure time, young people are given the freedom to explore the endless possibilities for more constructive forms of participation to be forged without the baggage of more previously formulaic and institutionalized means (United Nations 2004). Thus, democratizing young Singaporeans' time away from the rigors of school and work (and any forms of extensions of them) empowers these youths to more fully realize their participatory potential. Only then will they be able to carve pathways of participation that is not only different but more promising than what currently exists.

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## Contents

1	Introduction .....	410
2	Emotional Geographies, Gender, and "Nature" .....	411
3	Cohabitation: Birds, Squirrels, Girls, and Boys .....	414
4	Media, Children, Nature, and Emotions .....	417
4.1	Social Relations and Identities in <i>My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic</i> .....	419
4.2	Social Relations and Identities in <i>Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles</i> .....	422
4.3	Environment and Aesthetic Modalities in <i>My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic</i> . .	423
4.4	Environment and Aesthetics in <i>Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles</i> .....	423
5	Conclusion: Affective Atmospheres, Media Landscapes, Children, and Nature .....	424
	References .....	426

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## Abstract

This chapter tells the story of a vine, a girl, a boy, birds, squirrels, and an assortment of other natures dwelling in one house in the city. I attempt to make sense of a particular event implicating these myriad actors by examining the gendered and generational complexities of urban natures. Drawing on emotional geographies, this chapter shows how children's everyday relations with urban natures are always gendered and very emotional. More specifically, the chapter explores how a child's understanding and emotional-material experiences of nature are shaped significantly from birth by media. In this regard, the chapter examines the role of TV shows and literature and the ways in which they influence children's understanding and material experiences of urban natures. As studies in emotion and affect have argued, emotions are not purely biological but

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are always shaped by a multiplicity of interactions, relations, experiences, and “affects.” Thus, the assumption that children have a close connection to “nature” cannot be understood as innate and biological. Because emotions are psychosocial, children are taught which emotions are “proper” and which are not “appropriate” according to their gender. This does not mean that children do not experience a range of emotions and feelings, but they learn which to express (and when). The chapter argues that children’s film and literature plays an important role in shaping how children understand, interact with, and relate to nature, focusing in particular on urban natures.

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**Keywords**

Children • Nature • Cities • Urban • Emotions • Gender • Television media • Animals

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## 1 Introduction

This chapter tells the story of a vine, a girl, a boy, birds, squirrels, and an assortment of other natures dwelling in one house in a North American city. It attempts to make sense of a particular event implicating these myriad actors by examining the gendered and generational complexities of urban natures. In particular, the chapter explores the emotional geographies of children’s everyday relations with urban natures, starting with the premise that such relations are always gendered, sexed, and very emotional. Moreover, children’s understanding and emotional-material experiences of nature have a diverse set of influences from birth, including parents, siblings, media, school, caregivers, and playmates. This chapter examines the role of media, in particular children’s television shows, in shaping material and emotional relations with urban “natures.” The aim of the chapter is twofold. First, it contributes to research challenging the problematic assumption that children and nature are intrinsically connected. Almost 15 years ago, Aitken (2001, p. 36) pointed out:

young people are still thought to be naturally closer to nature with little thought to how childhood is constructed as closer to nature. Part of that construction, of course, comes from powerful associations with other media besides journalistic texts that point to the ways that children and nature are jointly commodified and consumed.

Despite Aitken’s argument, there remains in most literature on children and nature an underlying assumption that children are innately connected to nature. The “Children and Nature Movement” (Louv 2008) and similar campaigns seek to *reconnect* children to nature. The argument is that children are being distanced from their natural connection to nature, what Louv diagnose as “nature deficit disorder.” While such movements have the potential to be very beneficial to efforts to make cities more sustainable (e.g., improving access to green spaces), there is little critical reflection on how children’s relationship to nature is constructed as



gendered and culturally specific. Research has pointed out the ways in which girls and boys interact and play in nature differently (Linzmayr and Halpenny 2014; O'Brien 2009; Skår and Krogh 2009), but few analyze such gendered play in nature as socially constructed). By not recognizing or paying attention to gendered differences in children's relations with nature, such research implicitly shows how gendered relations with nature are "natural." Moreover, naturalizing children's relationship with "nature" fails to challenge the dominant and problematic understandings of and relations to nature.

In this regard, the second aim of the chapter is to show how children's experiences and interactions with nature are shaped socially and culturally, especially their emotional ways of knowing nature. The socio-natural interactions presented in children's TV shows and films are gendered and heteronormative (Aitken 2001; Gauntlett 2008; Skelton and Valentine 1998) and reify dominant gendered, sexual, and cultural human-nature relations. Such representations manifest materially and emotionally in children's everyday interactions with "natures." Drawing on emotional geographies, this chapter illustrates this by focusing on one particular question: how do media shape children's understanding and emotional-material experiences of (urbanized) nature? Using the story of birds, squirrels, and two children inhabiting one house, the chapter explores the emotional geographies of children and urban natures. In this regard, the chapter responds to Kraftl's (2013) call to develop a "more-than-social" emotional geography of childhood.

The chapter begins by discussing emotional geographies, focusing in particular on work in feminist and children's geographies. Following this, the chapter recounts an event that took place in the summer of 2013 in Montréal, Québec, and examines the human-nature relations and gendered emotions in the story. It then makes links between the emotions and relations in the story and popular children's media to make sense of how children's media landscape shapes everyday emotions of dwelling with socio-natural assemblages in the city, pointing out the materiality of emotions.

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## 2 Emotional Geographies, Gender, and "Nature"

Feminist and social geography have been at the forefront of a growing recognition in the social sciences that emotions shape the ways in which people produce everyday lives and spaces. Indeed, feminist geographers were some of the first to pay attention to the importance of emotional ways of knowing. In the 1980s (and even more so in the early 1990s), feminist geographers began to look at gendered experiences of city spaces through women's sense of fear and safety (Bondi 2009). This research, however, was not necessarily framed as the study of emotions. It was not until the last decade that human geographers began to position emotions as serious aspects of experiences and productions of space. There are now a wide range of topics through which geographers explore the intersections of emotions, space, and place – from home and family (Blunt and Dowling 2006), death and mourning (Milligan et al. 2005), consumption (Jayne et al. 2010), and migration



(Conradson and McKay 2007; Gorman-Murray 2009) to nature (Sultana 2011) and children and young people (Blazek and Windram-Geddes 2013; Holt et al. 2013; Power et al. 2014). Such work is part of a larger engagement within the social sciences and humanities that takes seriously the complexity of emotions and their role in shaping social, cultural, and economic life.

Within geography, feminist geographers were the first to consider emotions as a critical aspect in creating a more nuanced understanding of everyday life and space. They did this through two key related concerns: gendered experiences of space and the (gendered/sexed) space of the body. This work called attention to how women's movement in and through space is shaped significantly by emotions, such as fear, which is felt because of and through the (gendered) body. As (Davidson and Milligan 2004) point out "our . . . most immediate and intimately *felt* geography is the body, the site of emotional experience and expression *par excellence*. Emotions, to be sure, *take place* within and around this closest of spatial scales" (2004, p. 523). Because emotions are felt through the body, they are intricately linked to the senses. Emotions are not, however, theorized in opposition to reason or rationality. Rather, emotion and reason are, Bondi explains, "mutually interwoven with one another. . . . [R]eason is in fact never emotion free. Conversely, emotion is never wholly without reason" (2009, p. 448). In this way, knowledge is produced through *both* reason and emotion, instead of just through reason and rational thought, which has been the dominant perception of knowledge production. Bondi (2009) reminds us that feelings and bodies are integral to our knowledge of the world and that it is often emotions that inspire curiosity and lead to the expansion or creation of new knowledge. This is particularly relevant in relation to children's emotional geographies, which are discussed further on.

If emotions and reason are intertwined and always in relation, deciphering what counts as emotional responses becomes complicated. In general, emotions are understood in as nameable states such as happiness, sadness, shame, anger, pride, etc. Studies in emotion and affect have argued that emotions are not purely biological but are always shaped by a multiplicity of interactions, relations, experiences, and "affects" (Bondi 2005). Emotions are psychosocial and socially embedded rather than biological or physiological (Dewsbury 2009; Pile 2010). The concept of affect is often used to describe how emotions materialize, or as Thein explains, "affect is used to describe (in both the communicative and literal sense) the motion of emotion" (2005, p. 451). In this regard, affect is discussed in relation to sources of affect or affectual spaces that shape and give rise to particular sensual and emotional experiences (Anderson 2004; Tolia-Kelly 2006; Thrift 2004). Emotions are understood as subjective feelings about and, in relation to, sources of affect, which are always spatial, that is, the places, spaces, landscapes, and environments that individuals live, work, play, and move in (Bondi 2009; Davidson and Milligan 2004; Davidson et al. 2005).

Work on emotions in children's geographies has in many ways mirrored feminist geography, although there are far fewer studies in the former. Children's Geographers have called attention to how emotions shape the way that children experience and produce their lived spaces. For example, research has paid attention to

children's sense of fears in everyday life (Nayak 2003; Pain et al. 2010). Scholars have also explored children and youth's sense of belonging, most notably immigrant children (den Besten 2010). There has also been research that links adult and children's worlds. Brown (2011) explores youth's desire for adulthood. Jones (2008) and Philo (2003) explore the ways in which children are "othered" in relation to adult emotions of nostalgia for childhood. This work also engages with nonrepresentational theory, uncovering the problematics of representing children (Jones 2013). There has also been much discussion on the problems of doing research with children and the emotions involved (Kraftl 2013). Indeed, the practice of doing research with children often involves approaches that involve emotional engagements, for example, asking children to draw how they *feel* about their neighborhood or play spaces (den Besten 2010). There is thus a dual concern in children's emotional geographies – how are children's emotions represented and how are children themselves represented?

Because emotions are psychosocial, children are taught which emotions are "proper" and which are not "appropriate." This does not mean that children do not experience a range of emotions and feeling, just that they learn which to express, when, and in what spaces, similar to adults. Because we learn which emotions to represent, many geographers suggest that we need "to engage with what people do and feel rather than with what people say they do and feel and therefore with emotions rather than with narrations of emotion" (e.g., what we say we feel). Thus, there is a draw toward nonrepresentational practices (closely linked to affect) on the nonverbal, embodied practices through which emotion is expressed. However, paying attention to expressed emotions reveals much about how children are socialized into particular ways of being, especially related to gender and sexuality. What emotions do girls tend to express in which time and spaces as compared to boys? And what sorts of emotions emerge through different relations with other people, as well as other beings and things?

Emotional relations with the more-than-social aspects of everyday life have been little explored in children's geographies, as Kraftl (2013) and Ryan (2012) point out. There has been some work in human-geography environment on emotions. Sultana (2011, p. 171), for example, examines how issues of access to water engender a range of emotions, from "the joys and relief of having safe potable water" to the "pain, fear, despair, conflicts, and overall sufferings for and from water." She pays particular attention to the gendered differences in emotional attachments to water access. Robbins (2007) also explores emotional attachments to a particular "nature": the suburban lawn. He describes the emotional attachment people have to lawns, although he does not explore this in great depth nor does he engage with emotional geographies. However, he does show how people's attachment to lawns is shaped and maintained in part by desires. Both Sultana and Robbins point toward the politics of emotional ways of knowing "natures," whether these are lawns, water, trees, or, in the case of the present chapter, urban animals.

Exploring children's emotion geographies of nature has the potential to reify already problematic notions about children and nature. There is an assumption that children and nature are intrinsically connected; that children have a natural affinity

or attachment to nature (Aitken 2001; Louv 2008; Taylor 2013). In this sense, children are placed on the emotional side of the emotion/reason binary alongside nature, which is contra culture (human, male). Thus, exploring the emotion geographies of children and nature has the potential to fall into a binary trap. Yet paying attention to children's "tangible manifestations" of affect in relation to natures can reveal the complexities of interactions, experiences, and knowledge (Dewsbury 2009, p. 23). Just as emotions are not innate and biological, neither is a child's relation to nature. Indeed, their understanding and ways of interacting with nature are mediated by a diversity of social-material influences. In this sense, understandings of gender, sexuality, race, and class shape children's relations to/with nature. For example, females are still charged with the emotional work of caring for nature, especially that nature which is considered more fragile. But care for larger nature (parks, large animals) is the domain of men. Nature is gendered. And popular media – film, TV shows, books – for children support this construction. Aitken (2001) has discussed the ways in which children are made to consume nature. The remainder of this chapter explores the emotional aspects of children's (gendered) consumption of and interactions with urban nature through one particular event and examines the links with children's contemporary media landscapes.

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### 3 Cohabitation: Birds, Squirrels, Girls, and Boys

This story is based on a series of events that took place in a home in Montréal, Canada. During the summer of 2013, the back of the house in this story was covered with ivy. The vine served as habitat for at least a dozen birds, mainly sparrows and wrens. In addition to the many birds living on the outside wall, there were also two children inhabiting the house: a 4-year-old girl and a 6-year-old boy. The girl, Chloe, lived in the upper apartment with her family and the boy, Antoine, lived with his family below. The vine and birds fascinated Chloe. She would sit on the deck and watch the birds fly in and out, using binoculars to find their nests in the vines. In the evening, the bats flew in and around the vine (the bats may have also inhabited the vine during the day as it was well shaded). One day Chloe commented that it was very cool to have bird apartments on the building. The cohabitation with these birds became lessons for learning not only about ecology but also about difference.

The new baby birds enthralled Chloe, and she had a desire to identify with them. She would put special bowls of seeds out for them and get frustrated by their inability to share with each other (why can't their mom or dad teach them how to share, she wondered). Chloe quizzed her mother about birds: Did they have families? How do you differentiate between male and female birds? Did the baby birds attend daycare and kindergarten? Did they fly to the park to play like she did? Do they tell stories at bedtime? What time did they go to bed? Why did they get up so early? etc. While exasperating, her questions were important for her to understand difference and similarities. From the start she identified, to a certain extent, with the birds – they lived in the same house! And she wanted to find more ways that she and the birds were the same. She had a desire to see similarities rather than

differences. At the core of her quest for similarities was a desire *not* to form boundaries or perhaps to create categories to understand difference (as per Strathern 1988), making sure that she could cross over any boundaries.

Unfortunately, at the end of the summer, the owner of the building (the 6-year-old boy's father) decided that he was tired of the bird poop on the basement stairs and flowerbeds. So one weekend he and his son, Antoine, started cutting down the vines at the base. The son was very excited; he cheered his dad on, yelling for the birds to go back to the trees where they belong. Chloe watched in horror as the birds fled very quickly from the vine (it was eerily similar to scenes from Hitchcock's *The Birds*). She did not yell at the owner to stop but stood on our balcony shocked. He was destroying the bird's home. Then she asked a flurry of questions: Where would they go? Can they live with us? Can we plant vines in our kitchen? She was confused because she thought the bird poop was good for the plants below (she had been told about the usefulness of bird poop (guano) as fertilizer and how people at one time had fought over it), so why did the landlord think it was bad? Chloe's parents spent the afternoon figuring out how best to explain concepts of private property, a desire for particular aesthetics, and nature "out of place" in cities (Douglas 1966).

Later that week, Chloe approached Antoine and asked him directly why he destroyed the bird's home and didn't he know that they need homes too. Antoine replied equally directly that birds can find another home in trees where they belong, not on human buildings. Anyway, he sneered, birds are girly. The exchange prompted even more questions, now around whether certain animals were for girls and others for boys and what it meant to be girly. It also brought into this "event" another coinhabitant: Chippy (as named by Chloe), the squirrel who inhabits two trees, one in the front yard of the duplex and the other in the neighbor's front yard. Chippy travels between his/her two homes via the telephone and electric cables. If birds were girly, Chloe wondered, what about squirrels? Was Chippy a boy or a girl? Did the birds really find homes in a tree? Can we plant a new vine next summer so they can be our neighbors again?

Chloe's questions and the conversation between her and Antoine illustrate the complex culture-nature questions at the heart of dwelling in the city. The building and the ecologies that surround it are the site of many habitats (human and nonhuman). Moreover, the exchange between Chloe and Antoine illustrates the ways in which constructions of gender influence how humans relate to, experience, and understand nature. Paying attention to the emotional reactions to the bird apartment and its destruction helps to make sense of Chloe and Antoine's experiences of dwelling with birds, squirrels, and many other urban natures. In the story, there are different emotional reactions to the bird apartment: frustration and anger (at the work to remove bird poop) in the owner and his emotional performance of chopping the vine; Antoine's elation at seeing his father destroy out of place, "girly" nature; and Chloe's, at first joy and fascination with the apartment, then sadness and fear. The story illustrates well what Peake and Reiker (2013) note: the material practices of producing urban places often have profound emotional reverberations. Moreover, the story shows how these practices are always more than

human. Humans, birds, squirrels, and plants are all in the process of dwelling and as such are intertwined in the emotions of everyday life (Hitchings 2003; Lorimer 2007).

Chloe's feelings of anger and confusion, for example, generated a new set of questions about nature, gender, and dwelling. As noted above, emotions are often the source of knowledge production (Bondi 2009). Chloe's query as to whether nature really was gendered – is there really a boy nature and a girl nature – gives rise to further questions around why and how Antoine assumed birds and squirrels are for the girls? Children's understanding and experiences of nature are shaped from birth by parents, siblings, media, school, caregivers, playmates, etc. For example, how are children made aware of certain natures (by parents, etc.)? What natures get emphasized in walks, stories, etc.? What sorts of intimate natures are encouraged or discouraged? These are critical moments in the everyday patterns of social reproduction that are overlooked in human-environment geography and to a certain extent in children's geographies.

Children's understanding of and relation to nature are also shaped by their access to different natures: playgrounds in green space, playgrounds outside green space, the street, backyards, school yards, the house, etc. But what sorts of urban natures are in and around dwelling? There are many psychologists and child development specialists/educators who argue that increased exposure to nature creates increased environmental awareness – a development of caring toward the environment. But in the growing New Nature Movement, the question arises: a better relation with what sorts of "natures"? To go back to the story, the landlord and his family have a cottage in the Eastern Townships an hour outside of Montreal. Every weekend, they leave the city to, in the words of the landlord, give their children exposure to nature. This is not uncommon for many upper-middle and upper class Montreal families (and other cities in Canada and the US). But what does the act of leaving the city to experience nature reinforce in children and their understandings and experiences of urban nature? Considering the destruction of the bird apartment, for the landlord an urban home should not have the same relation with nature as their cottage – thus the frustration and anger at the birds living in the vine. For him, the vine should serve only an aesthetic purpose, but as soon as it becomes a home for wild birds and uncontrollable, it is considered out of place (Douglas 1966).

There is thus a material dichotomy created between an aesthetic, sanitized domestic nature in cities and wild nature at the cottage. This is, of course, the prevailing binary that has underpinned urban and rural development. Such an understanding shapes emotional relations with/of material urban nature. Antoine's elation at seeing his father chop down the vine is linked in part to his acceptance of the distinction between urban and rural natures. But his association of birds with girls is shaped by other factors. One such factor is media. Portrayals of human-nature relations in films, TV shows, and literature can be very powerful in shaping children's understanding of nature. Of course such relations are not alone in shaping children's understanding of and everyday experiences with/in nature (Taylor 2013). But as many media scholars have noted, the pervasiveness of media in children and youth's everyday lives affords it power (e.g., Singer and Singer 2012).

## 4 Media, Children, Nature, and Emotions

Images in film, TV, and other forms of media now form an intimate part of everyday interactions for children, in many cases starting at birth. Indeed, the children's media landscape is complex and diverse (Vossen et al. 2014). Children's entertainment now consists of multiple media platforms, where stories are told across different forms of media. Jenkins (2003) refers to this as transmedia storytelling, whereby story elements are spread across multiple media channels including video (film, TV, internet), web-based participatory fan engagement (games, forums, websites), and books. Meyers et al. (2014) argue that more than just storytelling, contemporary media comprises "transmedia franchises" which use the multiple media platforms mentioned above in addition to branded merchandise to not only tell stories but to construct particular notions of childhood and proper citizens. Disney and other popular media franchises contend, adapt, and create stories that "reflect dominant codes of sociolinguistic and cultural values of Western society" (Meyers et al. 2014, p. 100). They point out that transmedia franchises and storytelling are not necessarily new; contemporary media is one instance of transmedia storytelling that is part of a century-long trajectory of the commercialization of childhood. Stories told across platforms have been a part of childhood since the turn of the twentieth century. In this regard, transmedia franchises such as Disney now hold an important place in childhood.

The influence of Disney and other media franchises on the socialization of children has been well studied since the 1960s (Drotner and Livingstone 2008; Holtzman and Sharpe 2014; Singer and Singer 2012). Such work has noted the important role that media plays in the socialization process of children. In particular, media's role in the socialization of gender roles (Gauntlett 2008), children's understandings of human-nature relations (Taylor 2013), and the links between these is significant. In the case of Antoine and Chloe, the media that they are exposed to shapes how they identify and interact with the natures they dwell with. Beginning with the simple question of why are birds for the girls, there are clear connections to images of female and males and nonhumans in films, TV shows, and books. For example, to turn to both classic and contemporary Disney films, there are clear associations with different sorts of "natures" and human characters in the stories. Who surrounds Snow White in the forest? Birds, squirrels, and rabbits, of course, and they are located within the space of the home. The small animals and Snow White are placed in a domestic environment. Snow White's interactions with the small forest creatures near her house are gentle (usually in song) and nurturing, reflecting an idealized mother-child relationship. In the new film *Frozen*, the main male character, Kristoff, has as his best friend a moose, Sven – a strong, large figure. Like Snow White, they live in the (wild) forest and with mythical creatures: Snow White lives with dwarves, and Kristoff and Sven live with trolls. Kristoff and Sven's relationship is significantly different from Snow White and the forest animals. It is not one of father-son or owner-pet but rather is more similar to that of siblings or friends. Their interactions are rougher (pushing each other) and teasing, although the latter interactions are not the usual exploitative, dominating, and aggressive masculine relations portrayed in other animated films such as *The Jungle Book* (Aitken 2001) and *Pocahontas* (Murray and Heumann 2011).

In media studies, as well as to a lesser extent in children's geographies, there has been considerable work on how different forms of media shape children's gender, racial, sexual, and cultural identities. Numerous scholars have written at length about how gender, race, class, and nationality are problematically represented in Disney and other animated films (see Bell et al. 1995; Gauntlet 2008; Holtzman and Sharpe 2014; Jojola 2003). There is also the growing field of eco-criticism in film, which focuses on animated films and narratives about contemporary environmental crises. The growth of animated films since the mid-1980s with explicit environmental themes (e.g., *Fern Gully*, *Wall-E*) has inspired scholars to take seriously animated films and their role in representing the environment and human-nature relations. Although, as Whitley (2012) shows in his book *The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation*, nature (and in particular *wild* nature) has always been a central theme in Disney cartoons, especially film. More importantly, he stresses that more than just representing nature, Disney films create *feelings*; their "stock in trade," he suggests, "is emotion" (Whitley 2012, p. 2):

Again and again, Disney animated features make a play for our feelings; inventing animals with exaggerated features that enhance their cuteness; creating characters out of stereotypes that are finessed by charm and humour; developing stock situations with a twist designed to engage the audience's feelings with renewed potency.

Whitley argues that sentimentality should not be the main focus of critiques of Disney, as this tends to be the case. Rather, he suggests that the role of sentiment and how it is produced need to be better understood. The feelings and ideas we have about the nature, humans, etc. shape our relationship with the world; engagement with the world through sentiment needs to be given more importance. In this sense, Whitley argues that what needs to change is how "we feel about the world, the way we understand and relate to the other – non-human as well as human – organisms that share our sphere of existence, and the way we experience our identities as human beings" in relation to the complex spaces and processes of the world (2012, p. 2). Whitley inadvertently engages in an emotional analysis of film and nature. He also alludes to – although does not show – how the feelings about nature that are created through animated films are manifested in very real relations with material natures.

Indeed, similar works in eco-criticism on children's animated films also brush over the material manifestations of media's influence on human-nature relations (Murray and Heumann 2011; Pike 2012). Heise (2014, p. 301) points out that this work has focused primarily on how films

mobilize particular cultural templates in portraying nature, how they define humans' relationship with nonhumans, to what extent they engage with ecological crisis, and what sociopolitical ideologies they criticize or encourage. They construe the relationship between animation and environmentalism, in other words, mostly as a matter of thematic content

Analyzing how media portrays nature and human-nature relations is necessary, but there also needs to be more connections showing how ideas and emotions around



nature in media transfer to everyday ways of interacting with nature. In this regard, the remainder of this section attempts to link Antoine and Chloe's emotional reactions to the birds and other animals dwelling with them.

While the above scholarship in media centers mostly on animated film, TV shows are far more prevalent in the everyday lives of children and tend to have a greater influence (Signorielli 2013). Popular TV shows, both on Netflix and cable channels such as Nickelodeon, are often watched daily. Chloe and Antoine have watched a variety of shows, but both tend to watch only a few shows repeatedly. During the summer when the event took place, Chloe was watching *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* and a bit of *Franklin* (both on Netflix); Antoine was watching the third animated *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* series (2012 to present) and various superhero cartoons (*The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes!* and *Ultimate Spiderman*), on Nickelodeon and Disney, respectively. The shows Chloe and Antoine watched during this summer were very obviously gendered, although *Franklin* is considered an educational show aimed at both girls and boys. *My Little Pony* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* are used in the present chapter to explore how nature is portrayed differently in animated TV shows aimed at girls and boys (separately) and the different emotions such shows elicit. (Data collection methods included viewing 20 episodes of each from different seasons (note more episodes were watched repeatedly in MLP because the researcher's daughter watches that series) and from the series' wiki sites, fan blogs, and forums about the shows.) Each of the shows will consider the environment and aesthetic modalities of the show. The environment includes: whether the setting is urban or rural, day or night, and the presence of nature and how it is represented. Aesthetic modalities in this chapter refer to the visuals (such as color), language, character interactions with environment, and sound elements that create the world in the cartoons (Flaig 2013). The aesthetic modalities help to create emotional responses in viewers.

#### 4.1 Social Relations and Identities in *My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic*

*My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* (MLP) is the fourth generation in the My Little Pony oeuvre. The show is based on a line of toys from the 1980s, with the ponies significantly different in appearance from the ones in the show (and the current toys). It is a show that is marketed directly toward young girls, from preschool to around age 10, although the fan base is much more diverse than this and includes men in their 20s (Delano Robertson 2014). According to Creative Director Lauren Faust (2010), the aim of the show is to illustrate the diversity and complexity of being a girl. While MLP attempts in many ways to challenge gender stereotypes and create a diversity of ponies that any girls might be able to relate to, there is little thought given to the portrayal of nature and the ponies (girls) relations to it. Indeed, it problematically creates story lines and characters that encompass stereotypical gendered associations with natures and draws on romantic idealizations of "nature."



MLP has six main characters, all female ponies, each of which belong to one of the three kinds of ponies in the series: Earth, Unicorn, and Pegasi. They each also associated with a different Element of Harmony: six supernatural artifacts (represented as gem orbs of different colors) each representing an element of friendship or aspects of harmony. Each element only corresponds to one pony with a matching trait. The six elements are: honesty, kindness, laughter, generosity, loyalty, and magic. Each of the main characters has a different element, and as such they all have distinct personalities, likes, talents, ideas, etc. The main characters and their corresponding elements are Twilight Sparkle (magic), Rainbow Dash (loyalty), Rarity (generosity), Pinkie Pie (laughter), Fluttershy (kindness), and Applejack (honesty). Each pony also has a special talent, which is linked to her element and is represented by a symbol – a cutie mark – one back hip.

Twilight Sparkle, a unicorn, is the leader out of the six friends, but her leadership centers around her ability to bring all the different elements and ponies together to collectively make decisions and solve problems. She has the most powerful magic and is named princess near the end of season three. She is the intellectual of the group and her talent is research, synthesis, and organization. The other unicorn is Rarity. She also has magic (through her horn), but it is not as strong as Twilight Sparkle. Her element is generosity and her talent is creativity, and her specialty is fashion design although she uses her creative thinking to help solve problems. There are two Pegasus ponies: Pinky Pie and Apple Jack. Neither of these ponies has magic and is opposite in their personalities and talents. Pinkie Pie's element is laughter; she is the comedian and loves parties. Her special talent is, of course, to tell jokes and make ponies laugh; she is also a talented baker and loves to eat. In contrast, Applejack is serious. Her element is honesty and her talent is physical labor, in particular farming. She lives on an apple orchard and spends most of her days working on the farm. She is also competitive and is often challenged by Rainbow Dash, a Pegasus pony whose element is loyalty. Both Applejack and Rainbow Dash are often considered the tomboy ponies. They like to compete and are often the loudest and most outspoken, especially Rainbow Dash who tends to always express her opinions. The last pony, Fluttershy – also a Pegasus – is the quietest and can be very timid. Her element is kindness and her talent is helping others, especially the animals of the forest. She has a special magical connection with all animals. Indeed, she lives alone near the edge of the town, Ponyville, in the woods in a cottage that she shares with a multitude of animals in her house.

Almost all of the six ponies live without parents, suggesting that they are young adults. The exception is Applejack who lives with her grandmother together with her little sister Apple Blossom. Rarity also lives with a younger sister, Sweetie Belle. There are other younger ponies that appear in various episodes, but their connections to the main characters are not direct. Twilight Sparkle lives with her best friend and assistant, Spike, a dragon. Spike appears in most episodes but is rarely shown with the main ponies in marketing material. In spite of this, he is considered a main character and works alongside the ponies, helping to make sense of and address problems in the stories. He is not associated with any element, but

his talent is sending letters directly to Princess Celestia with his green fire. Princess Celestia rules Equestria with her sister, Princess Luna. They are both Alicorns – Pegasus-Unicorn mix – and responsible for raising the sun and the moon (respectively). Princess Celestia is also Twilight Sparkle's mentor.

The Earth's cycles are a central component in MLP. The sun and moon cycles govern the natural work and as such responsibility for these, therefore, falls in the hands of Equestria's most powerful. The Earth ponies in particular have a special relationship to nature and are responsible for food and animals. Faust (2011) explains that Earth ponies, "while not magical like the other pony types . . . have a connection to the land that other types do not. In Equestria, growing food and tending animals is just as necessary, as managing weather and magic." Pegasi are responsible for weather in Equestria and manipulate clouds by being able to push them (and not through them). Fluttershy is an exception; while she is a Pegasus, her talent is caring for animals (a trait usually associated with Earth ponies). However, as Faust notes, Fluttershy is not good at flying and is more comfortable on the ground than in the sky (2011). Unicorns are not responsible for one particular element of "nature" – except Princess Celestia and her sister. Because unicorns can make and control their magic, they use it for a diversity of tasks, including manipulating weather, changing seasons, growing food, etc. The combined talents and traits of all ponies work to ensure that "nature" in Equestria is kept in balance.

There is a clear environmental theme in MLP, although not discussed in depth by Faust or on wiki sites. Far more important for Faust and others is the message of friendship and working together. But the combination of the Elements of Harmony, the association of ponies with different elements of nature, the responsibility of keeping nature in balance, and, as discussed in depth below, the rural environment of the show create feelings about nature. Indeed, nature is an important message in the show: if it is not kept in balance, problems will emerge – and this is often the crux of many episodes. For example, not working together results in delaying the arrival of spring. Certain animals are considered out of place in Equestria, such as fire-breathing dragons whose smoke blocks the sun. Moreover, the nature is linked to the Elements of Harmony in each pony. The character of Fluttershy is especially interesting in this regard. Her element is kindness and her talent is taking care of animals. She dwells with all sorts of animals and in many episodes is clearly more comfortable with them than with her pony friends. Her character empathizes with the animals; she takes care of injured animals and feeds them. She plays a role in their "natural" cycles: tucking them into their homes for hibernation and waking them up in the spring. Just like Snow White, she is a nurturing figure that cares deeply for the well-being of forest animals. She exudes the emotion of empathy and in doing so encourages viewers to do the same. Other ponies also engender different feelings about nature, but most of these are stereotypically female emotions and reflect an emotional affinity to protect nature. There are some attempts to make them more complex. Rainbow Dash makes fun of Fluttershy's over sentimentality, but the overall feeling of empathy and care for nature is dominant in the show.

## 4.2 Social Relations and Identities in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*

While nature is an important part of the characters and stories in MLP, it plays a very minor role in the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (TMNT). In MLP ponies are responsible for keeping nature in balance. In contrast, the turtles in TMNT – known as Ninja Turtles – are responsible for “saving” humanity from evil alien species (the Kraang). Similar to MLP, this show is also the most recent incarnation in a media franchise that goes back to the 1980s. The four main characters are teenage turtle brothers: Leonardo, Raphael, Donatello, and Michelangelo. Also like the ponies in MLP, each of the turtles has special traits as well as a weapon of choice. The magic in TNMT is science: ordinary turtles in the laboratory of the scientist, Dr. O’Neill, are transformed into giant anthropomorphic turtles after being exposed to a mutation serum. The Ninja Turtles are skilled the art of Ninjitsu, having been trained by their adoptive father, Master Splinter.

Leonardo (Leo), like Twilight Sparkle, is the leader of the four turtles. He is the eldest turtle and his strengths are in bravery, decisiveness, and discipline. Leo’s weapon of choice is the katana sword and he wears a blue eye mask. Donatello is the intellectual whose talents are science and engineering. He is shy, quiet, and often awkward. He wears a purple mask and uses a Naginata (staff). Raphael is physically the strongest of all the Ninja Turtles and is a brawler. He tends to be sarcastic and has a short temper; however, he is the most loyal, especially to Master Splinter. His weapons are knives (sai) and he wears red eye mask. The last Ninja Turtle is Michelangelo or Mikey. He is the comedian and the joker of the four brothers. He is also the youngest and smallest, but the fastest. Unlike the other three brothers, Michelangelo is the most social of three brothers and also the easiest to show emotions. He has an orange mask and uses nunchucks. There is a fifth character in TNMT that plays a similar role as Spike in MLP. Just as Spike is one male among five female ponies, April O’Neill is the only girl in the show. She is the daughter of the scientist who created the turtles and appears in most episodes. She often helps the Ninja Turtles fight evil and is more skilled in the art of Ninjitsu than the turtles.

Turtles do not have a special relationship to any sort of nature, except in the first episode of season three when there is a brief change in location of the show, which is discussed in the section below. The characters are associated, however, with different emotions, all of them stereotypically masculine, just as those in MLP are more or less stereotypically feminine (although arguable less so than TNMT). Displays of anger and frustration are shown through acts of violence: brotherly fighting and attacking the enemy. Concern for others, such as their brothers or Master Splinter, is shown through tears (especially Michelangelo). Emotions in TNMT are not linked to any sort of association with nature, but in relation to human sensibilities. The conventional representation of the show’s urban environment shapes the absence of interactions with and relations to nature – as discussed below. Indeed, TNMT is set in New York City and focuses far more on the built urban landscape. MLP, in contrast, is set in a rural landscape. These shows taken together represent the modern binaries of urban/rural as well as the related culture/nature and male/female.

### **4.3 Environment and Aesthetic Modalities in *My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic***

MLP itself epitomizes the urban/rural divide. It takes place in a small rural village called Ponyland and the surrounding forests and farmlands, all of which are in the land of Equestria. However, there is one large city in Equestria, Manehattan, with a few episodes set there. There are clear distinctions made between the metropolitan city of Manehattan, which is fashioned after the island of Manhattan, and the rural landscape of Ponyville. Manehattan is considered the center of high society where ponies go for culture (theater) and consumption (clothes shopping – although the ponies hardly ever wear clothes). Depending on the pony's trait and special talent, they either feel out of place or inspired and excited. For example, Apple Blossom, a young pony from the apple orchard near Ponyville, visits her urban cousin and feels very much out of place with the rules of etiquette, pressures of being “in style,” and the closed-in landscape of the city (“The Cutie Mark Chronicle” season one); she longs for the peace, quiet, and freedom of Ponyville. In contrast, Rarity – a pony whose special talent is fashion design – travels to Manehattan to participate in fashion week. Rarity is excited and energized by city life. However, during the episode she transforms into a stereotypical, driven by competition, “every pony for herself,” urbanite. Eventually she realizes that life in Ponyville is better because it revolves around community and friendship.

Nature is prominent in the rural landscape of Ponyville. The town is set in a lush valley surrounded by thick woods and tall snow-capped mountains. Scenes always contain plants, trees, animals, and even insects flying around. The soundscape often includes birds tweeting. In the setting of Manehattan, in contrast, there are no street trees or the sounds of birds. The landscape resembles a typical downtown – tall buildings, sidewalks, people rushing, and traffic. The urban scenes are louder with more background noise such as talking and cars. MLP takes nature of the urban to make the contrast with the rural idyllic more drastic. The visuals of each landscape, however, are the same in terms of color and animation technique: bright colors and light and soft images. The ponies also interact differently with the urban and rural landscape. In episodes set in Manehattan, ponies from Ponyville are often more tense, get frustrated easily, and long for the calm and quiet of the rural. The ponies also take on stereotypical urban characteristics, such as the example of Rarity above. When she participates in the fashion show, she becomes more competitive and treats her friends like workers instead of friends.

### **4.4 Environment and Aesthetics in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles***

The world in TMNT is radically different from MLP. TMNT takes place in an urban landscape, yet like MLP's Manehattan, it is also set in a fictitious New York City. The four teenage turtles and their father figure and sensei, Master Splinter, live below the city in the storm sewers. They only emerge onto the surface at night, as they are trained to be shadows and hide from humans. Because the show takes place

below the city and at night, the visuals are very dark; the colors used in the animation are gloomy, with only splashes of color. The sewer lair is lit from above by the subway system and by dim lights placed near the walls. In the aboveground landscape of New York City, there are no street trees or plants visible. Nor are there any bird sounds, even the rare occasions when the Ninja Turtles leave the sewers during the day. Similar to *Manhattan in MLP*, there is no “green” nature displayed in the aboveground cityscape. Neither, however, are there any “natures” that run through the storm sewers; that is, it never seems to rain while the turtles are in their lair, even though they live in storm sewers.

The visual and sound landscapes change dramatically when the Ninja Turtles, April and Casey Jones (a secondary character that enters in season two), escape New York City for the O’Neill farmhouse when the city is taken over by the Kraang (at the beginning of season three). Leaving the city in a VW van, the turtles go to recuperate and energize in the country. In the rural setting of the farm, the animation becomes much lighter and colorful. The setting here is, of course, full of nature; the farmhouse is surrounded by forest and the Ninja Turtles have to learn how to be in “nature,” including interacting with animals such as chickens and deer. Indeed, Michelangelo becomes attached to the farm animals, tearing up when he has to say goodbye when they return to take back New York City. In the rural landscape, they fight different “bad guys,” many of which draw on mythical tales, for example, Bigfoot appears in one episode.

Being with nature at the farmhouse becomes pivotal in the Ninja Turtles’ journey to becoming better masters of Ninjitsu, which involves deeper concentration and balance. In this way, the idealization of a balanced nature is directly linked to inner peace and focus within the turtles. This is clearly portrayed in episode 8, season three when the turtles leave the farmhouse to camp in the forest. Their task is to practice Ninjitsu and meditate and be at one with nature. After having a vision of Master Splinter, the turtles embark on an individual journey, each of which is linked to a goal and element of nature. Raphael is fire and needs to find focus, Leonardo follows the wind to become an exemplary leader, Donatello has to find more power in the mountains, and Michelangelo is too much distracted and needs to find calm in the forest/woods. At the end of their journey, they emerge from the forest triumphant, each bearing a banner with their newfound nature element and ready to return to New York City to fight the Kraang. There are little emotional affinities toward protecting nature in *TNMT*. Rather, nature serves as a source of power and strength. It is rejuvenating and energizing.

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## **5 Conclusion: Affective Atmospheres, Media Landscapes, Children, and Nature**

Both *MLP* and *TNMT* exemplify dominant and romanticized understanding of nature: nature is outside cities and is “othered.” Moreover, nature is portrayed stereotypically as something important to protect and dominate as well as an idealized escape from the urban and culture that is calming and energizing. Aitken

(2001) also makes this point that nature in children's programs is almost always in pastoral settings; moreover, nature is venerated. Neither MLP nor TNMT is deviant from this reverence of nature. Nature is calming, healing, in balance, in need of protection, and outside of cities. The feelings they produce about nature do nothing to challenge dominant understandings of nature for children. It is difficult to extract the exact emotions these shows generate in children since each child interacts and interprets differently based on their experiences and geography (e.g., urban or rural). But these shows most certainly play a part in shaping understandings of nature (and spaces). Indeed, the TV shows can be understood as "affective atmospheres." Anderson (2009) argues that rather than think about specific emotions or affects, it is more useful to employ the concept atmosphere. An atmosphere presses and envelops life without a person really feeling it or being completely aware. Atmospheres, as Anderson (2009, p. 78) argues, are ambiguous in that they are "between presence and absence, between subject and object/subject, and between the definite and indefinite." In this regard, he continues that atmospheres are "always in the process of emerging and transforming. They are always being taken up and reworked in lived experience – becoming part of feelings and emotions that may themselves become elements within other atmospheres" (p. 79).

In the everyday lives of Chloe and Antoine, we can consider the TV shows they watch as both atmospheres in their lives as well as an element of within the atmospheres of their homes. The shows they watch – MLP and TNMT – affect their feelings, emotions, and understanding of nature. It is almost too simple to map the representations and feelings of nature (and urban rural) in both shows to the reactions of Chloe and Antoine to the bird apartment. However, pointing to the obvious similarities between the shows that Chloe and Antoine watched most during this time and their reactions makes clear connections to how media shapes our spatialized relations with nature. Chloe was very much attached to the figure of Fluttershy in MLP, and she loved Fluttershy's house. The bird apartment on her own house was most likely in her mind the same, although she did not express this verbally. For Chloe the fact that her house was in the city did not matter; what was important was that the house was shared with animals, just like Fluttershy's. Home in MLP was always more than human and not just because the main characters are ponies (they are after all anthropomorphized). Because the homes are located in a forested, rural landscape, they are constantly inhabited and transgressed by all sorts of creatures. This is not, as I point out above, unproblematic. Chloe felt as though she need to take care of the birds and was curious how they could survive without someone (such as humans to help them). Antoine, in contrast, had little in common with the birds and other animals dwelling with him. For Antoine, the birds belonged in the country and not the city. That his house was urban was an important element in whether or not the animals belonged, just like in his favorite show, TNMT, urban New York does not have trees or animals.

It is not difficult to imagine how these media landscapes – or rather the affective atmospheres of media – influence children's feelings about the material socio-natural spaces they inhabit. As Whitely notes above, the feelings about nature that are created through animated films have very real material affects. Almost a

century of Disney's influence in shaping feelings and understandings of human-nature relations in North America, Europe, and beyond cannot be underestimated. Analyzing how media portrays nature and human-nature relations is necessary, but there also needs to be more connections showing how ideas and emotions around nature in media transfer to everyday ways of interacting with. Louv and others in the New Nature Movement tend to ignore the power of media in shaping human-nature relations. But if we are to reshape children's relations to and understandings of nature that engaging with work in media on representations of nature and human-nature relations is critical, especially pointing to how we can create ways not to reifying problematic romantic, idealized human-nature relations.

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Erin Spring

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	430
1.1	Defining Key Terms .....	431
1.2	Theorizing Place .....	432
2	From Text to Reader .....	434
2.1	Scaffolding a Reflection of Place .....	435
2.2	Real Landscapes and Literary Places .....	436
3	Empirical Reflections on Children’s Place-Related Identities Through Texts .....	437
4	Empirical Reflections on Young Adults’ Place-Related Identities Through Texts .....	438
4.1	Home as a Personal Reflection of Identity .....	438
4.2	Reading About Toronto, from Toronto: The Role of Feet .....	442
4.3	Changing Perceptions of Place .....	444
5	Conclusion .....	448
	References .....	449

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## Abstract

This chapter explores the interconnections between young adult fiction and young adult readers’ constructions of place and place-identity within and beyond the text. It draws on data from a qualitative case study, where discussion groups, semi-structured interviews, and the creation of place journals were used to interpret some of the ways in which ten 16- and 17-year-old readers, in two diverse Canadian communities (rural/urban), respond to how place and place-identity are construed within two young adult fiction texts. It questions how and if reading these place-based texts impels these readers to reflect on place within their own lives. A multidisciplinary theoretical framework informs analysis, including geography theory, ecocriticism, and reader response criticism. Through

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discourse analysis, it argues that these young adult participants construe place to be a multidimensional concept that is constantly changing. It shares how these young adults constructed and reconstructed representations of their emerging identities, commenting on the influence of various factors including family, culture, environment, and personal hobbies. In doing so, this chapter offers a critical description of the moment in time when these texts and these readers met as part of a reading transaction, within a particular time and space.

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### Keywords

Adolescent • Blink • Caution • Changing perceptions of place • Emerging adult • Empirical reflections • Changing perceptions of place • Personal reflection of identity, young adults • Place-related identities, children • Young adults, role of feet • Heterogeneity • Literary places • Moon Over Manifest • Place-identity construction • Power dynamics • Real landscapes • Scaffolding • Scaffolding mirrors • Theorizing place • Writing, Reading, and Place project (wRePlace) • Young adult fiction

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## 1 Introduction

In 1956, American author Eudora Welty famously asked, “what place has place in fiction?” She argued for its pivotal role as a literary device, because “the novel from the start has been bound up in [...] the ordinary day-to-day of human experience” (2013, n.p.). There is a wealth of multidisciplinary scholarship on the intersections between fiction, place, and identity construction. This literature can be separated into two strands that interweave: literary, text-based criticism that focuses on how concepts such as place and identity are constructed within fiction; reader-response criticism, which privileges the role of the reader. When thinking about place and identity in relation to fiction *and* readers, a consideration of both perspectives is necessary. To begin with, this chapter considers what children’s and young adult fiction criticism and theories of reading offer to an understanding of place and identity.

To illustrate these connections, the latter section of this chapter draws on a multiple case study conducted between 2010 and 2013 in two geographically distinct Canadian contexts (rural/urban), focusing on how a selection of 16- and 17-year-old readers rendered place and place-identity within their own lives. Secondly, the chapter comments on some of the ways in which these same readers responded to how place and place-identity are construed in two contemporary Canadian texts: Tim Wynne-Jones’ (2011a) *Blink and Caution* and Clare Vanderpool’s (2010) *Moon Over Manifest*, arguing that the act of reading these place-based texts impelled these readers to deliberate on their own place-identities. A range of participatory, youth-centered methods, including reading discussion groups, semi-structured interviews, and the creation of place-journals, were employed to access the voices of the participants, therein capturing *their* perceptions of what it means to be a young adult.

## 1.1 Defining Key Terms

An essential first step is to outline several key terms that underpin this chapter. Numerous ambiguous terms emerge when discussing the transition between childhood into adulthood: youth, adolescent, teenager, emerging adult (Arnett 2000), and new adult. Because of the blurred margins between these categories, defining young adulthood is tenuous: is it a biological category, beginning with the onset of puberty? Or is it merely a social construction? Young adults are, generally speaking, at a liminal stage in their lives when they are thinking about their identities (Hine 1999; Savage 2007). Several of the adolescent participants were preparing to attend university, to move away from home for the first time. Others were recent immigrants, trying to navigate what being “Canadian” meant, often in opposition to a very different place that they had left behind. These individuals’ self-concepts were not always congruous with the expectations and perceptions of their families, particularly parents.

Stephanie Taylor (2010) conducted an empirical study wherein she interviewed 20 women, probing the importance of place in their lives, focusing on the way they spoke about their identity. Taylor asserts, “the detail of someone’s talk is understood not as an expression of an already formed identity but as a work in progress, as part of the ongoing construction of ‘who I am’” (2010, p. 29). Taylor’s proposition of identity being an active process aligns with John Dixon and Kevin Durrheim’s (2000) discursive approach to place-identity construction. The case study framed research questions in a way that acknowledged no guarantee that the participants would be aware of their place-identities or consider place to be part of their identity at all. If they did share their experiences of place, it was not clear from the outset which aspect of place (social, physical, and cultural) would be construed. When working with young adults, our aim should be to understand the ongoing process of identity construction that they are experiencing, including the meanings they have, and are consistently forming about the world. Identity is always being reconstructed; young adult identifications with place are therefore not static but ever changing.

Defining young adult fiction as a text-type is similarly not straightforward. Literary scholars have long debated over how to define children’s and young adult fiction, based on, for example, its central characteristics, authorial intention, and implied readership (Rose 1984; Nodelman 2008). Marah Gubar (2011) asserts, however, that seeking a coherent definition is not useful:

we can give up on the arduous and ultimately unenlightening task of generating a definition without giving up on the idea that “children’s literature” is a coherent, viable category. More than that, I contend that we *should* abandon such activity, because insisting that children’s literature is a genre characterized by recurrent traits is damaging to the field, obscuring rather than advancing our knowledge of this richly heterogeneous group of texts. (p. 201)

Booksellers and publishers perpetuate this heterogeneity. Texts often fall into numerous categories on bookstore shelves. As would be expected, young adult fiction captures transitions, periods of growth, power dynamics, and identity

reformation (Coats 2010; Hilton and Nikolajeva 2012). The purpose here is not to define what is meant by young adult fiction, or who its readers are or should be, but rather to reflect on the ways in which young adult fiction is fraught with implications for identity, of which place often takes center stage.

## 1.2 Theorizing Place

Place is equally difficult to define, particularly because of its interdisciplinary focus. Lawrence Buell (2005) insists that a discussion of the environment is “not the property of a single discipline” (p. vi). Sasha Matthewman (2007) asserts that issues of place have “porous subject boundaries” (p. 71). Within this subsection, place is reviewed from the perspectives of geographic theory and ecocriticism, a branch of literary theory that focuses on how the environment (of which place is a subset) is represented textually.

In *Place: A Short Introduction*, geographer Tim Cresswell (2004) provides a succinct overview of place scholarship. While more summative than critical, he rightly argues that, despite geographers’ agreement on the important role of place, they fail to agree on one definition. Geographer John Agnew (1987) reminds the scholar that humans are social beings, who inhabit social worlds. But of what do these social worlds consist? Do social worlds include the physical? Edward Relph (1976) writes “to be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places” (p. 1). What makes a place significant? Until the 1970s, the focus of geographical research was spatial science, which was chiefly concerned with the particularities of physical locations, viewing humans objectively rather than subjectively. Yi-Fu Tuan (1974, 1975, 1977) and Relph (1976), among others, sought a realignment of their discipline’s focus, ascertaining that the aim of human geography was rather to understand our “internal geographies” (Cresswell 2013, p. 108), which they felt were overlooked by spatial geography. As something central to every human experience, place became a salient interest to the discipline.

John Agnew (1987) subdivides place into locale, location, and sense of place. Agnew’s definitions work in tandem; he believes one cannot acquire a sense of place without understanding the locale of a place or knowing where it is located. While Agnew provides a useful breakdown of these elements, he does not decipher *how* humans achieve a sense of place. Like Agnew, Tuan differentiates between a physical location and a feeling of locale, though he identifies it as *space* and *place*. He refers to space as movement and place as pause. Space is transformed into place when we pause, allowing for the attribution of meaning. The result of pausing in space, and thereby acquiring identification (or rootedness) with place, is *topophilia*, defined as the “affective bond between people and place” (Tuan 1974, p. 4). Relph’s (1976) perception of place builds upon Tuan’s space/place thinking by providing a conceptual framework that accounts for different layers of place-experiences, with *insideness* at one end and *outsideness* at the other. In between these opposite experiences are a number of possible identifications, without falling to either extreme. As such, this framework demonstrates how relationships with place are fluid.

Rather than thinking about place as a geographical location with delineated boundaries, geographer Doreen Massey (2013) conceptualizes place as a “pincushion of a million stories.” Geographical spaces are not flat surfaces: they are comprised of a “bundle of trajectories” (Massey 2005, p. 47) where each living and nonliving thing comes together to comprise that place. Each of these contributors is coming from somewhere and is going somewhere else, through a range of temporal and spatial scales. Massey’s assessment of place consists of four distinctive stages, forming a succinct conceptualization of place that offers a working definition for the purpose of this chapter.

The first stage of Massey’s (1991) redefinition is that places are processes. We live in a world where things are “speeding up, spreading out” (p. 24), leading to a “stretching out of social relations” (p. 25). Because of the flows of movement that are constantly at play, places cannot be defined as static but should rather be seen as being “constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations” (1994, p. 154). While we may pause somewhere long enough for it to become part of our identity, the place itself does not stay the same. Secondly, in attempting to describe places themselves, a vital consideration is what other geographical locations are influencing the place in question, making it impossible to draw boundaries around places. Massey’s (1991) depiction of Kilburn, London, demonstrates this argument – without leaving the high street she can find various ethnic eateries, religious centers, and foreign newspapers; her sense of place is informed by the outside world, blurring a sense of local and global space. Because the local is continually influenced by the global, Massey’s (1991) third stage is that places cannot ever have a “seamless, coherent identity” (p. 25) shared by a population. Everyone experiences place differently, depending on the communities, or networks, that they are involved with. Lastly, while Massey (1991) considers place as unstable, and thus difficult to define, her fourth stage clarifies the important uniqueness of places. She is not suggesting that, in the midst of openness, a sense of identification is impossible. Places retain their uniqueness through their fluidity: “this very mixture together in one place may produce effects which would not have happened otherwise” (1994, p. 156). Massey’s model was used in this study as a way of understanding contemporary place construction.

In their seminal text *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (1996) define ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the environment [...] an earth-centered approach to literary studies” (p. xviii). Children’s literature is an obvious space for ecocritical reflection, because the concepts of nature and the child have historically underpinned this genre (Sigler 1994). With that said, the study of the environment and childhood are seen as “largely separate undertakings” (Dobrin and Kidd 2004, p. 3). While there are several examples of ecocriticism being applied to children’s texts, such as Sidney Dobrin and Kenneth Kidd’s *Wild Things: Children’s Culture and Ecocriticism* (2004), which adopts a thematic, text-focused approach, and Cutter-Mackenzie, Philip Payne, and Alan Reid’s *Experiencing Environment and Place through Children’s Literature* (2011), which takes an pedagogical approach, drawing on

autoethnographic studies of classroom-based, environmental incentives, there are fewer examples of ecocritical readings of young adult texts (Whitley 2012).

In *Writing for an Endangered World*, ecocritic Lawrence Buell (2001) offers a focused theory of place within the field of ecocriticism. While writing from a different discipline than Massey, there are tangible connections between their conceptualizations. Buell constructs a theory to reflect the importance of place-connectedness to the literary imagination, a five-tiered framework that he asserts is applicable to texts regardless of theme or time of authorship. Each tier of Buell's theory elucidates a potential place-relationship that a character or reader can form. The first stage suggests that we have a *singular home base* with which we identify most strongly. As we step away from this center, the places we encounter will, while potentially evoking belonging, pale in comparison to home. As such, the second way of envisaging place-connectedness is to assume that we take on a *patchwork* of "specific entanglements" (Buell 2001, p. 66) with place, whereby multiple places, rather than one, affect identity. This closely echoes Massey's (1991) argument that mobility is an integral part of place, and that places themselves are constructed as a "simultaneity-of-stories-so-far" (2005, p. 9).

Massey and Buell similarly agree that, like our identifications, places themselves are unstable, in that they are *continually being reshaped* and redefined. Buell (2001) writes, "place is not just a noun but also a verb, a verb of action" (p. 67), reflecting the third tier of his theory. The fourth stage continues from this perspective, acknowledging that people themselves move between places, resulting in a *multi-layered* sense of place, "like a coral reef or a set of tree rings" (p. 69), negating notions of singular place affiliation. The final tier of Buell's (2001) model specifically relates to readings of fiction. He asks, "must you have been there before they can be said to matter to you?" (p. 71), acknowledging the power of fiction (particularly constructions of place) to affect the identities of readers. Buell suggests that readers are *capable of engaging with fictional settings using their understanding of real-life places*. Massey and Buell's theorizations of place provide a concrete framework for interpreting place-relationships inside and outside of texts.

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## 2 From Text to Reader

This chapter explores empirical examples of the ways in which fiction impels young readers to deliberate on the role of place within their lives. Central to these studies is reader-response criticism, a branch of literary theory that focuses on the encounter between the reader and text. In *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (1978/1994), literary scholar Louise Rosenblatt shares her fear that, within literary theory, the reader has been neglected. In an attempt to move away from the purely aesthetic, text-based focus of movements such as New Criticism, Rosenblatt outlines a transactional theory of reading which brings the reader into focus. From Rosenblatt's perspective, the reader makes sense of what is offered by the text through a transactional process,

which involves looking *externally*, onto the printed words of the text, but also *inwardly*, to textual referents that remind the reader of their own lives. We bring our prior knowledge of the world to our reading of the text, and through this encounter this knowledge is changed: a new meaning is created. Rosenblatt's (1938/1995) theory is relevant to an understanding of place and identity because it emphasizes that the reading experience is informed by our personal experiences with the world.

Margaret Mackey (2010) proposes that it is the role of feet, precisely, that readers draw upon while reading: reading and physically exploring place are interdependent. Although Mackey does not refer to Rosenblatt explicitly, she builds upon Rosenblatt's argument that a reader's past experiences are part of the transactional process, but she is explicit about the role of place. Mackey's (2010) emphasis has two purposes: not only does she suggest that a knowledge of the physical world is brought to a reading of the text but also that reading in itself is an active pursuit, resembling Rosenblatt. Mackey uses examples of her own childhood to illustrate her argument that the process of becoming literate paralleled her meanderings through the streets of St. John's, Canada. As children develop as readers, their engagement with fiction becomes more complex; simultaneously, with the burgeoning sense of independence that accompanies growing up, their knowledge and experience of the world expands.

## 2.1 Scaffolding a Reflection of Place

If readers bring their knowledge of the world to the text, what happens when readers engage with textual representations of place itself? In a conference paper, Wynne-Jones notes that the physical spaces where he lives and thus writes from are embedded in his fictional narratives. He argues that reading is unique, in that it facilitates an engagement with real (or primary) and fictional (or secondary) places. His belief that the reading event requires a recount of our primary world experiences resembles the positions of Rosenblatt and Mackey. Wynne-Jones (2011b) writes,

I believe every book is an intermediary between two worlds — the one that we live in and the one that the writer takes us to. Because no matter how exotic the book's locale may be, it is imbued with the reader's own locale [...] The writer creates with lively words only scaffolding upon which the reader hangs the hills and valleys and skies of his or her own place (p. 122).

The concept of scaffolding mirrors a question that underpins this chapter: does reading about place impel young readers to consider its role within their lives? Within his article, Wynne-Jones (2011b) provides a moving illustration of this type of engagement. A group of readers from Williams Lake, British Columbia, read his text *The Maestro* (1995). During an author visit at their school, they shared with him their belief that Burl's adventure had occurred in their small town. In fact,



the setting is northern Ontario, which is nowhere near Williams Lake. Wynne Jones (2011b) explains this experience as follows:

the magical thing that had happened [...] is that those kids read right through my flora and fauna — not ignored it but transcended it — *translated it* into the language of the world they knew and loved. They had made Ghost Lake their own: replaced the white pine with Douglas fir, the poplars with aspen, the low slung hills with mountains, the small-mouth bass with salmon. Their vicarious adventure in this other world, two thousand miles from their own, had *reinforced* their own sense of place within a quite different environment (p. 123).

The reading event encouraged a reflection of the readers' relationships with place outside of the text; they were so engaged that the boundaries between reality and fiction were blurred. These connections exemplify Rosenblatt's (1978/1994) transactional process, in that, for these readers, it required recalling previous knowledge and actively using this experience to shape a personalized response. As readers, we use the representations of place provided by the author in order to scaffold a reflection of our own place-identity, outside of the text. Wynne-Jones' readers from Williams Lake ignored the details of his setting – the information that would have, most likely, led them to recognize Ghost Lake as nothing like British Columbia. They were reading aesthetically, reading over details and replacing them with their own place-perceptions.

## 2.2 Real Landscapes and Literary Places

Wynne-Jones' *Blink and Caution* (2011a) provides a near-accurate portrayal of the physical geography of Toronto. Blink, the protagonist, wears a set of clothing stolen from "a gym locker at Jarvis Collegiate, where the posh children drift down from Rosedale" (Wynne-Jones 2011a, p. 9). Jarvis Collegiate and Rosedale exist outside of the text, potentially within the worlds of young readers. While a reader could read this text for its information, searching for details about Toronto, the question remains: can settings, constructed by the author or narrator, ever reveal anything about *actual* places?

Although Wynne-Jones (2011b) admits to using real places as his point of departure, and even though the fictional and the actual are closely aligned in *Blink and Caution*, it is not Toronto. Regardless of authorial intention, fictional settings are always going to be representations, resulting in reader recreations. The textual Toronto, crafted by Wynne-Jones, is a construction of place, a reflection of the city that is presumably drawn from his own real-life encounters with the city, but not the same as them. Textual representations of place are not mirrors but representations. In the following subsection, the focus turns to researchers who are concerned with what young readers *do* with these representations: how they engage with them, respond to them. The ways in which we approach representations of place inevitably depend on our own geographical positioning, on our own relationships with place. It is still a process of scaffolding, reflecting, and reinforcing, as Wynne-Jones (2011b)

suggests, but it additionally depends on our starting point as readers. What knowledge and experience of place do we bring to our reading, which in turn influence engagement?

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### 3 Empirical Reflections on Children's Place-Related Identities Through Texts

Within this subsection, a small sample of empirical studies will be reviewed that use texts as catalysts for interpreting young people's engagements with place. There are numerous educational studies that interpret the pedagogical role of place in classroom settings (see Matthewman and Morgan 2006; Taylor 2009, 2011). Linda Wason-Ellam (2010) conducted an ethnographic study of a primary school in the Canadian prairie. Motivated by her concern that her students' lives were "displaced from reality" (p. 279), due to prolonged periods of screen time, she sought ways of reconnecting students with their local place via reading. Exploring local, place-based picturebooks, while simultaneously visiting local places, facilitated the students' critical thought in terms of the sensitivity and specificity of immediate surroundings. Similarly, Amy Azano (2011), in her research concerning place-based pedagogies at a rural, American school, observed a series of lessons where students were asked by their teacher to consider, what does it mean to be from here? Azano (2011) argues that the teacher brought his own rural biases into his teaching, limiting the class' ability to be critical about their own construction of place. For example, he asked them to discuss a specific, local place, rather than to reflect generally on their prior place-experiences, which could have occurred in a range of locations.

The Writing, Reading, and Place project (wRePlace) team within the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge completed a research project to consider how children perceive and represent their place identities through reading and writing. The project involved an empirical case study of two Grade Five classrooms in contrasting British locales, where interviews and the creation of visual and verbal texts were used to apprehend the students' identifications with place (Charlton et al. 2014). The researchers used a reading of *My Place* (Wheatley and Rawlins 2008) to ascertain their participants' conceptualizations of place. The researchers concluded that the text "was a rich stimulus for thinking about place and place-related identity" (Charlton et al. 2011, p. 17). The wRePlace project researchers concluded that, through reading, their participants reflected on the role of place within their everyday lives (Charlton et al. 2014).

Evelyn Arizpe is concerned with children's meaning-making strategies, particularly in relation to the verbal/visual dialogue offered within picturebooks. In an international research project, *Visual Journeys*, which focuses on immigrant children's engagements with wordless texts, Arizpe and her research colleagues worked with 10-year-old children who belong to minority ethnic communities, and who had recently migrated to Scotland. Arizpe (2009, 2010) refers to this movement between

places as journeys. Her participants read two picturebooks with migrant themes and then responded in various ways. In the publications that have emerged from this project (Arizpe 2010; Arizpe and McAdam 2011) the researchers share how reading these texts encouraged the children to reflect on their own *and* others' journeys. The participants drew on their past experiences of migration to interpret the texts.

In each of these examples, the use of texts as methodological tools offered a space for critical reflection on themes of place and identity. Despite similar theoretical and methodological frameworks, none of these conversations focus on what it means to be a young adult reader in today's world, and how places – social, physical, fictional, and real – are navigated and experienced from their perspectives. Researchers have not yet fully explored the interconnections between young adult (YA) fiction and young adult readers' constructions of place within *and* beyond the text (Spring 2015). The case study explored in the following subsections illuminates the ways in which a selection of young adults perceived and represented their encounters with place, both real and textual.

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## 4 Empirical Reflections on Young Adults' Place-Related Identities Through Texts

The case study, outlined in the introduction to this chapter, differs from the projects outlined in the preceding subsection in that it involved young adult readers and texts. The data is particularly rich because of the life stage of the participants; the questions underpinning the research would not necessarily have been as urgent with a younger group of students. Additionally, within the literature on place and place-identity, numerous empirical studies have interpreted children's engagements with place (Hart 1979; Matthews 1992) but few have specifically engaged with young adults. The research was conducted in two locations. One of the case sites was a neighborhood of Toronto that has been renamed Kirkville. Of the five participants from Kirkville, two were immigrants to Canada, and one was a first-generation Canadian. Lakeside, the rural research site, is approximately 250 miles from the nearest urban center. The six rural participants were all white and Canadian born. In what follows, a small sample of the data that was generated in these locations will be shared. The names of all places and people have been changed to ensure anonymity.

### 4.1 Home as a Personal Reflection of Identity

Victoria, age 16, was a participant from Kirkville. She lived with her parents, two older brothers, and dogs in a block of attached housing, where she had lived for her entire life. Victoria spoke about her relationships with her parents and with her grandmother, who lived in the family home before passing away. Victoria had never

traveled. In what follows, Victoria construes place as a physical extension of her personal identity:

**Victoria:** My place is [pause] the one place where it is actually *mine*, and not my family's, and that would be my bedroom. [. . .] I mean like you are just sorta all over the place in your house, but then like your room, at least for me, it is that one place that it is just me. And if someone is in my room, it is like, 'why are you in my room? This is mine.'

Victoria juxtaposes her bedroom as "mine" and "not my family's," indicating the territory she has ascribed: this is her space, not theirs. Her use of the word "if" as opposed to "when" suggests that her family does not frequently enter her room. Victoria attributes to this space a positive sense of place. In her room, she can be herself through being by herself. On the other hand, "all over the place" denotes a sense of unsettled chaos, of movement, connoting space rather than place. Six people live in Victoria's house; she values her bedroom as it is a private, personalized place within a shared space. Victoria's demarcation of these areas points to her awareness of having a personal and a social identity, and how different physical places within her house accommodate these features of her self-concept.

Victoria's reflections illustrate her desire for order and consistency: rooms are laid out in a specific way, and she is aware and in control of her position. These precise descriptions of home reflect her desire for home to remain consistent and familiar. Home is thus aligned with positive affiliations, mirroring Relph's (1976) conception of existential insideness, where the deepest level of place-attachment is felt. In the passage below, Victoria's demarcation of place and home further accentuates the mythic features of her conceptualisation:

**Victoria:** Places you come and go all the time. Whereas home, you always go back to it. I mean like a place you leave, and then when you leave you don't think about coming back. But at home you always know that you are going to go back, you never think 'is this going to be the last time that I see it?' you just go, 'oh, I am going wherever' [. . .] Um, actually, when I was like twelve, there was this talk that 'oh, this house is pretty expensive, maybe we should move,' and I was just like, 'no, no we are not moving,' you know?

Victoria's comment explicitly reflects how she perceives home as stable. She reflects on this pattern with certainty: losing this physical home is not something she thinks about; she understands that it is promised. When home *was* threatened, Victoria's tone suggests how disruptive this would have been, reiterating how strongly this precise house is home. Victoria's vocabulary when reflecting on her relationship with her parents suggests that, from her perspective, her house is more hers than theirs. Victoria categorically expresses not caring that her parents have to

pay more in order for them to continue living there. It is as if her parents do not have the same physical attachment to the house, and therefore Victoria can be the one to make imperative demands as to its possession.

The tension between Victoria and her parents, in relation to the distribution and ownership of physical space, re-emerged within our interview:

**Victoria:** I remember going to the backyard, trying to be alone [...] My mom came out, and was doing laundry, and I was like, ‘Ah!! There is never anyone in the backyard, like ever, and the one time I go there to be alone, there are people in the backyard!’

Victoria’s bedroom is aligned with a positive sense of place because she can be alone. Outside of this environment she expresses losing (and thus seeking to find) these positive affiliations. In her place-journal, Victoria made a list of special places, which she categorized under three headings: reflective, social, and get away. Her bedroom and her backyard fall under the category of reflective and get away, while other rooms within her house, such as the living room and school, are labeled as social places. Victoria’s various responses demonstrate awareness of how different places condition her self-concept in varying ways.

Victoria’s reflections of home bring to mind Buell’s (2001) concept of the “home base,” one of the ways in which he construes place-connections. He suggests that we have a singular home base with which we identify most strongly. These physical homes are salient to her identity, and she recognizes this. In construing these places as home bases, Victoria’s reflections challenge Buell’s (2001) suggestion that place-identifications are often made of a “specific entanglement” of different places. On the contrary, Victoria has a singular, specific place-identity that is bound up in the physical home; she draws boundaries around these physical places – the bedroom, the backyard – suggesting that places are not processes, as Massey (1991) might suggest. Her construction of home does not accommodate movement or change. The boundaries around Victoria’s physical places exclude her parents. From her perspective, home is an enclosed personal space, which is not open to the experiences or trajectories of others.

In the following passage, Victoria reflects on her knowledge of the streetscape of Toronto and how it changes depending on her precise physical location within the city:

**Victoria:** Um, I have been downtown a couple of times, but I feel a lot of times as though, it is really touristy [...] I don’t know anything really about downtown. I know a couple of subway stations down there but, like, I am totally lost above ground.

**Erin:** So what part of Toronto do you know?

**Victoria:** Kirkville.

**Erin:** The limits of Kirkville, or a particular neighbourhood?

**Victoria:** I don't know, I am not very good with streets and stuff, so I like know my house is off of Parkview, and they are like 'oh, by what street?' and I am like, 'Parkview, which intersects by the subway station,' you know? [...] So I guess it is a really closed area around here [...]. My sense of direction is terrible. But I know buildings. And I know how to get home.

For Victoria, downtown Toronto is an unknown space. Victoria knows her starting point (home) and her end point, but everything in between is perceived as space. Victoria's home is a closed area within the city. She construes boundaries around home, and these restrictions influence how she physically engages with spaces outside of these perimeters. Victoria has a limited sense of direction, and she is lost above ground, because she has never fully engaged (or had to engage) with these spaces on a sensory level. She has relied on the subway to navigate space *for* her. On the contrary, she knows specific subway stations, and how to get home, because these are necessary frames of reference for how she interprets the city.

Victoria desired control over the spatial arrangement of these places, or homes. When she steps outside of home, beyond the boundaries that they have drawn, this control is taken away, resulting in feelings of being lost. Tuan (1974) distinguishes between native and visitor perceptions of place. Victoria's sense of place shifts between native and visitor, as they move between space and place. Place (home) is thus meaningful because this control, this sense of familiarity, is maintained. Her reflections work against Massey's (1991) construction of place as a process: for Victoria, spaces and places do not interact. These place-perceptions translated into Victoria's reading of the two research texts:

**Victoria:** Well like, um, Abilene was travelling all over the place and so she didn't really set down roots. Both *Blink and Caution* in the beginning they are homeless, they are also like searching for someplace to put down roots, but not sure if they'll be able to find it. It was similar. 'Cause all three of the main characters were kinda missing home, and homeless, and they all find some place where they can settle down.

Victoria's vocabulary sets traveling (movement between places) and home in opposition. While moving, the characters cannot find a home. Being rooted in place is thus the result of being stationary in a physical place, mirroring Tuan's (1977) description of rootedness as permanent. "All over the place" connotes a sense of space, of aimless movement, while "some place" connotes singularity. Victoria perceives the characters as actively searching for some place (one place) to put roots; they are *aware* of missing these home bases (Buell 2001). Missing something implies an awareness of its absence. Victoria's vocabulary suggests that she construes the protagonists as seeking a physical connection with place: "put" and "set" entail lying something down, making something permanent.

## 4.2 Reading About Toronto, from Toronto: The Role of Feet

Within this subsection, the participants from Kirkville reflect on their experience of reading about Toronto *from* Toronto. Although they were critical readers, and were able to recognize that Wynne-Jones' setting is a fictional representation, they often found it difficult to distance themselves from the familiarity of the setting. To begin, Chloe shares her interpretation of Toronto, as a setting, and how this shaped her reading of *Blink and Caution*:

**Chloe:** It helped me to get into the book when I know the place. Like especially with Union Station [. . .] and then there is a Tim Horton's [coffee shop] in the station, and washrooms. Like I could imagine what the characters are doing, and where they are, in that event.

**Irina:** That's not really imagination, that's more memory.

**Chloe:** Yeah, so I could like relate to it.

**Erin:** You could relate to it because you knew the place they were in?

**Chloe:** Yes.

Chloe's comment about being able to "get into" the text suggests that she desires this reading ease. The moments of familiarity within the text provided Chloe with glimpses of her own physical experience of this city. Chloe builds an interpretation of Wynne-Jones' setting using additional details, borrowed from her own experience of this place, outside of the text. Chloe's reflections of being able to relate to the characters of *Blink and Caution* mirror Mackey's (2011) reflections of the role of feet. Their reflections demonstrate that the act of reading does not stop when the book is put down – it is a continual process of inward and external reflections (Rosenblatt 1978/1974).

Calla's experience of reading about a known place was similar to Chloe's:

**Calla:** I actually like the references to the Tim Horton's. Just not the streets. Because I don't know streets that well, and I sorta felt as though they were skimming on the descriptions [. . .] because they thought that you'd automatically know what [. . .] the streets would look like. But with Tim Horton's, I've been there a lot, so I know exactly what it looks like.

Calla had a limited knowledge of the streetscape of Toronto. Although Calla may not have been to the precise Tim Horton's coffee shop that *Blink and Caution* visit, she has enough previous knowledge of the physical layout of a typical store that she is able to connect with *Blink and Caution*'s experiences of this aspect of the city. Her reference to the street names not being given enough description corresponds with her limited knowledge of these streets outside of the text. For Calla, more detail was needed; she was not able to fill the gaps using her knowledge of the city.

Carrying on from this, Victoria and Irina discuss the use of street names:

- Victoria:** Sometimes it just felt unnecessary. Maybe I just notice it more because I know the streets, but I feel that when things take place in New York, they don't constantly mention streets in New York, but you find that here [...]
- Irina:** Because when you start seeing it in books you think of Bloor, and then you think, 'so I have to drive down there, and then I have to make a turn' and 'I have my practice down there.'

As a reader, more detail was necessary for Calla, in terms of description. For Victoria and Irina, however, the level of description provided by the narrator, particularly in relation to street names, means that the fictional and real Toronto are difficult to separate. While reading, Irina was thinking about her primary world encounters within place. She was unable to separate herself from these reflections in order to experience the fictional setting. Again, Mackey's (2011) thoughts on the role of feet are coming through clearly within this passage, as Irina's understanding of the city has been informed by her physical negotiation of this place. The places were too similar for Irina to distinguish between them; she desired a degree of distance and felt compressed by its familiarity.

Alice shared a different reaction to the representation of Toronto:

- Alice:** *Manifest* was very generic, but like with *Blink and Caution* it was like the street name, you recognise it. It is really hard to transfer it to another city. Because you know how it is laid out, like there is a picture in your mind, with *Manifest* it is not as specific.
- Erin:** So which text did you prefer?
- Alice:** *Manifest* for sure. Because it is like, we don't know what it looks like [...]. And with *Blink and Caution* you really didn't have that creative aspect when you were reading it. Like you couldn't imagine that that was what the street looked like, like you *know* what it looks like. There is a Tim Horton's there, and a Starbucks a couple places down or whatever. That can't change. You could make up more stuff about *Manifest* to make it more unique. Whereas Toronto, well Toronto is just Toronto.

In interpreting *Manifest* as generic, Alice is able to make it her own through the act of reading. She can actively imagine this setting, without being limited by previous reflections. She described the experience of reading *Blink and Caution* as being limiting, in that she felt too close to the actual city. Her comment of being able to "picture it" in her mind suggests that she has an imprint of the streetscape of the city ingrained in her. She recognized the streets that *Blink and Caution* were walking down – again, recognition is a visual, physical reaction, one that suggests that she has seen this place before, albeit through a different lens. Alice's physical engagement with this city has informed her reading of the fictional setting. Although the real



and fictional Torontos are not the same, Alice cannot “transfer” this place knowledge that is imprinted in her mind. Not being able to transfer information suggests that that place knowledge is specific. Alice introduces the binary of “knowing” and “imagining”: if you know something well, you cannot imagine it differently. In not knowing anything about Manifest, she had more creative agency in her evocation of *Moon Over Manifest*. Alice’s use of the word “transfer” chimes with Irina’s use of “compressed.” Both of these readers felt limited as readers. They were unable to take these fictional settings and reshape them into something more unique because their experiences of these places (outside of the text) were too physical in real life. “Can’t change” connotes stability, which is interesting in relation to Massey’s (1991) assertion that places are processes. Reading about place did not offer Alice another vision of the city, something to add to her real world knowledge of this place. For Alice, then, place is not necessarily a process.

### 4.3 Changing Perceptions of Place

The participants all shared very different constructions of place. Within this subsection, I focus on moments wherein the act of discussing these place-based texts prompted a discussion of these contradictory experiences. In the following extract, the participants from Kirkville are considering the image of the train in *Moon Over Manifest*:

- Victoria:** I just really like the image of the train because it is really symbolic of the time [...] trains as far as I can tell, they were very popular for a short amount of time [...] like, before cars, and somewhere after horse carriage.
- Irina:** Trains are still popular.
- Victoria:** [laughs] Not really.
- Alice:** Yeah, everyone takes an airplane.
- Irina:** No, where I used to live there was one airport, and it was really small, and nobody wanted to use that. So there was a little train station and everyone pretty much used it. 'Cause in Russia, if you don't have the money for an airplane, you have to take the train.

The image of the train, as presented within this text, has prompted the participants to reflect on their place-experiences outside of the text. Paralleling Rosenblatt (1978/1994) and Buell (2001), the participants slip in and out of their primary and secondary world reflections to scaffold a reflection. Within this short extract, the participants are sharing their reflections of the textual Toronto, their varying experiences of the real Toronto, and Irina is sharing information about Russia. The train is not part of Victoria’s knowledge of place, but for Irina it is. Through this discussion they are not only sharing their own reflections, but they are listening to the experiences of others and are in doing so changing or at least widening their understanding of place. Even though Victoria’s response (“not really”) suggests that she disagrees with Irina’s interpretation, hearing Irina’s stories of traveling via train in Russia and

reading about Abilene's use of the train within the text, is changing Victoria's interpretation of place. Irina, additionally, is recreating her understanding of the use of trains in Canada.

Correspondingly, in the following extract, the same participants are discussing public transportation in Toronto, having just discussed Blink's experience of riding on the subway:

**Victoria:** I actually just realised it now, is that people always say that in Toronto, people don't talk to each other on public transportation. But they *do* in this book, which is kind of interesting.

**Irina:** But they do in this city! [. . .] I get on the rail cars, and sometimes these ladies just start talking to everyone around them.

**Victoria:** Really?

**Irina:** Yeah.

**Alice:** The stereotype is that nobody talks to each other in Toronto on trains. They just ignore you.

**Irina:** Well, it depends where you go. 'Cause I drive on the upper edge [. . .] Everyone just talks to each other. It is awkward. It is like, 'I don't want to talk to you. But you are starting a conversation, so yes I will!'

As in the passage above, the participants navigated between their real world and textual reflections. They began by discussing *Blink and Caution* and then progressed into a discussion of their own experience of this city. Victoria's tone shifts within this passage: her use of "really," posed as a question, differs from the previous passage, where she appeared to disagree with Irina's statement. Victoria's tone suggests that, by listening to Irina's reflections of riding the subway, her interpretation of this place has changed. She is more aware of the different experiences that occur within this city. The participants were open to hearing about each other's experiences. For example, when responding to Alice, Irina's tone ("well, it depends") is not dismissive. Her use of the word "depends" reiterates Irina's understanding that place interpretations are the result of how that place is experienced by the individual. This resurfaced later on within the same discussion group:

**Calla:** It felt like a darker version of Toronto. Like it was always at night, and um, I don't know if it was just the front cover, but I imagined all the scenes in sort of blue, monotone colour, and it sort of this dark underbelly of Toronto with organised crime, gangs, and thugs.

**Irina:** Most alike Toronto, if you go downtown at night. And if you hang around, or walk around the embassy kind of area. Lots of strange stuff. It's relatable.

Irina's vocabulary, particularly her use of "if," chimes with her use of "depends" in the previous subsection. The textual representation of Toronto is "most alike" the real Toronto, but only "if" your experience of Toronto corresponds with Blink's. For

Calla, it does not. Even though she is familiar with the setting, how Blink experiences place is vastly different from her own. Irina's use of the word "relatable" reiterates her understanding that even if the setting mirrors the real place, it is only ever relatable; it is never completely the same.

Although Massey (2005) conceptualizes place as a constellation of social relations, resulting in places that are in flux (as opposed to static), the participants distinguished between places, particularly rural and urban locations, and in doing so created boundaries around places. In the following passage, Thea, from Lakeside, describes her place-specific knowledge of the world:

**Thea:** There are things you know, like when you are living in the city, and things you know when you are living out in the bush, that other people don't necessarily know.

**Erin:** Like what?

**Thea:** Just like, bears and everything. Like, when I was younger I learned that like bears hibernate, but they'll come out [. . .] if it is a warm day they will come out of hibernation. So in the Spring you have to be loud when you walk your dog. And in hunting season we wear orange on our walks.

**Erin:** Yeah, ok.

**Thea:** And that's 'cause there was a big bear population around where I lived [. . .]. They wouldn't teach someone in Toronto that. And like I've never taken a bus. Never *been* on a bus. So if I went to Toronto, well that would be different. How would I pay? Where do you pay? [laughs].

Thea has place-specific knowledge: she knows about bears and hibernating patterns because this information is pertinent to her personal experience of place. Having never had the opportunity to ride a bus, this knowledge is irrelevant. Her laughter suggests that she perceives this as normal; she does *desire* learning how to ride a bus, for example. Her choice of vocabulary reiterates the connection she construes between place and identity: who we are (and what we know) is a result of where we live. For Thea, information does not necessarily flow from one place to another, as Massey (1991) suggests it does. Thea attributes to place a specific set of skills or a knowledge base that is required to live there. When you step outside of these places things are different, requiring new knowledge.

An oppositional vocabulary emerged within many of the participants' reflections, as they spoke of their place in reference to other physical places, often rendering them as opposites. However, the participants were similarly aware of having had varied experiences within a shared place. Places were understood, in this context, as not having a coherent identity (Massey 2005). The participants brought this understanding to their reading of the chosen texts. In the following excerpt, for example, the participants from Kirkville reflect on the textual construction of Toronto and how it is experienced (and therefore perceived) differently by Blink and Caution:

**Chloe:** Blink and Caution live in different places.

**Erin:** Interesting. So the city means different things to different people?

- Irina:** Mostly there are different sections [. . .] Like in downtown there is a lot of business, and there is a lot of insurance [. . .] and then when you get more into the suburbs, [. . .] you have more small time stores. There is a different attitude everywhere.
- Chloe:** And then, even though it is the same place, it changes according to time. Like in the morning it is, you think of downtown as bright [. . .] then at night there are like gangsters, drug dealers and those bad people.
- Irina:** Well, they have that in the day, too, you just don't notice it as much.
- Chloe:** Yeah, so like you just notice them more when the time changes.

Irina construes cities as having sections, districts that have specific purposes. Her interpretation of a city thus depends on the section that she is part of. Chloe renders *Blink and Caution* as being from “different” cities, as they come from divergent sections or neighborhoods of the city; as a result, they do not have a shared knowledge of place. Envisaging place as a collection of various sections puts forth that it does not have a cohesive identity but one that shifts depending on your precise physical location. Chloe's reflection on gangsters and drug dealers echoes the representation of downtown Toronto offered in *Blink and Caution*. Chloe's comment conveys that this is not the Toronto with which she is familiar. In this excerpt, the participants slip in and out of the text and their own life experiences of Toronto to convey their understanding of its identity. Their reflections mirror Buell's (2001) assertion that places are unstable, that settings can come to mean different things for the characters.

In the following passage, Irina and Alice recognize that, although they live in the same neighborhood, their experiences are vastly different:

- Irina:** I lived in a bit with my great-great grandmother for a while, in Russia, kinda in the small town [. . .]. Everyone knew each other, they weren't really up in each other's business but they pretty much knew everyone, so they can tell you that if you needed some flour you could go down two houses, and ask for some.
- Erin:** So you wouldn't do that in the city?
- Irina:** No, you wouldn't go to people, you would go to the store.
- Alice:** I disagree. I don't know how many times like my mom has been baking, and she says, 'go down to your neighbours and buy some eggs' and it's like, 'ok'.
- Irina:** I don't know. The mentality for me is that you can't really ask people for resources.
- Alice:** Well, if you know them.
- Irina:** Yeah but still, you should probably just buy them.
- Erin:** That's interesting. So you haven't had the same experiences.
- Irina:** Well, we live in the same city but in different places. Our Torontos are different places.

As a result of the internal networks or communities with which Alice and Irina are a part, or the physical sections of the city that they live in, Toronto is experienced and thus known differently by them. Their vocabularies (“I disagree,” “I don't know,”

and “but still”) suggest that their interpretations of place are in active; by sharing their experiences of city with one another, they are not only reflecting on place, but their prior conceptualisations are being challenged and potentially changed. Alice and Irina can share a city – they go to the same school, they walk the same streets – but what is felt or experienced in these places always depends on the unique trajectories that they bring with them. Irina and Alice are part of a different time-space as a result of their prior experiences. The reflections made within this subsection illustrate the complex, diverse constructions of place that the participants brought to our discussions. They were open to the experiences of other participants, accepting that place is not a shared construct, but rather that it has the potential to mean different things.

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## 5 Conclusion

Using young adult fiction as a methodological tool impelled the adolescent readers to think critically about their own and others’ place-identities, as suggested by Charlton et al. (2011, 2014), Arizpe (2009, 2010) and others. The participants’ individual understandings of the world, their subjectivities, were the lenses through which they interpreted place, within and beyond the research texts. The constructions of place that emerged *depended* on these personal interpretations of the world, on their emerging sense of their identities. Their interpretations of place, in line with Massey (2005) and Buell’s (2001) conceptualizations, were not static or singular. As they discussed the research texts, the participants questioned their individual constructions of place, as they read about and engaged with the place-experiences of others. The project was designed so as to reveal the experiences of these transactions, accounting for the personal, social, and cultural contexts in which these encounters occurred.

Massey’s (1991) conceptualization of place as a time-space compression helped me to recognize the intersections between time and space within the participants’ trajectories. Her description of time-space shaped the methodological design, as well as the analysis, in that it was understood that the participants were positioned differently within time and space: they had come from somewhere, and were going somewhere, within a range of spatial and temporal scales. By understanding place as a process, rather than as something fixed, the participants’ “stories so far” were in focus. Buell’s (2001) ecocritical theory of place worked in two ways: not only did the participants, unknowingly of the theory, come to similar conclusions about the various ways in which place and character can interact within a text, but Buell’s theory provided a way of interpreting the participants’ readings of these texts.

Rosenblatt’s (1978/1994) transactional theory was paramount to an interpretation of the participants’ responses; it enabled an understanding that the participants’ readings of these texts were shaped by their knowledge of the world, including their experiences of place. It also encouraged an interpretation of the discussion groups as a particular type of transaction where the students were sharing, challenging, and thereby changing their constructions of place as they met with one another. The participants’ highly articulate reflections not only indicate their ability to think

critically about the role of place within their primary worlds, when prompted, but that these concepts have been in their minds for some time. The participants were receptive to the place reflections of their peers, and the discussions that occurred pushed their thinking forward, reiterating how concepts such as place and place-identity are indeed salient within their self-concepts, but also how these experiences, as part of a transaction, are continually in motion.

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Cameron McAuliffe

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	452
2	Spatial Politics and Graffiti .....	453
3	Graffiti Practice as Youth Subculture .....	454
4	Graffiti Subcultures and Youth Deviance .....	460
5	The Spaces of Subway Graffiti .....	462
6	Criminalization of Graffiti Practice .....	463
7	Legal Graffiti .....	465
8	Street Art and the Creative Economy .....	468
9	Conclusion .....	470
	References .....	471
	Videos .....	473

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## Abstract

Young people involved in graffiti have become emblematic of the ongoing troubling presence of “youth” in the urban public spaces of the contemporary city. The act of doing graffiti, known among those involved in the practice as “writing,” has been the subject of a good deal of academic theorizing and public policy intervention since its rise to prominence on the subways of New York City in the 1970s. Drawing on the historical development of what has now become a global subculture, this chapter details the way graffiti has been constructed as outside the normal ordering of social space, as out of place in the city. The youth subculture of hip-hop graffiti writing, which developed around themes of fame

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and respect and the pursuit of style, has been persistently linked to deviance and transgression justifying the criminalization of young people and a succession of wars on graffiti. More recently, processes of commodification along with the appearance of legal graffiti forms and the rise of street art have all worked to unsettle assumptions of graffiti as out of place. The trope of the young urban graffiti writer continues to influence approaches aimed at variously including and excluding young people in public space, informing the contemporary urban spatial politics of young people.

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**Keywords**

Graffiti • Street art • Transgression • Urban management • Spatial politics • Criminalization • Legal graffiti • Creative economy • Youth subculture

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## 1 Introduction

A critical approach to the processes of exclusion that face children and young people needs to consider those who are normatively cast as transgressive actors, seemingly deserving of exclusion. One such group is young people involved in graffiti. Routinely marked out as vandals, property criminals, or gang members, those involved in graffiti practice have become emblematic of the troubling presence of “youth” in the urban public spaces of the contemporary city. The act of doing graffiti, known among those involved in the practice as “writing,” has been the subject of a good deal of theorizing and public policy intervention since its rise to prominence on the subways of New York City in the 1970s. For both academics and urban managers, the trope of the young urban graffiti writer has influenced the development of approaches aimed variously at including and excluding young people in public space, informing the contemporary urban spatial politics of young people.

Writing graffiti is a spatial practice, with its practitioners variously involved in taking and making space in the city. Graffiti writing, as an activity that has been framed as an appropriation of urban space (Cresswell 1996, p. 47; see also Brighenti 2010), challenges the dominant norms of urban property rights. It threatens stable notions of the city, presented by the powers that be as a scourge of dirt and disease spreading out like contagion. Graffiti is thus deemed “out of place.” But in the tradition of Lefebvre (1996), graffiti also opens questions of who has the right to the city, evoking freedom of speech and access, turning private into public, and finding value in the city’s interstitial spaces (see Young 2014; also Iveson 2007). In these interstitial, informal, and reclaimed spaces, graffiti finds new meaning and value – it is “in place” (at least for some). Whether graffiti is in place or out of place turns on a range of questions about the different valuations given to graffiti practice, to its practitioners, and ultimately to the product of their labors, the graffiti and street art that marks the surfaces of cities across the world. These questions are shot through with spatial considerations, and geographers have been well-positioned to contribute to ways of understanding graffiti practice as a spatial politics.

## 2 Spatial Politics and Graffiti

The rise of graffiti as a global urban subcultural phenomena has inspired a range of different theoretical and empirical approaches. Yet, with some notable exceptions, the existing scholarly work on graffiti writing has only lightly touched on the spatial politics of graffiti. Graffiti has predominantly been framed as a practice of youthful deviance, and its success as an urban cultural form and practice has ensured it has remained a rich sociocultural vein mined by a succession of sociologists and criminologists interested in deviant youth subcultures. The emergence of graffiti in the 1970s coincided with new ways of thinking about subcultures, particularly in the work of the Birmingham School scholars who were busy marking out the scholarly landscape of cultural studies (e.g., Hebdige 1979). For geographers, the study of graffiti has provided new ways of thinking through the place of young people in the city. Themes covered by geographers include how people and things are constructed as out of place (Cresswell 1992, 1996), graffiti as territorial markers in youth gangs (Ley and Cybriwsky 1974), how transgression molds the public spaces of the city (Iveson 2007), the impacts of “wars on graffiti” on the urban geographies of fear (Iveson 2009, 2010), the role of mobility in the lives of young graffiti writers (McAuliffe 2013), and the challenges of “post-graffiti” practices on the geographies of graffiti and “street art” (Dickens 2008a, b, 2010). This explicit geographical line of inquiry has played a central role in efforts to understand the impact of graffiti. Spatial themes permeate the work of graffiti scholars more generally as they deal with the implications of transgression and monitor attempts to institute order in the city. Sociologists, criminologists, and cultural studies scholars, in addition to urban and cultural geographers, have all contributed to understandings of the spatial politics of graffiti writing, which has helped to contribute to unraveling some of the problematic ways young people have been positioned in the story of the contemporary city.

Graffiti, as a spatial practice par excellence, helps to illuminate the spatial politics of place. Tim Cresswell (1996), in his seminal study of the workings of ideology and transgression, turns to graffiti as one of his “heretical geographies” to animate what it means when we say something or someone is out of place, and his work is a fitting entry point here to the discussion of the spatial politics of graffiti writing. Graffiti produces heretical geographies that provide evidence of the relationship between place and ideology. For Cresswell:

Ideologies are not simply sets of ideas. They are ideas that influence and guide actions. These actions are referred to as ‘practice.’ . . . A place comes to have meaning through our actions in it – by ‘practice’ – and through our reactions to this practice. (1996, p. 14)

By disrupting the “normal” expectations of the city, graffiti practice lays bare the operation of “common sense” and the construction of normative urban geographies. By being “out of place,” graffiti helps us see how we define, construct, and reproduce that which is “in place.” As Cresswell notes, the transgression of graffiti makes the usually hidden boundaries of normality visible. In this way, transgression is a form of

politics (1996, p. 9). His ideas are important for this discussion, not least because his arguments were being presented at a time when geographers were making the case for a more critical place for geography in the understanding of social relations. For Cresswell and other critical geographers at the time, such as Harvey, Soja, Massey, and Jackson, geographical space was not merely the end product of social relations. Space was not simply formed and molded by society but played “an active role in the formation of society” (Cresswell 1996, p. 12).

The walls on which graffiti writers practice their writing can be thought of as more than mere sites, and their inscriptions as more than the material residue of their practice. Writers see the urban spaces that make up “the street” where graffiti takes place as more than a set of discrete things. They see them, “as a set of affordances, as process of production, as experience and event” (Brighenti 2010, p. 317; see also Halsey and Young 2006). Walls are not simple horizontal borderlines, like the marks on a map, dividing up space:

They are vertical planes that, through inscription, can be transformed into unexplored and multidimensional spaces, becoming frontiers in the dictionary sense of ‘undeveloped areas or fields for discovery and research,’ frontiers that . . . can beckon with a sense of limitless possibilities (Nandrea 1999, p. 111).

Each wall becomes a site of boundary-making that engages the public. It, “collects a temporally dispersed audience that, at some point, has transited nearby” (Brighenti 2010, p. 323). As a social process that claims space, graffiti is not only marking out territory, “it *is* a territory in itself” (Brighenti 2010, p. 327); the practice of writing can be seen as a type of vertical territoriality that is simultaneously a social and spatial process. A central feature, then, of the spatial politics of graffiti writing is the way the spatial and the social “are thoroughly imbued with each other’s presence” (Cresswell 1996, p. 11). Through a focus on the spatial politics, it is possible to weave together the work of geographers, sociologists, and criminologists, in order to trace the sociospatial story of graffiti as a youth spatial and subcultural practice.

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### 3 Graffiti Practice as Youth Subculture

There are many different types of graffiti. Contemporary studies of graffiti typically center on the global subcultural form that traces its origin to the northeast USA in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While the term graffiti covers a wide range of forms and practices, from the painting of political slogans on walls to scratching words on toilet doors, here, the discussion will be largely restricted to the graffiti practice that began on the walls and subways of Philadelphia and New York, that later became enmeshed with the emergence of hip-hop, and that has more recently developed into a broader range of urban artistic practices that have been labeled “street art.” What differentiates these practices from other forms of wall marking is that they are associated with the development and reproduction of a youth subculture based on graffiti writing.

**Fig. 1** Different “tags” on a graffiti abatement vehicle in New York City (Feb. 2012) highlighting ongoing contestation between the city and graffiti practitioners (Photo: Cameron McAuliffe)



**Fig. 2** Quickly rendered “throw-ups” in Notting Hill, London, on hoardings designed to protect shops from revelers during the Notting Hill Carnival. The temporary nature of the hoardings means the writers get exposure to the crowds of the carnival, but are less likely to be pursued for property damage by the authorities (Photo: Cameron McAuliffe)

In its earliest forms in Philadelphia and then New York, this subculture developed around practices of “writing,” which involved young people writing simple combinations of letters and numbers, such as TAKI 183, CHEW 127, and TRACEY 168, that became known as their “tag,” their writing pseudonym (see Fig. 1). In addition to the tag, which remains a mainstay of subcultural practice, other key graffiti forms include the “throw-up,” a quickly rendered two-dimensional letter form usually involving an outline and a simple fill color (see Fig. 2), and the “piece” (from “masterpiece”), which involves more sophisticated use of letter forms and colors and may be completed by one or several writers working together (see Fig. 3). The most elaborate pieces, involving letter work along with characters and backgrounds, are known among writers as “productions.” The location of a piece of

graffiti can also play a part in the way it is named by writers. In classic subway graffiti, a piece on the outside of a train carriage is a “window-down” if it is painted below the windows or a “top-to-bottom” if it extends from the top to the bottom of the carriage. Craig Castleman, whose ethnography detailed the characteristics of early graffiti writing in New York, discusses “whole cars” and even “whole trains” (or “worms”) as the pinnacle of 1970s subway graffiti practice. Beyond the subway, tags, throw-ups, and pieces continue to dominate urban graffiti.

The graffiti subculture, as it developed in New York and spread to other cities, coalesced around the desire for fame and respect (Austin 2001; MacDonald 2001; Miller 2002) and the development of “style” (Ferrell 1996; see also Cohen 1972a; Hall and Jefferson 1976, on style and subculture). While there are innumerable personal styles identified by graffiti writers, the main styles of writing that have developed within the subculture are “bubble letter,” “3-D,” and “wildstyle.” Castleman pointed to these three as generally agreed styles in 1970s New York. Yet, it is his account of style by the writer SPIN that points to the way writing developed as a coherent subcultural practice:

There is one main style and that is graffiti itself. When you see it, you know for certain reasons that it is graffiti and that makes all graffiti part of a single style. Subway style, Graffiti style. (SPIN, in Castleman 1980, p. 22)

This graffiti style merged with hip-hop rap and dance as a key component of the “hip-hop culture” in the early 1980s. Hip-hop graffiti style has become by far the most recognized global form of graffiti, as well as the most comprehensively discussed in the literature. It is also the style of graffiti that has been explicitly associated with youth cultures. Both Ferrell (1996) and MacDonald (2001), in their detailed ethnographies of graffiti writing, point to a coherent subculture centered on hip-hop graffiti practice (see also Austin 2001; Lachmann 1988). For Ferrell, style is not merely related to the form of graffiti as a material and aesthetic product but also ties writers into the practice of “doing graffiti.” A writer’s style is a “tool” deployed in the everyday practice of graffiti that helps to embed the writer in the subculture – it is thus both personal and collective. It is also the source of competition within the subculture, forming the basis of comparison and, ultimately, uncertainty and threat, as writer’s stylistic accomplishments are critiqued by subcultural peers.

Graffiti subculture now has a global presence. Within this global graffiti subculture, new forms have developed, producing distinctive national and city-based scenes (see Fig. 3). The diversity of these styles has been represented in the glossy images of graffiti magazines (see Snyder 2006, 2009), such as *International Graffiti Times* (US), *Graphotism* (UK), *Backspin Magazine* (Germany), *Artillery* (Australia), *Subwaynet* (Italy), and *Underground Productions* (Sweden), among a raft of other titles, many of which have come and gone (Snyder 2006). These subcultural publications have been supplemented by a profusion of blogs, discussion forums, and websites, such as *ArtCrimes.com* (established in 1994) and *12ozProphet.com* (founded in 1993, initially as a magazine), as well as connections made through social media networks, from *MySpace* to *Facebook*, and now *Instagram*, which is



**Fig. 3** Drawing on New York hip-hop style, writers develop their own local styles. *Top:* Piece by Sydney writer, PHIBS, in Wollongong, south of Sydney, as a part of a curated event called Wonderwalls. *Middle:* Piece by RAYGUN in the sanctioned graffiti area known as the undercroft, under the Southbank Centre in London. *Bottom:* Unsanctioned piece in a former waterfront industrial site in Tallinn, Estonia (Photos: Cameron McAuliffe)



popular among writers and artists. These networks of communication have proven critical in the expansion of graffiti practice.

Photography has played a pivotal role. Photos of graffiti (or “flicks”), taken by writers, initially allowed them to trace their progression and to capture evidence of their ephemeral works for display to others. Some used to mail flicks of their work to other writers whose work they admired living in other cities or countries in order to

make connections. These networks sometimes resulted in visits to other cities, where subcultural connections ensured access to walls to paint without stepping on the toes of any local writers (Snyder 2009). The practice of taking photos of graffiti was instrumental in the development of the early graffiti magazines. People submitted photos of their work and contacted writers from other places whose work was published in these magazines, spawning transnational mobility and facilitating the global spread of the subculture (Snyder 2006, 2009). Just as with other subcultures, the success of graffiti as a cultural product, both in terms of the writing on walls and the photographs circulating in print and on the web, has played a role in the commodification of subcultural practice. Like the mods, rockers, and punks before them (Hebdige 1979), graffiti writers have had to contend with the contradictions of reproducing subcultural capital in the face of pressures to capitalize on their increasing integration into the mainstream economy – of trying to “keep it real” while some are trying to make a buck.

New York hip-hop style graffiti has remained a fundamental influence in graffiti subcultures as the practice has gone global. The graffiti subculture in 1970s New York developed on the subway system and internalized risk and illegality as core subcultural themes, in part in response to increasing criminalization by the New York authorities (Dickenson 2008). The criminalization that occurred in New York led to the masculinizing of the subculture as female writers were marginalized by increasingly risky practices tied to the search for fame and respect. These core components of New York graffiti practice, the role of masculinity and illegality and of fame and respect, and the centrality of railway infrastructure were reproduced in other cities as graffiti practice expanded. At the same time, as graffiti spread to other places, new innovations in form and practice encroached on the subcultural core, challenging some of the established rules and hierarchies of graffiti practice. A constant theme in the literature is the rear-guard defense of subcultural traditions that many writers present when they discuss graffiti (see Castleman 1980; MacDonald 2001; Ferrell 1996; Miller 2002). Writers talk of the fundamental role of trains, of illegality, of masculinity, of respect, and of fame, in many cases with an urgency that speaks more to the inevitability of change in the subculture than to the stasis of tradition. The decline of subway graffiti (Dickenson 2008); the emergence of sanctioned, or legal, graffiti (Kramer 2010; McAuliffe 2013); the changing role of women in the subculture (Ganz 2006); and the rise of disrespect and the commodification of fame (Dickens 2010) all unsettle the norms of graffiti, just as graffiti unsettles the norms of the city (see Cresswell 1996). Like all contestations over constructed traditions, these discussions of the state of the subculture are open and ambivalent and in many ways provide important insights into the dynamic nature of the spatial politics faced by young graffiti writers.

More recently, the development of “street art” forms has further diluted the sanctity of “old school” graffiti style. Street art, which includes a wider range of urban arts practices than hip-hop graffiti (see Fig. 4), more easily straddles the divergent worlds of “street” and “gallery,” emerging from and as a response to hip-hop graffiti (Austin 2010). These post-graffiti forms, as Dickens (2008b) calls them, including “stenciling” (quickly rendered aerosol stencils), stickers,

**Fig. 4** Street art practice includes aerosol character work, as well as work in other media such as stickers, paste-ups, and stencils. *Top:* Paste-ups, from the Paste Modernism exhibition, presented as a part of the Outpost street art festival, Cockatoo Island, Sydney. *Middle left:* Stickers on a shopfront in Kraków, Poland. *Middle right:* stencil, “I’m happy again” in Kraków, Poland, referencing US film star Gene Kelly in Singin’ in the Rain. *Bottom:* Yarn-bombed trolley art work in SoHo, New York (Photos: Cameron McAuliffe)



“paste-ups” (cut-outs applied with wheat paste), 3-D sculptures, “cuprocking” (arranging plastic drinking cups in mesh fencing), and even graffiti knitting (also known as yarn bombing, crochiti, or knitfiti), alongside larger aerosol mural-based works dominated by figurative images or “characters” (see Fig. 5), all challenge the reproduction of subcultural graffiti practice. Many writers see these practices as not



**Fig. 5** Two examples of figurative street art by PHIBS (*top*), and Adnate and Fintan Magee (*bottom*) in May Lane in the Sydney suburb of St Peters (Photos: Cameron McAuliffe)



“real” graffiti. A profusion of new terms, such as “guerrilla art,” “brandalism,” and “urban art activism,” has appeared, in addition to the more established “street art,” “post-graffiti,” and “lowbrow art,” in an attempt to map this “significant evolution” in graffiti practice (Dickens 2008b, p. 7). As detailed below, the rise of street art forms in particular deepened the complexity of the spatial politics of graffiti, broadening the forms of engagement with urban young people through graffiti practice.

#### 4 Graffiti Subcultures and Youth Deviance

The subway graffiti subculture that developed in the 1970s had its roots in practices that originated on the walls of low socioeconomic neighborhoods in Philadelphia and New York, places where young writers started writing their tags on walls. The subculture can be traced back to those early innovators, such as TAKI 183, whose success as a prolific tagger was reinforced through coverage of his exploits in the New York Times. His fame, and that of other writers, led to emulation and the spread of writing. Many of the early graffiti writers were drawn into relationships with the networks of already functioning youth gangs, using their skills to mark out contested

gang territories (Ley and Cybriwsky 1974; Nandrea 1999). Philadelphia in the early 1970s was described as a city overlaid with a geography of youth gangs (Ley and Cybriwsky 1974). The young men who joined these gangs were afforded the status and protection of gang membership without the dangers of being involved directly in gang violence (Lachmann 1988, p. 236). As Lachmann notes, this was an important way young boys could negotiate the pressures to join a gang without being drawn into more serious criminal activity. Other writers left the contested territories of the inner city “ghetto” behind to spread their names throughout the city, looking for sites that were more brazen and tied into the production of status in the emerging youth writing subculture. Quoting from local media in Philadelphia, Ley and Cybriwsky noted that:

Graffiti kings seek to emulate each other in the inaccessibility of locations they invade . . . Tity Peace Sign sprayed his name in red on an elephant’s back side at Philadelphia Zoo; Bobby Kidd sprayed a police car while a friend held the officers’ attention; and at the central airport Cornbread sprayed a TWA jet which took off to the south bearing his name upon its wings. (1974, p. 493)

These early writers were the “graffiti loners” involved in a fantasy of the conquest of territory. In this conquest, they played for an audience of their local schoolmates. Recognition, when it came, was generally a local experience. Ley and Cybriwsky (1974), Lachmann (1988), and Castleman (1980) all noted the way individual writers accrued fame and garnered respect among a cohort of followers initially drawn from their school communities. More senior writers mentored junior writers from their school as social relations through graffiti practice began to thicken and take on the norms of subcultural practice and “deviant careers” (Lachmann 1988).

These individual activities contributed to the elaboration of the “right way” to do graffiti. But it was when groups began forming the so-called “crews” of writers, particularly in New York, that the subcultural norms of graffiti practice began to firm up. As Cresswell notes:

These small groups formed complicated and hierarchical communities with their own rules and ethics. The whole process from ‘racking up’ (stealing paint) to ‘getting up’ (producing graffiti) was highly organised. Beginners were ‘toys,’ and the lucky ones got to be apprentices with the accomplished ‘kings.’ (1996, pp. 32–33)

While Ley and Cybriwsky saw the development of graffiti as a youth “pastime” with the “conquest of territory” at its core (1974, p. 494), for others, the social relationships involving young people and graffiti could be best explained as an archetypal deviant subculture (see Cohen 1955, 1972; Becker 1963, 1964). In a similar way to Cresswell’s focus on transgression, deviance is understood through the responses to the acts of certain social actors, as the result of the process of defining the norms of appropriate behavior by social groups (Becker 1963). Any breach of the norms marks individuals (and groups) as deviant. It is less about the nature of what they do, and more about the way they are perceived. The processes of constructing the boundaries of acceptable behavior and the processes of labeling

those who do not fit constructed social norms become central to understanding deviance. The assignation of deviance “depends, to some degree, on who commits the act and who reacts to it” (Cresswell 1996, p. 25). Cresswell’s (1996, pp. 24–27) analysis of deviance as it relates to graffiti focuses on the intertwining of social and spatial processes in the social construction of deviance. While Becker does not make the connection to space and place in his work on deviance, his use of the term “outsider” has specific spatial connotations (Becker 1963; in Cresswell 1996). Outsiders are people who cause trouble. They are people “out of place.”

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## 5 The Spaces of Subway Graffiti

During the 1970s and into the early 1980s in New York, graffiti practice was about the subway. By 1974, Jon Naar’s book of photographs of subway graffiti, *The Faith of Graffiti*, with text by Norman Mailer (Mailer 2009), was published – the first of a range of influential texts, including *Subway Art* (Cooper and Chalfant 1984), and films (e.g., Wild Style 1983; Style Wars 1983) that both cemented graffiti as a subculture and began the process of commodification that continues to challenge writers, many of whom Jeff Ferrell sees as embedded in subversive, anticapitalist, and anarchist traditions fuelled by resistance to political and economic authority (Ferrell 1996, p. 187). Subway graffiti became the focus of the subculture, with fame and respect accrued on the surface of the carriages circulating through the city.

As opposed to walls that marked out territory, subway trains took the names of writers out into the far flung reaches of the five boroughs, to places they had never been. As trains circulated, writers could observe the different styles that were developing. Within the subculture, writers might aspire to be a “king of the line” (the writer who had ubiquitous presence on a particular subway line) and even “all city” (where a writer achieved quantitative presence across all the subway lines). Writers who were themselves constrained to neighborhoods could take part in the wider networks of graffiti by observing the rhythm of the subway or could leave a coded message for other writers to respond. For example, “A writer could write someone’s name whose style they admired with her own name next to it and he or she would write back” (Dickenson 2008, p. 31). This “third-rail mail,” as it was known among young writers in New York, allowed them to transcend the spaces of the city and “transformed writers’ spatially segregated communities into a citywide community of practitioners” (Dickenson 2008, p. 31).

The development of writers’ corners or writers’ benches – the places in the subway network where different lines would intersect and graffiti writers would wait to observe the subway graffiti as it passed by – intensified subcultural contact. It was at these locations that writers connected with other writers from different parts of the city, meeting people known previously only through their throw-ups and pieces. It was also here that writers took part in the qualitative attribution of style. Unlike those involved exclusively in tagging, for these writers involved in subway graffiti, it was quality rather than quantity that garnered respect among their peers, and through this, they developed of a qualitative conception of style. This “allowed

them to develop a total art world, formulating aesthetic standards for evaluating one another's murals and determining which innovations of content and technique would be judged advances in graffiti style" (Lachmann 1988, p. 242). This "art world" (Becker 1982), where style could be discerned and distinctions made, was made possible by the network of trains that carried graffiti on their exterior throughout the subway network.

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## 6 Criminalization of Graffiti Practice

The appearance of graffiti on the subway in the early 1970s was soon followed by new laws that sought to mitigate its presence. The first "war on graffiti" was announced in 1972, and "an ever-expanding number of towns and cities across the English-speaking world have since declared their own wars on graffiti" (Iveson 2010, p. 116). New York in the 1970s, under the conditions of fiscal crisis, was ill-prepared to fight this war (Dickenson 2008). There, like in other cities that have experienced the spread of graffiti practice, some battles have been won, but the continued presence of graffiti attests to the inability of urban managers to win these costly and drawn out "wars." One common consequence of the wars on graffiti has been an increased criminalization of graffiti practice, a by-product of the attempts to bring order to the disorderly city (Iveson 2009, 2010). Iveson links the increasing criminalization of graffiti to what he sees as a creeping militarization of everyday urban life, whereby more sophisticated attempts at urban social control, deployed to manage "antisocial" behaviors, have begun to resemble "'real' war-making" (Iveson 2010, p. 116). The introduction of new technological interventions, such as graffiti-proof materials and coatings, new cleaning technologies and improved systems of surveillance, data collection and tracking, have fuelled the anti-graffiti industry (Iveson 2010). At the same time, the introduction of specific anti-graffiti policies, ordinances, regulations, and legislation, particularly since 9/11, has hardened the resolve of urban authorities in many cities to ensure graffiti "vandals" pay for their incursions in the urban environment (Dickenson 2008; Iveson 2009, 2010).

The "deployment" of these mechanisms of social control has implications for the spatial politics of young people. Anti-social behavior regulations and ordinances, such as those brought in under Tony Blair's New Labour in the UK or the "zero tolerance" program championed by Mayor Rudy Giuliani in New York in the early 1990s, focused on social order rather than actual criminality and typically set their aims on crimes of order like graffiti. In the UK, Anti-social Behaviour Orders ("ASBOs") were instituted in an attempt to rein in social disorder. While not explicitly aimed at any age group, ASBOs have been used disproportionately to police young people, using temporal and spatial techniques such as curfews and exclusion zones in an attempt to evacuate disorder from public spaces (Iveson 2007; also see Staeheli 2010, on the study of disorder by geographers). Young people using urban public spaces are frequently viewed with suspicion (Malone 2006), as a threatening presence for other users of public spaces (Iveson 2007). Following Valentine (1996), the criminalization of graffiti practice has discursively constructed

young people involved in graffiti as “devils” in need of control (see also Cohen 1972b), validating the heavy-handed and disproportionate policing of young people by local authorities tasked with “keeping the peace,” protecting the normative sanctity of property relations, and maintaining order in the city.

In response to the conditions of increased criminalization, writers have made tactical adaptations to their practice. Spatially, new “fronts” in the wars on graffiti have also been opened up by graffiti writers. The mobility of writers has been an asset in forming responses to criminalization. For example, when the MTA (Metropolitan Transport Authority) declared victory in the war on graffiti in New York in 1989, graffiti rapidly dispersed from the subway to freight trains and “the street” (Iveson 2010, p. 129; also Ferrell 1998). Kramer notes three adaptations by writers to the 1989 declaration that the New York subway was “graffiti free.” Firstly, some remained committed to the subway. Secondly, other writers went “above ground” and shifted their practice onto “the buildings, highway embankments, signs, store-front gates, freight trains, and anything else they could possibly write on.” The third group, a subset of writers, started looking for legal avenues through which they could pursue their craft (2010, p. 242).

The increasing intensification of the criminalization of graffiti writers that has occurred in many cities (Iveson 2010) has ensured that the legal transition from youth to adulthood is a watershed moment in a young writer’s subcultural career (see Iveson 2009; also Lachmann 1988; Dickenson 2008). The threat of falling under adult criminal law is a significant motivator for young people as they move toward the legal age of adulthood. Tougher penalties aimed at graffiti writers have led to many young people moving to consider legal graffiti practices (Castleman 1980; Iveson 2009, 2010) or leaving behind graffiti practice altogether (Lachmann 1988; MacDiarmid and Downing 1998). For some this has led to new ways of thinking about graffiti practice, shifting away from a focus on subcultural rewards linked to risk toward a focus on the aesthetic features of style as a pathway to respect and fame.

The criminalization of graffiti has resulted in the mobilization of resources to mitigate the effects of graffiti on the urban environment. Zero tolerance policies backed by increasing city budgets aimed at graffiti removal have proliferated (Halsey and Young 2002; Iveson 2010). Removal has been the major response of urban managers to the presence of graffiti. In New York, the MTA introduced a \$20 million automatic car wash that used chemical solvents to remove graffiti from subway carriages – a process that had limited success (Austin 2001). More than 30 years later and half a world away, the NSW government announced it was spending approximately \$100 million a year to remove graffiti (McAuliffe 2012). “Rapid removal” has been deployed by urban governments battling graffiti. While removal of graffiti is typically motivated by attempts to restore order, *rapid* removal, which seeks to remove unsanctioned graffiti as quickly as possible, aims to limit the rewards writers accrue through exposure of their unsanctioned work. For Schacter (2008), rapid removal is an attempt to symbolically inflict harm on the body of the writer, wounding them just as they have scarred and wounded the city. Yet graffiti writers tend to understand the removal of their works as a necessary part of the

process of graffiti. Schacter, in his discussion with writers, found that the ephemerality was “part of the very *process*” (2008, p. 46, emphasis in original) of graffiti practice. Removal is not a danger to their work but a necessary part of doing graffiti. As Dickenson notes, drawing on Austin’s (2001) work, an MTA program to repaint the inside and outside of train carriages in the early 1980s “was discontinued 4 months after it started when results came back that 85 % of subway cars were completely covered with writing again within a week of being painted” (2008, p. 34). Whether removed by contract cleaners in the employ of the city, painted over by residents, or even by other writers and artists, graffiti and street art is fundamentally ephemeral. For many writers, the life-span of the work is more or less irrelevant. It is the act of production that is the vital part of the process. Removal, for many, simply provides a “fresh canvas,” acting as a further stimulus to “get up” (Schacter 2008, p. 47).

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## 7 Legal Graffiti

Much of the early academic research on hip-hop graffiti practice foregrounded its deviant nature, drawing on notions of deviancy that were core to the neo-Marxist structuralist view of youth subcultures (Hebdige 1979). As Kramer notes, many of these accounts, particularly from sociology and criminology, presented graffiti practice as a “generalized lawlessness” where the illegality of graffiti was “taken for granted” (Kramer 2010, p. 236). Illegality of graffiti has been presented by some as intrinsic to graffiti practice (see MacDonald 2001; Rahn 2002). Ronald Kramer (2010) suggests that the centrality of illegality to the practice of graffiti in many author’s work (see Rahn 2002; Castleman 1980; Lachmann 1988; MacDonald 2001; Ferrell 1995, 1996) indicates “the presence of a somewhat stable, yet historically specific, set of truths” (2002, p. 238). By this he means that much of the work relates to a period from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s, where the criminalization of graffiti produced and reproduced a narrative of deviance underpinned by a belief that graffiti was a corrupting influence in the city and that its practitioners were easily cast as unrepentant transgressors of social norms. As a result, the moral claims that underpinned the spread of anti-graffiti legislation and ordinances were justified because graffiti was seen to be morally wrong.

More recent research has focused on the diverse nature of graffiti practice (McAuliffe and Iveson 2011; Kramer 2010; Lombard 2013; Dickens 2008a, 2010). Kramer points to the appearance of new legal forms of graffiti practice after 1990 that destabilized the “set of truths” that posit the practice as necessarily illegal (see Fig. 6). The emergence of legal, or sanctioned, forms of graffiti can be traced to a number of conditions. Firstly, the cycle of wars on graffiti conducted in New York (Dickenson 2008), and other cities (e.g., Iveson 2010), failed to eradicate graffiti and institute the promised “clean city.” In some contexts, this resulted in the shift away from zero tolerance and an engagement of more innovative responses from metropolitan government and youth agencies (Halsey and Young 2002). Youth engagement programs that utilized graffiti practice were among these new approaches.



**Fig. 6** Sanctioned or “legal” graffiti sites are places where young people can practice graffiti and street art safely. *Top:* The Tunnel, authorized graffiti area, Leake St, near Waterloo Station in London. *Middle:* Legal graffiti wall in Rydalmere in Western Sydney. *Bottom:* Sanctioned street art by French artist, Mr Sable, on construction hoarding in Shoreditch, London (Photos: Cameron McAuliffe)



Harm reduction programs aimed at diverting young people from risky behaviors employed graffiti writers as youth workers and used “aerosol art” as a medium. Out of these engagement programs grew “legal wall” programs, where young people could practice graffiti legally (McAuliffe 2013).

A second factor in the emergence of legal graffiti involved wider structural changes in urban economies. The deindustrialization of Western developed

economies produced the conditions for the growing importance of the “new economy” or the knowledge economy, one important sector of which being the creative economy. The increasing prominence of the creative economy, fuelled by the creative industries, has led to the revaluation of some graffiti as “good graffiti” that can contribute to the creative economy. Urban deindustrialization has also created the conditions for the proliferation of graffiti by ensuring an increasing stock of unused industrial spaces. These interstitial spaces – the unused spaces of the city – have played an important role in the reproduction of graffiti subcultures in many cities, as sites where writers can hone their skills and see the work of others. Young (2014) sees these places as parafunctional sites (from Papastergiadis and Rogers 1996), sites that seem to be unused, sites of disrepair or decline, as places avoided by citizens of the legislated city, but relished by graffiti writers and street artists. These and other in-between spaces (Iveson 2007), abandoned industrial buildings awaiting demolition, and stormwater drains and concrete drainage canals all offer opportunities for “hidden micro-practices” to take hold. The colonization of these interstitial and liminal spaces by writers challenges top-down “topographic” understandings of the city as a two-dimensional map that contains “a patchwork or mosaic of privately owned property dotted with public places such as streets, parks and city squares” (Young 2014, p. 130). Places can instead be seen as having a “multiplicity of character,” where publicness is moderated against the ownership and control of spaces and where different users might have different expectations of the way a space should be used.

The final factor in the emergence of legal forms is the continued commodification of graffiti. Some point to a longer intertwining of illegal and legal graffiti practice that takes us back to the formative moments of the subculture. These scholars argue that the assumption that graffiti must be illegal is a simplification of the complex social reality, and the commodification of graffiti forms is not new (Lombard 2013; Kramer 2010; Austin 2010). The *United Graffiti Artists* (UGA) coined the term “graffiti artist” as far back as 1972 in the first attempt to get graffiti into galleries. Their first formal art show, in the Razor Gallery in SoHo, New York, led to a spate of exhibitions involving other writers, where “paintings sold for over a thousand dollars, and press reports were generally favourable” (Cresswell 1996, p. 35). By the mid-1970s, graffiti “art” had fallen out of favor in the New York “high” art scene (George 1998) only to reappear in galleries in the early 1980s. Lombard (2013), drawing on the work of Miller (2002) and others, points to the resurgence of the graffiti art scene in the 1980s, both in galleries and through private works commissioned by residents and businesses. The *Post-Graffiti* exhibition in 1984, rather than representing the shift of graffiti into the art world, again led to the decline in the engagement with “high art” gallery spaces (Austin 2001). For Miller (2002), this fluctuation in the fortunes of graffiti “art” in the 1970s and 1980s has had as much to do with the artists being drawn into the galleries by “outsiders” as it did the vicissitudes of the market. But by the 1990s, it was the artists themselves, now older, who took control of the commercialization of their artistic products – a process that has intensified up to the present (Miller 2002; Dickens 2010; McAuliffe 2012; Lombard 2013).



## 8 Street Art and the Creative Economy

In addition to this shift toward legal or sanctioned forms of graffiti, the 1990s also saw the rise of new forms and practices derived from graffiti under the banner of “street art.” Street art unsettles the social and spatial boundaries around graffiti practice that represent it simply as deviant and transgressive. Unlike hip-hop graffiti, which has been presented as a mode of private communication between members of a transgressive subculture, and thus as an appropriation of the public spaces of the city, street art is generally seen as having a more public address, which produces spaces of interaction between the work and its various publics. Rather than all graffiti being placed at the bottom of the hierarchy of values, as dirt and disease ready to spread like a contagion through our defenseless urban landscapes, street art plays a more ambivalent role, more explicitly evoking a range of public responses in a similar way to other forms of public art.

Recent research has sought to engage with this broader range of responses to street art. In particular, there has been some attempt to consider alternative valuations of graffiti and street art, the possible contributions of graffiti practice to the sociospatial life of cities. Beyond the question of whether it is illegal or legal, graffiti and street art is being revalued through its aesthetic contribution (MacDowell 2006), as an integral part of the character of neighborhoods (Dovey et al. 2012), as a surprising engagement with the materiality of urban diversity (Amin 2012), as a part of a more just and democratic do-it-yourself urbanism (Iveson 2013), as an artwork (Dickens 2010; Lombard 2013), as “alternative heritage” (Merrill 2014), and as a tourist attraction (Young 2010, 2014). These authors note that, in some cities, local urban governments have begun to look beyond engagement programs as merely attempts to minimize the harm of graffiti, to see how funded and unfunded “street art” projects can contribute to cities in a variety of ways.

The rise of street art as the partial revaluation of graffiti provides pathways for inclusion for young graffiti writers, as they shift through youth-adult transitions and follow opportunities to become a part of the creative economy (Dickens 2010; McAuliffe 2012, 2013; Lombard 2013). But the opportunities of the creative economy also hide the specter of exclusion in the form of gentrification of artist districts in the search for the right conditions to attract the “creative class.” Zukin and Braslow (2011) even go so far as to point to the symbolic value of graffiti as a marker of impending gentrification. That is, rather than devaluing property prices, graffiti becomes an indicator of the presence of artists and “creatives” that have been linked with impending urban renewal and the opportunism of gentrification built on Neil Smith’s rent gap. Irrespective of the desires of writers to avoid commodification and stay clear of art worlds – to “keep it real” – the unintended consequences of the presence of graffiti in places like Williamsburg and Bushwick in New York, such as it was in SoHo and East Village before, are the eventual displacement of artistic workers by second-wave gentrifiers (Zukin and Braslow 2011). Zukin and Braslow point to the presence of public art as contributing to the reputation of an area as creative, and see “transgressive and overtly critical public art, such as graffiti and street art, as signs that attract rather than repel investors” (2011, p. 138). The cycle of

gentrification of working class neighborhoods in the cities of developed economies thus presents both opportunities and barriers for young people involved in graffiti subcultures.

The search for “good graffiti” by those outside the subculture serves to reinforce the hierarchies of practice within the subculture, differentiating those who have “sold out” to focus on style and “legals,” from those who are “keeping it real” through a commitment to graffiti practice that resists commodification within the creative economy. In addition to this differentiation between sanctioned and unsanctioned practices, a further differentiation occurs in terms of age, with young, inexperienced writers – the “taggers” and “toys” – left behind by the success of older, more experienced graffiti writers and street artists as they take advantage of the opportunities opening up in the creative economy (McAuliffe 2012; also Lombard 2013). These opportunities manifest as vocational pathways providing potential socioeconomic mobility. They also manifest spatially as local governments sway back and forth from zero tolerance to attempts to capture the value of graffiti in urban regeneration, community development, and the creative industries. This dynamic geography of graffiti management (see Halsey and Young 2002) has been shown to impact the mobility of writers (McAuliffe 2013). Older writers are able to more easily respond and withdraw from areas where criminalization occurs to use networks of sites in other locations within the metro area (and beyond). Younger writers unable to draw on the same networks of mobility remained tied to local neighborhoods. Their isolation has implications for their socioeconomic mobility as the opportunities to follow pathways toward sanctioned practices and professionalization in the creative economy may be replaced by increasingly harsh criminalization of graffiti (McAuliffe 2013). As in other areas of social endeavor, in this case, young graffiti writers tend to feel a disproportionate weight of the changing geographies of urban governance.

Even where new valuations have led to the persistence of graffiti and street art on the walls of the city (see Kramer 2010; Halsey and Young 2002; Lombard 2013), these valuations remain subject to orthodox understandings of graffiti as out of place (Young 2014). The power of writers and artists to control urban spaces is heavily circumscribed, and in the contestations that arise where different conceptions of aesthetic and moral order compete for presence, power remains in the hands of those deemed eligible to manage the city. For Cresswell, “the question of whose world is being written over – the crucial ‘where’ of appropriateness – is never a purely aesthetic judgment. The question of geographical hegemony – the taken-for-granted moral order – inevitably imposes itself on the politics of aesthetic and moral evaluation” (1996, p. 46). McAuliffe takes a more sanguine position, arguing that attempts to control space are subverted and moral codifications of space are challenged by the emergence of new ways of valuing graffiti and street art. Rather than seeing graffiti and street artists as purely transgressive and deviant, their involvement in sanctioned graffiti practice and even emerging state-led creative city practices places them in a position where they are “not merely subject to a moral framing from without, but also contribute to the continuous production of new urban moral codes” (McAuliffe 2012, p. 204).

## 9 Conclusion

Graffiti, as an affront to the city, a challenge to property rights, and a symbol of disorder, has become a touchstone of urban discontent. Young people involved in graffiti face a double bind – often excluded from the normative realms of adult worlds, their involvement in graffiti distances them further from rightful inclusion in urban life. As such, young people involved in graffiti have often found themselves subjected to disproportionate responses to their actions as writers. They are constructed as deserving of their criminalization – as vandals, property criminals, or gang members. They are outside the “natural” operation of the city. As Cresswell notes, “Transgressions appear to be ‘against nature’; they disrupt the patterns and processes of normality and offend the subtle myths of consensus” (1996, p. 26). Graffiti writing as a transgressive practice reveals unquestioned assumptions about the moral framing of our urban spaces, thrusting alternative visions of the city in our face and unsettling heretofore settled ideas of the right way be in the city. It is for this reason that young graffiti writers find themselves constructed as deserving of exclusion.

Yet, despite the virulence of the charges laid against them, young graffiti writers now find opportunities for inclusion through their graffiti practice. The appearance of legal forms of graffiti and the rise of street art both signal the destabilization of negative associations with graffiti practice. Some urban managers are opening up to the possible alternative values of having graffiti and street art in their neighborhoods. Whether as a tourist attraction, as a way of fostering community, or bringing life to the forgotten places of the city, the revaluing of graffiti and street art has made space for graffiti writers and street artists and opened up vocational pathways to the creative industries, for those able to make good on their social capital as graffiti writers.

In order to better understand the ways young graffiti writers are either included or excluded, this chapter has investigated the spatial politics of graffiti writing. Spatial politics involves the contestations over the meaning of people and things in place; it is the expression of what is in place and what is deemed out of place. Paying attention to the geographically marginal can tell us a great deal about the geographically central (Cresswell 1996, p. 150). Language is used to construct and reinforce the “common sense” position that certain groups are out of place. In the case of graffiti writing, as a global youth subcultural practice, the discursive attempts to assert normality in the face of the transgression of graffiti marks out young people as a problem. The norms that result, of young people out of place, are shot through with geographical assumptions concerning what and who belongs where. In this way, “normality” is defined, to a significant degree, geographically.

The spatial politics of graffiti writing facing young people has been interrogated through discussion of different spatial themes in the graffiti literature and the way they intersect with the social. Tracking the history of graffiti practice back to Philadelphia and New York has allowed consideration of the way the practice has changed over time and developed as a youth subculture. Graffiti writing began on the walls before shifting to the trains where the forms of the subculture were developed.

Themes of fame and respect and the pursuit of style animated the early subculture of writing. The normative construction of graffiti as a deviant subcultural practice can be traced to the early contestations over the presence of graffiti on the subway in New York. The association of graffiti with deviance, dirt, and disease – as a contagion spreading disorder through the city – is tied to the battles that were waged over the presence of graffiti. The wars on graffiti, in New York and elsewhere, secured the normative construction of graffiti as a heretical geography, as outside the normal ordering of social space.

The appearance of new forms of street art in the 1990s signaled an intensification of processes of commodification that began not long after graffiti hit the subway. Simultaneously, the failures of criminalization and the wars on graffiti to yield a clean city led to more nuanced approaches to graffiti and street art in some cities. These two conditions are in part the result of criminalization and the fact that some writers were growing up and moving away from some of the illegal practices that served to define graffiti subculture. The proliferation of sanctioned graffiti forms has unsettled the normative geographies of the city that determine graffiti as always already out of place. They destabilize the assumptions that graffiti practice is fundamentally tied to its illicit nature. The appearance of legal forms of graffiti has provided new ways of thinking about graffiti practice and challenged older visions of graffiti writers as limited to a deviant career path. But even more importantly, legal graffiti has interrupted a narrative that has secured the moral claims of anti-graffiti laws and policies. This has led to the expansion of innovative and complex policy positions and, in some cases, review of anti-graffiti legislation to account for the range of values and impacts associated with contemporary graffiti practice.

Whether seen as a disorderly incursion into the fabric of the city or as a source of creativity and surprise that contributes to a sense of place, the site of graffiti and street art is a vertical territory, a site of boundary-making that engages the public and collects the temporally dispersed audience that passes by. Young people engaged in graffiti practice still face the disproportionate impact of their construction as vandals. Nevertheless there exist opportunities to inhabit multiple subjectivities in order to take advantage of the revaluation of graffiti practice currently taking place in the creative city.

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Catherine Wilkinson

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	476
2	Representing Community and Identity on the Radio .....	477
3	Young People's Exploration of Self Through Relationship-Building on the Airwaves ...	479
4	Community Radio and Youth Voice .....	483
5	Conclusions .....	488
	References .....	489

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## Abstract

Geography, with its natural focus on landscapes over soundscapes, has historically been recognized for its visual bias. In recent years, however, a small number of influential studies have made strides to push the boundaries of geographical thought and praxis in presenting soundscapes as relevant to geographical debate, moving away from previous discussions of space and place which were firmly rooted in visual epistemologies. In particular, this chapter turns attention to the portable soundscape of community radio and considers how young people have the agency to present themselves on the airwaves. Moreover, this chapter extends this analysis by focusing on how community radio functions as a platform for youth voice, thus enabling young people to create cultural (re)presentations of themselves. Synthesizing different studies which explore the power of community radio as a platform for youth voice, relationship-building, and identity formation leads to the contention that, although soundscapes are a relatively new object of geographical research, they are an increasingly important one. By examining the complexities of young people's explorations of self and youth

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voice, this chapter makes use of an extended case study of KCC Live, a volunteer youth-led community radio station in Knowsley, UK. This chapter considers a move beyond perceiving youth voice as an ideal outcome, acknowledging the limitations of its conceptualization, and recognizing the ways in which voices are shaped by, and shape, the contexts which produce them.

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**Keywords**

Young people • Community radio • Soundscape • Representation • Youth voice • Collegiality

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## 1 Introduction

Young people and community radio are worth connecting because, as Chávez and Soep (2005) remark, when the phrases “young people” and “media” are used within the same sentence, it is usually in the context of concern about the current generation. However, while other forms of media, such as television and the Internet, have faced negative portrayals in relation to young people, community radio has oft been met with positive appraisals. For instance, Baker (2007) argues that community radio can position young people within dominant societal discourses, from which they were previously detached. Thus, community radio is an interesting site of study for geographers of children and young people.

Further, in relation to voice, Spyrou (2011, p. 155) queries: “how do particular institutional contexts produce certain voices rather than others?” Educational institutions such as the school have been heavily researched regarding youth voice, in this context typically referred to as “student voice” or “pupil voice”; however, research into more informal settings, such as community radio stations, is lacking. Heeding Spyrou (2011), acknowledging the role of institutional contexts on the production of young people’s voices aids understanding of the situatedness and variability of their nature. Thus through airing young people’s voices, community radio is an important space to consider the possibilities of youth voice and the ways in which young people can (re)present themselves. For as Tilton (2013, p. 1195) asserts: “we must identify what kinds of spaces and dialogs empower young people to forge the relationships and identities that foster social change.” This chapter aims, first, to briefly present some of the existing literature on the role of community radio to consider issues of identity in order to set the context. Second, consider young people and community radio specifically, reviewing the literature pertaining to young people’s exploration of self through relationship-building. Third, and more pointedly, provide a critical commentary on the extant literature on community radio and youth voice. A case study, taken from the author’s PhD research, of community radio station KCC Live, based in Knowsley, neighboring Liverpool, UK, will be woven in throughout. This case study involves mixed-methods research, including 18 months of participant observation at the radio station; interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders and youth volunteers; and a listener survey,



follow-up interviews, focus groups, and listener diaries. The verbatim words of young people from within this research are included herein to illustrate the varied and nuanced realities of youth voice and to allow, as much as possible, the voices of the young people to be shared accurately. Finally, based on synthesis of the former discussions, the chapter is drawn to a conclusion, signposting possible areas for contribution to theoretical debates.

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## 2 Representing Community and Identity on the Radio

As a prelude to the discussion of young people's engagement with community radio, it is useful to have an understanding of the role of community radio more generally. An interesting place to start is Vaillant's (2002) consideration of local radio in Chicago between 1921 and 1935. According to the author, during the 1920s, local broadcasting transcended a "radio imaginary" or an "imagined community," instead promoting face-to-face community life, for instance, by encouraging listeners to participate in programs or by organizing community socials. As Vaillant (2002, p. 26) eloquently asserts:

The airwaves became a neighborhood as well as a metropolitan stage, and many listeners tuning to independent stations swelled with pleasure and pride at hearing music and cultural programs that acknowledge and validate their particular languages, histories, and cultural backgrounds for both the designated group and the larger audience to hear.

Vaillant (2002) is quoted at length here because he evokes an image of radio broadcasting and listening as a community per se and pays homage to the importance of community radio in presenting local voices. Certainly, through a case study approach, Vaillant (2002, p. 26) situates independent radio broadcasting and listening within a struggle among urban ethnic, immigrant, and middle- and working-class Americans at this time to "claim urban space, shape public culture, and define the contested terms of ethnic difference, racial differentiation, and Americanism." This represents an important step in using radio as a means of empowerment and to give a voice to those deprived of one. As is perhaps evident from the preceding discussion, an implicit supposition in the literature is that the airwaves are a place, though not tangible and corporeal, which provides a forum for voice.

Cammaerts (2009) insightfully suggests that community radio stations promote civic cultures through their role as critical watchdogs and, as a platform for marginalized and underrepresented voices, they promote both external and internal media pluralism. This point is consistent with the work of Lewis (2006, p. 6) who positions community radio as giving "a voice to the voiceless." It would therefore be fair to conclude that community stations play a vital role in empowering previously silent or inaudible members of a community. Moreover, Morris (2008) demonstrates how community radio, through advocating scarce languages and cultures, aids in regenerating rights and identities of different marginalized communities.

Resultantly, these communities find their place in mainstream society. In this respect, community radio is capable of transmitting identity. However, more than this, Supadhiloke (2011), in a study of community radio in rural Thailand, notes that participatory community radio has the potential to transform rural people into active citizens, owing to radio's ability to empower the grassroots as well as to treat its listeners as participants, as opposed to passive audiences. According to Supadhiloke (2011, p. 297), through community radio, many hill tribe minorities have the means to realize their rights, duties, freedoms, and responsibilities and to articulate their views to the public; thus community radio serves "as a mouthpiece of the marginalized and the underprivileged." In short, citizenship can be created through community radio.

The above conclusion aligns with the views of Sujoko (2011) who, with specific reference to the Indonesian broadcasting system, maintains that community radio is concerned with sustaining aspects of local culture and everyday life. The author considers how Balai Budaya Minomartani FM preserves Javanese local culture, including ethnic song, traditional drama, leather shadow puppet shows, and Javanese languages. Overall, it appears that community radio allows for expression of a collective community voice, as well as individual voices. Turning to the case study of KCC Live, according to the Office of Communications (Ofcom) application for a community radio license, this station aims to encourage the positive self-image of a young audience and provide minority voice representation. In this instance, these minority voices are held by young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). The NEET status of the young people is somewhat worrying when considering Yates and Payne's (2006) articulation that those under this rubric are often perceived as lacking both aspiration and employment-related skills and thus can be at risk of becoming marginalized and excluded.

Regarding voice, Leal (2009) discusses Brazilian community radio stations as important public spaces whereby different political, cultural, and social discourses are evident in a number of opinion-oriented genres. As Leal (2009, p. 162) notes, oftentimes community stations utilize the local discourse, so as to reflect local reality, thus providing "a privileged space for publicizing the voice of the common citizen." In particular, Leal (2009) finds that community radio stations in Brazil are vital for assisting public educational campaigns, owing to their considerable infiltration on the lower-income sectors of society. Further, such community radio initiatives are often credited with reviving community spirit. The author asserts that regardless of the different action rationales observed, community radio stations often function as democratic participatory spaces. This conclusion accords well with Gaynor and O'Brien's (2011, p. 438) observation that "community stations open up the space for local talk by local people on issues of local interest and concern" and as such are a vital element in community development. Having contextualized this chapter by presenting a brief exposition of the role of community radio from a range of work in different contexts, the next section will give some consideration to the body of literature on young people and community radio, specifically, with a foray into young people's exploration of self through relationship-building.

### 3 Young People's Exploration of Self Through Relationship-Building on the Airwaves

I'd sit alone and watch your light  
My only friend through teenage nights  
And everything I had to know  
I heard it on my radio  
– Queen, Radio Ga Ga

In the section that follows, discussion turns to the distinctive relationship between young people and community radio. A number of studies considering young people's exploration of self and identity formation through relationship-building are reviewed. The case study of KCC Live is used to discuss some of the claims made in the literature.

A question posed by Glevarec (2005, p. 335, emphasis in original) is an apt place to start, the author asks: "what kind of 'social object' is radio for young people?" This is a somewhat knotty question. In answering it, the author devotes attention to the social meaning of free radio shows for young people in France. Within these free radio shows, listeners call in and pose a problem and are provided with advice. Alongside this, the shows feature games, live link-ups with sporting events, and music. As Glevarec (2005, p. 335) vividly points out, free radio shows explicitly target a teenage audience:

In a context where the passage from childhood to adulthood is becoming de-institutionalized, young people's radio and its 'free radio' shows are taking on responsibility for issues relevant to this age-group, as well as to social situations involving the confrontation of adolescents with the social sphere, with other people, parents, sexual partners, institutions and their representatives, the social order.

This quotation illustrates how radio can become a mediator for young people, introducing them to situations typically associated with adults. In a similar train of thought, Weller (2006) notes that free radio shows comprise the junction of two social realities. For the author, radio produces categories of age within adolescence while simultaneously exposing children to "adult secrets." In other words, heeding Glevarec (2005, p. 335), young people's radio "shapes the frontiers within childhood and between childhood and adulthood." Further, Glevarec (2005) maintains that, for adolescents in a liminal space, radio is both a negotiator of socialization in the transition to adulthood and to the public sphere. In sum, then, it can be seen that radio has the potential to enable young people to reflect on their childhood years and understand this in relation to the social realities of adulthood, thereby functioning as a negotiator of identity formation and transmission.

Algan (2005) sheds further light on the social function of radio, discussing the role of Turkish local radio in the construction of a youth community in Sanliurfa. Through media ethnography, Algan (2005) critically examines young people's attempts to overcome traditional restrictions and social norms through talk radio. In doing so she challenges Western-dominated scholarship on talk radio, which

hitherto has ignored talk radio's role in the formation of community. Still more significantly, she finds that some young people in Sanliurfa pursue romantic relationships via song and message exchanges on the local radio. Many of the young people believe that declaring their love publicly over the radio makes it more real and legitimate. For the listeners, young people come to hear familiar voices and listen to discussions by young people who share the same culture and traditions about how they resist the different social restraints erected for them by the family and wider society. Significantly, Algan (2005) finds that in Sanliurfa, radio functions as an alternative space for those young people who have limited public spaces to enact their youth identities, to meet and share stories, and to pursue romantic relationships. At KCC Live, too, young people were seen to use the airwaves of this community station as a channel through which to explore the potential of romantic relationships. For instance, one volunteer, Chris, formulated a creative tale of how he was longing to get back into a relationship with his ex-girlfriend. This story transgressed weeks and months as he told the listeners that he had been romantically reacquainted with his girlfriend and then eventually that he desired to end this relationship because he had fallen in love with another girl. This entire story was fabricated. In an interview Chris spoke of why he chose to tell this story:

To begin with it was just like a, erm, a filler, something to take up space on air. But then, like, I really got into it. I could visualise the characters, I kinda like knew what these girls looked like, I had names for them and stuff. In the end I carried on because I knew, like, the audience would find it funny and stuff. . . It was weird how much I got into it, I got into character too, I pretended to be upset because of things that this fake girlfriend had done, and I knew that, like, listeners could relate to that and empathise.

This quotation reveals a rather misty interpretation of a young person's (re)presentation of self. It holds parallels with the work of Holmes (2005) who, writing on the topic of media more generally, acknowledges that presenter's performances are a channel through which commonality is accomplished with other viewers, listeners, or readers. More contentious, as Stiernstedt (2014, p. 297) reminds us, there is a common expectation among radio audiences that presenters are performing, and crucially that these performances are "scripted, edited, and to a certain extent 'fake.'" Heard in this way, not only is community radio a crucial space for the construction of youth culture and young people's presentations of selfhood, but it is also an important space of experimentation, creative storytelling and (re)presentation. Community radio can therefore be seen as allowing young people to explore various possibilities and outcomes in the construction of different identities and narratives.

In a similar train of thought, Glevarec and Choquet (2003) argue that the connection made between the listening audience, radio presenters, and fellow listeners who phone in is indicative of an "in-between" status of radio for young people. The focus of discussion is the situation in France where, popular with young people, radio programs mix free radio with music. The authors tell that young people locate a space on radio to express their own concerns and to learn about others' experiences. As Glevarec and Choquet (2003, p. 34) assert, the presenters of youth

radio occupy an in-between role: “between two social spaces, being both institutional and friendly, presenter and pal, presenter and switchboard operator.” They find that young people assume a number of diverse personas and negotiate multiple identities on radio. Also of interest is the authors’ observation that at youth radio stations, first names, nicknames, and pet names are used for and by young people. In contrast, the authors note that stations with an older audience use family names or the presenter’s civil identity. From this, Glevarec and Choquet (2003) conclude that the presenter on youth stations is not defined by his/her social identity, rather with regard to terms originating from the social worlds of family and friends. Drawing on the case study of KCC Live, many of the presenters had nicknames by which they were referred to on air. The following quotation from Chris expresses this point well:

At the station, we all have like, nicknames, or names which we call each other, like be it their surname or we might refer to each other by something that we look like. We got these names printed on the back of our station hoodies. When I’m on air I always refer to people by the nicknames I call them in the station, because I think it’s important for, like, the listeners to have an insight into what we’re like, like our personalities and also it gives insight into what we look like. I call Andy [KCC Live volunteer] ‘the ginger genius’ and then people know that he has ginger hair and is clever. It gives the listeners a clue into what he looks and acts like.

Chris explains this further:

It’s important that they [the listeners] have that insight because, like we speak to them in the morning, afternoon, evening and night. We could, like, play a huge part in their life. Some listeners may see us as friends and we have a duty to erm, like, fulfil that role, and obviously it’s nice to be able to visualise the friend that is talking to you for hours on end, days and weeks.

Thus, the young people believe that through repeated listening, audience members genuinely come to perceive presenters as friends. All of this suggests, in line with Glevarec and Choquet (2003), that the presenter’s role and social identity are shaped in accordance with more personal, filial, and domestic worlds.

Having discussed “on-air” relationships between young people who are listeners of radio, discussion now turns to “off-air” relationships developed by young people who produce radio. Chávez and Soep (2005) explore the collaboration among young people and adult participants at Youth Radio, a broadcast-training program in the San Francisco Bay Area in the United States. The authors introduce the concept of “pedagogy of collegiality” to describe the process whereby participants at Youth Radio mediate the conventional relationship between adult “teachers” and youth “learners.” The authors are particularly concerned with the specificities of the learning environment created by youth media production. They believe that, following guidance from adults who are involved in the production process, young people make the transition from reaction to intervention. This fits well with the stance of Evans (2007) and Serido et al. (2011) who state that encouraging relationships between young people and adults afford secondary benefits to young people, by usefully supporting them to use their voice, thereby learning how to communicate

their thoughts and opinions to be heard outside the program. At KCC Live, the young people spoke fondly of their relationships with station management, and how they saw management not as authority figures, but as friends. Bruce's articulation of this is perhaps the most telling:

You don't really think of station management as being at the top of the hierarchy, you don't really think of them in that way. Chrissie [the station manager] doesn't really have a personality of "I am the boss!" she's very down with the kids. She always helps me if I'm stuck with things or if I'm confused by some technology in the studio. She's helped me since day one. It's my show that goes out on air every week, but at the end of the day, I couldn't do it without the support of management.

In this account, the relationship between the young volunteer and management at KCC Live plays a pivotal role in the production of content to be broadcast on the station.

Returning to Youth Radio, Soep and Chávez (2010, p. 55) likewise note the importance of collegiality in their classic text *Drop That Knowledge*:

The adult producer cannot create the story without young people to identify topics worth exploring, to find and interview characters, and to experiment with novel modes of expression and ways of using words, scene, and sound. At the same time, young people cannot create the story without adults to provide access to resources...and to share the skills and habits developed through years of experience as media professionals.

This work underscores youth media's role in increasing democratic participation. Future, the authors turn their attention to the relationships created throughout the production process, for instance, by young people, with adults as colleagues and the public as audience. In sum, the identities of young people are shaped and transformed as they are performed through the complex relationships between the young people themselves and adults, in both spatially and nonspatially grounded friendships.

To provide another example from the case study of KCC Live, the young volunteers at the station spoke of how they possessed a role, akin to that of peer teacher, in training new volunteers:

I try and help the new volunteers as much as I can. Sometimes the only jobs that are around at the moment which they can do is news bulletins. When I did work experience I did the news bulletins, so I've helped a few volunteers out with theirs. I just, you know, I just try and not be one of those people who thinks erm new people and just let them get on with their work, they're here to learn, I try to help them out as much as I can because when I was volunteering here first I did get a lot of help and support from other presenters and workers here at the station. I like to be that kind of head over their shoulders that they were to me (MJ).

I think that, like the fact that other volunteers are training newer volunteers shows like, the community spirit, rather than just like going in and getting a classroom and getting like loads of people to one teacher, I think like getting one person, one to one with like a fellow volunteer, it feels more comfortable. To begin with I wasn't sure how good I would be at it, but after that I thought well, I'm alright at it, I might go into teaching (Kurt).

Thus, from the words of MJ and Kurt, it can be seen that, through collegial pedagogy, crucial learning opportunities are provided for young people.

This coincides with a point made by Ranson (2000, p. 266) who affirms that in order to “transform practice” young people must learn how to communicate, dialogically, with others. The importance of this is clear when reading Ranson’s (2000, p. 268) assertion that “to find a voice is to find an identity and the possibility of agency in the world.” Writing on the topic of young people’s diverging paths to adulthood, Jones (2002) elaborates this argument. The author tells how mature young people, those possessing increasing independence, productively supervise the “feral” young people on the other side of the youth divide. Such pedagogical relationships are crucially important as, heeding Arnot and Reay (2007), through these interactions messages can be shaped and voices can be changed, ultimately challenging power relations. This leads neatly to the next section, where discussion turns to community radio and youth voice.

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## 4 Community Radio and Youth Voice

As Arnot and Reay (2007) make clear, voice is a slippery concept. Cairns (2009) argues that, historically, the idea of voice accompanied stories of liberation and emancipation, linked to the notion of giving voice to disenfranchised groups and individuals, thereby assigning power to those who previously lacked it. The concept of voice has become increasingly fashionable, and more recently, according to Arnot and Reay (2007), voice is considered in relation to post-structuralist concerns about identity work including the framing of individual and collective identities, identifications, and subjectivities and broad subject positionings. Certainly, as Zeldin et al. (2005) make clear, having a voice may be particularly important for vulnerable and disempowered young people who typically occupy a muted position in society.

One example of such a case from within the literature is Podkalicka’s (2009) reporting of Youthworx Media (YWX), Melbourne. The author illuminates the transformative process of learning to listen, which transcends the production of a radio program into the lives of at-risk young people. According to the author, through the co-creation of personal digital stories, recording of original songs, and artwork production, at-risk young people are able to develop and reflect on their artistic selves. The basic thrust of this idea is that, for young people, the process of learning to listen is achieved by moving from an individualized expression of the self, to a socially produced voice which signifies empowerment and accountability. In a somewhat parallel vein, using the case study of CKUT, a Montréal campus community station, Wagg (2004) finds that young people are empowered and enfranchised through their participation in alternative media production, which, through different music shows (a focus on current political affairs and broadcasting cultural segments), creates a space in the airwaves for members of marginalized communities. According to this view, young people gain voice through becoming active agents in the creation of their own audio texts.

Further, Wagg (2004) explicitly argues, that for the young creators, sharing their written work is truly enfranchising, regardless of the size of even existence of an audience. This point is consistent with findings from the KCC Live case study, where



some of the young people prioritized the production process and saw more value in this than the broadcasting of their radio shows. The following exchange between Beard and Bruce is from a focus group discussion between the young people:

Beard: I love researching my, the music I'm playing, and... I like kind of like researching and I like finding little nuggets of information, like as soon as I put together the show and I put it in Myriad [broadcast radio software], that's it. Like as far as I'm concerned that's the best it will be, that's that best it can be. You know, I listen back to it and I cringe a little bit, because the, the presenting sides awful, the music's brilliant. But, you know, I prefer like, putting together the show, rather than it, like, getting broadcast.

Bruce: Do you really care if nobody listens?

Beard: I don't.

Bruce: Yeah, I'm pretty much the same, I like putting it together. I like finding a playlist of songs that and I think, no that doesn't work there, I'll put that there instead, no I'll move that down. I'll say that after that song, I'll speak into that track.

Beard: I don't care how many people are listening to my show. At the end of the day I say what I want to say, I get my voice out there, and if it's, if it's just me listening to it, then, you know, it doesn't matter.

Through this exchange, the young people pay homage to the enjoyment they get out of the production process. For Beard in particular, simply speaking about the music he is passionate about is emancipatory, and, in line with findings from Wagg's (2004) research, he dismisses the importance of an audience in this process.

However, although Wagg (2004, p. 268) maintains that the production of the radio artifact initiates the process, the author argues that it is "the legitimacy of discursive space" that is the most empowering for young people. Further, the author tells how the airwaves create a worthy sense of self resulting from the vocalization of words, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. In other words, through the vocalization of personal views and opinions, the young people's voices are legitimated. This idea was also evident in the case of KCC Live. For instance, Andy spoke of how his confidence grew during his time at the station:

It's [KCC Live] gave me, when I first came here I had like no confidence to speak on air whatsoever, I would completely shudder at the thought of speaking on air in front of people, now it wouldn't bother me. I still haven't got the confidence to talk in front of a room full of people, that still puts me off. But if I'm behind a microphone talking to a million people it wouldn't bother me, I speak about things that interest me and things happening in my life. It doesn't bother me at all. So, yeah it's kind of given me the skills to move on, and hopefully develop them elsewhere in radio.

Clearly, for Andy, involvement in community radio has had transformative effects on his confidence and resulted in a changed sense of self. This was a popular refrain in many of the interviews, for instance, Kurt, who is a keen musician and occasionally performs on stage, spoke of the influence presenting on KCC Live has had on him:

Like I've come in and done the radio, and the first time I done that I was crapping meself and then erm, obviously on stage I was a bit nervous, but like coming into the radio that was



nerve-racking but you get over it. Like I walk in [to the studio] now and I'm on air and it's just dead casual, and then I felt more comfortable on stage I think through the fact that I'd done the radio beforehand.

Chris, likewise, talks of the empowering potential of community radio:

At school I used to be like the quiet kid, especially when like I started college I used to be the quiet kid. Now I'm like a bubbly kind of person – that's been brought out of me at the station with the people, like having a bit of banter with other volunteers. It kind of brings out the confidence in you to be yourself, and when you do that with in a mic, I mean on your show, through a mic, just sitting in the recording studio it helps then too.

This finding is not out of keeping with the conclusions of other authors. For instance, Wallace (2008) discusses how students at a college station find it “cool” to have a show and are caught up on the idea of creating a “public self” and broadcasting that self. It is in this sense that, discussing the case of YWX, Podkalicka and Staley (2009) argue that this youth community media organization, through utilizing media and non-institutionalized learning, provides an opportunity for youth at-risk to have a voice. The authors emphasize how such projects crucially enable young people to be listened to in a process of participation and development that will reconnect them to education and society.

Other authors, too, acknowledge the value of youth media organizations for providing a platform for broadcasting a mass of youth voices. Weller (2006, p. 304), for example, argues that radio phone-ins foster “participatory spaces” which enable previously unheard young people to promote their views to the listening community. Weller (2006) finds that the radio phone-in was successful in highlighting the voices of teenagers, through placing issues important to them on the agenda for discussion. This point can be related to what Dauncey and Hare (1999) describe as the “tribune” role of French youth talk radio, in other words giving a voice to young people. Within the research at KCC Live, it was found that not only do the young people acknowledge the voice that the station gives them, yet they also perceive it as a platform for the community voice as a whole. For instance, during a focus group discussion Harry states:

As a community station. . . we give our community a voice, so Knowsley is a community, it doesn't have a voice I don't think, do you know what I mean? It's just like any other small town in any other part of the country. It's the same as, say, Bootle [an area of Liverpool] perhaps, it doesn't have a voice. What you as a community station do is say right, here's your voice, here is your outlet, and go out there and actually get people to listen and get people to be interested in what's happening in your community.

Harry's statement has clear parallels with Mhlanga's (2009) argument that community radio offers an alternative voice to local communities, also encouraging community members to contribute toward bringing about development. This is of value for, as Ranson (2000, p. 270) tells, when young people and, indeed, communities find a voice, they are set on the correct path for discovering the agentic potential that can contest the constriction of exclusion.

Returning again to *Drop that Knowledge*, Soep and Chávez (2010) advocate that their text is not a celebration of youth voice; for Youth Radio, the station they are reporting on does not simply hand young people tape recorders and give them voice to tell stories. Rather, young people are encouraged to get in touch with their senses and experiences in their social worlds. For the authors, the wish to celebrate young people's lives often results in fetishizing "youth voice," where the phrase becomes a misnomer. Soep and Chávez (2010) note that media producers and theorists are inclined to glamorize youth voice as personal, authentic, and unadulterated expression, positioning youth voice as one of the primary goals claimed by programs relating to young people. However, they encourage scholars not to consider youth voice as an answer or the end product, yet instead perceive it as a starting point that raises a new set of complex questions. Trend (1997) supports this point, explaining that media producers who work with disenfranchised young people often maintain the modernist viewpoint that expression of self always has emancipatory potential. Importantly, then, for geographers of children and young people, a warning is issued not to be deceived by the romanticized notion of youth voice and to recognize its limitations, for instance, by connoting the real and the actual, "youth voice" precludes any performative aspect of voice.

Relatedly, Soep (2006) acknowledges that, when examining young people's media projects, the notion of youth voice often evokes excitement, connoting free expression and social critique, a point reified too by Fleetwood (2005). However, Soep (2006) cautions that, though this is tempting, often there are conflicting voices and interests existent within youth media outcomes. The author explores the multivocality in youth media scholarship through critically reviewing the discourses of literacy and voice. Soep (2006) explains that youth voice is not as ideal as it may appear; to explain, on occasions young people may control, exaggerate, and try out a range of real and imagined voices, even within a single sentence. Of course, as Chan (2006) tells, promoting youth voice through media production is neither lucid nor impartial. Related to this, at KCC Live, it was found that many people possessed a "radio voice" and that this is distinctly different from their own voice. The following points from the young people express this well:

I think everyone knows when you work on radio, you have your like on air self and you have your self outside it. So I eff and blind a lot more in person than I would on the radio obviously [laughs]. You've got to project like a more polite version of yourself on there (Harry).

I pre-record my show and then I edit out all of the mistakes, like if I slip up pronouncing something, it has to be perfect. Or especially if like I decide that something I said was inappropriate, I'll delete that because, like, I don't want to get the station into trouble (Nikki).

I think that there's a, there's definitely a freedom of like speech here, you're allowed to say whatever you want – well, obviously in context. You can't swear and obviously you've got to obey the Ofcom rules and stuff like that, but yeah (MJ).

These excerpts support the view of critical scholars, as highlighted by Cairns (2009), to be cautious about understandings of voice that claim authenticity.

Komulainen (2007, p. 13) highlights this ambiguity well in arguing that “what is ‘true’ and ‘real’ about voices remains an unresolved puzzle.” Thus, it can be seen that though many scholars position youth voice as something which resembles the idealistic product of media communication, radio shows become an arena for on-air performances, which ultimately lead to a miscellaneous (re)presentation of self. Considering the supervised nature of youth voice on the airwaves, both by station management and also by the regulating body Ofcom, results in questionable identity formation and youth culture identification among young people. As Juffermans and Van Der Aa (2013, p. 112) tell: “the production of voice is always situated, socially determined, and institutionally organized.” The authors continue, along a similar train of thought as Komulainen (2007), that voice is not uniform and constant across an individual’s lifespan, but rather is in a state of flux, varying over time and space. James (2007) reifies this point, stating how certain projects which claim to give voice to young people can have the effect of amassing diverse young people as if they constituted a homogenous group, eradicating individuality. Clearly, it is important to take into account the plurality and multiplicity of young people’s voices.

Though not discussing community radio specifically, the work of Dickens and Lonie (2013) is relevant here. The authors trace the lyrical practices of a group of young people involved in Ustudios, a community music project. The paper asserts an obvious sense of the young people’s potential to explore their own voices, both as a way in which to augment their emotional expression and development, and as a means of sustaining their contribution as active community members. The paper acknowledges how young people’s lyrical expression may go beyond the musical and toward modes of communication which can be perceived as both supportive and accessible, thereby seeking to advance an effective politics of voice. Dickens and Lonie (2013) develop an up-and-coming thesis on the political significance of voice, listening and recognition for reimagining conceptualizations of the emotional geographies of young people. The authors argue that the voices of young people featured in their paper are understood not only as musical expressions and works of creativity, but also as political expressions that shape, and are shaped by, the participatory spaces within which they are made.

Relatedly, in her provocative paper, Ames (2003) analyzes the representation of local voices and the notion of “difference” within a regional context. Ames (2003, p. 2) is particularly concerned with how commercial stations typically position themselves as the “voices of the local community” in order to increase listenership, as opposed to the creation of a “youth world,” whereby regional young people are able to “select from the global” in order to support their identity. The author notes how Rockhampton radio station Triple J powerfully impacted on local young people, by creating a world that celebrated difference; however, competition to be the “most local” within the region pushed stations to concentrate on communication with listeners during peak times. Adversely, this resulted in the projection and reflection of specific youth voices within the community while silencing or neglecting others. To provide a further example of this, KCC Live possesses what Schafer (1993) refers to as a “soundmark,” that is a distinctive community sound which is highly valued by people in that specific community. This soundmark pertains to the accents of the

young presenters, the majority of whom possess the distinctive Liverpool “Scouse” accent. There were occasions during fieldwork at KCC Live where young people who did not possess the Scouse accent were not invited to record vocals for the station, for it was deemed that their accents did not reflect that of the listenership, or alternatively were asked, in humor: “can you put on a Scouse accent?” in order to be included. This situation is not unique to radio, for as Chan (2006, p. 216) notes with reference to video:

Negotiation, ordering, and selection occur before certain positions can be fixed in media texts, raising broader questions about which voices have been legitimized, promoted, and canonised, and which voices have been subtly neglected and devalued.

Thus conceptualized, it is tempting to conclude that despite its outward manifestation, geographers of children and young people should be alerted to the reality that youth voice on the airwaves is not always a cozy consensus; rather it can be a troublesome and contradictory process involving the prioritization of certain local cultural representations.

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## 5 Conclusions

Throughout this chapter, it has been shown that community radio has a significant role in providing a platform for young people’s (re)presentations of self, relating to youth voice and identity formation. First, young people’s exploration of self through relationship-building was considered. It was concluded, heeding Weller (2006) and Glevarac (2005), that community radio plays an important role in the lives of young people, in particular in socializing them to adjust to different features of adult social life. In this sense, community radio can be seen to be functioning as a negotiator of identity formation for young people. It was also determined that through relationships developed off air at community stations, both between young people and adults and young people and their peers, crucial learning opportunities are provided for young people. Paraphrasing Arnot and Reay (2007), such pedagogical relationships are crucially important as, through these exchanges, messages can be shaped and voices can be altered, ultimately challenging power relations.

Second, in problematizing youth voice, a number of studies were reviewed which challenged its sexy conception as authentic and pure. Heeding Soep (2006), researchers should not be deceived by the rosy notion of youth voice. Rather they must be aware that radio is an arena for on-air performances, which ultimately result in a miscellaneous presentation or (re)presentation of self, thereby leading to questionable identity formation among young people. Drawing on Wagg (2004), it was considered that young people gain voice through the production of their own audio texts; this was corroborated by findings from research at KCC Live, where young people did not perceive a listening audience to be important, valuing the production process over the broadcasting of their shows. It was also argued that community radio is not only a platform for youth voice but also functions as a performative site

of experimentation and creativity for young people, for instance, through storytelling. This leads to the conclusion that though many scholars position youth voice as something which resembles the idealistic product of radio communication, most fail to take into consideration that young people may perform on air and that not all instances of youth voice are authentic.

In studying voice delivered through radio, geographers could make important contributions to realizing the value of community radio in creating an auditory landscape, with and for young people. There can be no doubt that this knowledge will be useful insofar as providing a valuable pathway for identity work and for mapping out the soundscape of the airwaves. Building on the current literature review, with this chapter geographers of children and young people are urged to devote further critical attention to radio as a platform for young people to articulate, not only their thoughts and ideas, but their accents and identities. This will enable a richer understanding of the performative dimension of community radio. This is not to detract from the value of current youth voice research, but mirrors Spyrou's (2011, p. 151) calls for reflexive researchers to "move beyond claims of authenticity and account for the complexity behind children's voices by exploring their messy, multi-layered and non-normative character." Certainly, this topic is ripe for further research and debate. It is hoped that such research will lead to new possibilities of voice, learning, and identity experimentation for young people in the somewhat confusing transition they make to adulthood.

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# Spatiotemporal Ambivalences of Youth Identities: Striving to Be Authentic, yet Worldly

# 25

Elizabeth A. Peacock

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	494
2	The Grounding of Identity in Time and Space .....	495
3	Youth Spaces and Identities .....	497
4	Belonging to a Place .....	499
5	Imagining a Place to Belong (or Not) .....	500
6	Spatiotemporal Ambivalences of Identity .....	502
7	Solya: A Working Class Perspective .....	503
8	Vika: A View from the Middle Class .....	505
9	Understanding Solya and Vika .....	506
10	Conclusion .....	508
	References .....	508

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## Abstract

Research with young people has increasingly focused on how youth actively learn, shape, challenge, and create the cultures in which they inhabit. An examination of the youth perspective can give us important insights into how economic, political, and social changes within societies can interact with individuals' identities. Social psychologists and geographers have shown how specific places are meaningful for youth identity-making. Youth interact with places at differing scales, from local to global and from past, firsthand experiences to future, aspired experiences. This chapter proposes a notion of the "spatiotemporal ambivalence of identity" as a way to articulate how the multiple identities of young people, which are linked to various scales of space and time, can be fraught with tension. This chapter demonstrates how places, both experienced and imagined, factor

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into young people's cultural representations of themselves and others, through a review of the literature and a case study from recent work in Ukraine.

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**Keywords**

Youth • Identity • Place • Timespace • Imagined geographies • Ambivalence

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## 1 Introduction

Children and youth have been the focus of study within anthropology, geography, psychology, sociology, and other fields, but research on these groups is generally marginalized. Early research framed children as “sponges,” unformed beings that were in the process of becoming full adults (Montgomery 2008). Ranging from Sigmund Freud's (1962 [1905]) views on the importance of early childhood experiences to Margaret Mead's (2001 [1928]) research on alternatives to western childhoods, these early studies examined childhood and youth through lenses of what were perceived to be the final adult stage of their development. The research on post-WWII youth cultures that came out of the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (cf. Hebdige 1991 [1979]; Willis 1981 [1977]), however, provided a new perspective on the role of children and young people in their respective cultures.

The new fields of childhood studies and the geographies of children and youth have done much to illuminate the experiences of children and youth. Current research in anthropology, geography, and sociology has given a greater voice to the agentic power that children and youth possess in constructing their own worlds, cultural practices, and meanings. They may simultaneously accept and reject adult norms, as well as reflect and respond to concerns separate and unique from those of adults. Though children and youth are increasingly treated as subjects worthy of research in and of themselves, work is still needed to examine the multiplicity of spaces children and youth draw upon in coming to understand their social position vis-à-vis class, gender, race, and ethnicity (Aitken 2001).

This chapter demonstrates how places, both experienced and imagined, factor into young people's cultural representations of themselves and others. First, Wallerstein's notion of timespace (1988) and Massey's critiques of “time-space-compression” (1991) are examined in order to frame discussion of youth identities and “imagined” places (Anderson 1991; Holloway and Valentine 2000b; Saldanha 2002). Though much of the literature presented here does not directly draw upon spatiotemporal understandings of identity, issues of space and time are implicit assumptions underlying this work. Far from being stable scientific phenomena, time-space linkages implicitly help shape how we frame and interpret social life.

Next, the literature on how children and youth make use of the physical spaces and places in their environments is presented. Social psychologists and geographers have shown how specific places are meaningful for youth identity-making. Interactions with physical places can help construct a person's “place-identity”

(Proshansky et al. 1983). Research on how children and young people come to feel emotionally connected to particular places, through their experiences in these places, will also be explored. Youth interact with places at differing scales, from local to global and from past firsthand experiences to future, aspired experiences. Places not directly experienced can play a significant role in the cultural representations that people create of themselves. Though most of the literature dealing with place-identity and young people is focused on firsthand experiences of place, places that are only known through circulating discourses can also be important sites of identity-making for young people.

Finally, case study research with teenagers in western Ukraine will be used to illustrate how youth can draw upon views of particular imagined places, each intertwined with temporal elements, as they construct and express identities within everyday social interactions. How young people understand what it means to “be Ukrainian” is often defined in comparison with what they have experienced as Ukrainians, in interaction with other Ukrainians and with non-Ukrainians. What it means to “be Ukrainian,” however, is also defined by what these young people *imagine* makes someone “European,” “urban” or “rural,” “modern” or “traditional,” and the relationships these different spatiotemporal scales are believed to have among each other. What is also meaningful is the extent to which these various timespaces are seen to be part of young people’s cultural representations of “who I am” or “what I want to become.” These various locations for identity, in short, are multiple and can be layered upon each other. The resulting overlapping identities can align with each other or, conversely, “rub” against each other, causing “friction” (Tsing 2005). Conflicting identities can result in ambivalence over how to position oneself within an interaction and, within one’s social networks more broadly.

In short, the process of identity-making does not occur in a vacuum, but results from people’s experiences and perceptions of other people, places, and times. As young people move through their lives, the ever-present question remains: what kind of person am I, in this place, at this time? Sometimes, this is an easy question to answer, one that is not even consciously asked. But at other times, it is the question that roils under the surface, the unasked question that, if asked, would reveal multiple, opposing “true” answers. Herein lies the spatiotemporal ambivalence of identity.

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## 2 The Grounding of Identity in Time and Space

Children, youth, and adults alike construct their identities in relation to particular places. These identities can even be viewed as embedded within places, both those sites experienced firsthand and sites that have been given significance even if only imagined. Places that are meaningful for identity are not only meaningful because of what experiences and events occur there, but also for *when* they occur. A temporal element is inherent in our conceptions of place.

Wallerstein (1988) argues that social scientists need to challenge our socially constructed assumptions of time and space. When we examine national identity or immigration, such as notions of an idyllic, historic homeland (Den Besten 2010;

Silova et al. 2014) or a past fraught with marginalization (Akesson 2015; Christou and Spyrou 2012; Coutin 2013), time is always a factor. Time is experienced and thought of in different ways, from short or long periods, to periods that are seen as reoccurring and cyclical. Time and space “are not two separate categories but one” (Wallerstein 1988, p. 292): the temporal and the spatial cannot be divided, but are dependent upon each other. Places gain meaning through their association with particular events, time periods, or perceived timelessness. The temporal is concretized through being locatable and grounded in space. The differentiation of timespaces lies in “the substantive objects being described” (Wallerstein 1988, p. 292). For example, east–west and north–south relations can only fully be understood by recognizing that this relation is both cyclical in time and ideological in space. They are “socially-created geographic categories of fundamental importance. . .linked within a given time period” (Wallerstein 1988, p. 293). What is compared, contrasted, and encompassed by “east” and by “west” is not set but is dependent upon the relations between these spatialized representations during the time period being focused upon. What is meant by “east–west” in the late 1800s looks very different from that of the late 1900s. Rather than framing occurrences and events in relation to particular other occurrences and events, such as (post)colonialism or (pre)globalization, Wallerstein asks us to consider how these phenomena are made meaningful in particular timespaces.

Massey (1991) also argues that linkages between time and space have always been implicit in people’s understandings of the world. For example, she argues against the view that “time-space-compression” – which “refers to movement and communication across space, to the geographical stretching-out of social relations, and to our experience of all this” (Massey 1991, p. 24) – is a new phenomenon brought about by globalization. Rather than viewing globalization as having an even, threatening effect on local identities and places, Massey points out how flows between places have always occurred between populations. Just as people have multiple identities that are meaningful, places too can be meaningful in various ways. The significance of a place “is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations” that occur there with others, and thus, places “can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings” (Massey 1991, p. 28). Furthermore, these social relations are “imbued with power” and “deeply affect the meanings of cultural influences and cultural contact” (Massey 1998, p. 125). In short, the flows characterized by “globalization” have occurred in the past, albeit not at the current speed or scale (Appadurai 1996).

Places are meaningful because of the particular social relations that are associated with these places and times, relations that are uneven and culturally embedded. Youth may represent their identities in seemingly similar ways, but these identities may be interpreted differently. The “east–west” time-space has a different influence on the identity of someone born in St. Petersburg in 1989 than it does on the identities of those who were born in other places and times. In short, the same time-space framework might look very different based on where one is standing and from which vantage point it is being viewed, examined, interpreted, and scrutinized.

### 3 Youth Spaces and Identities

The perspective that places are meaningful due to the social interactions associated with them has directly influenced much of the research on geographies of children and youth. Holloway and Valentine's edited volume (2000a) emphasizes how children's daily activities, such as playing and learning, are shaped and take on meaning due to the places in which these activities occur. The ways in which children's identities become "fixed" through the constraints and limitations of place and scale are the focus of Aitken's (2001) work. However, the focus of much of this work is on how children and young people interact with their physical environment (McKendrick 2000; Skelton 2009) rather than how their uses of these spaces are connected to their own identity-making as children and young people.

Children are found to primarily use spaces near and within the home, school, and park, while unstructured public spaces are used more by youth (Holloway and Valentine 2000a). The problematic nature of youth occupying public spaces is the focus of Hall, Coffey, and Williamson's work (1999). Adults often view young people in public spaces, such as spending time on street corners, as nuisances to peace and order. Youth are seen as needing "a place to go" in order to avoid becoming deviant. In this way, adults imply a direct link between the kinds of places youth occupy, the activities that are associated with these places, and the type of people who engage in these behaviors in these places. For example, the spaces that homeless youth utilize can influence the identities these young people construct and perform. While younger children in Evans' (2006) Tanzanian research draw upon western tourists' notions of the "young, innocent" street kid when begging in places popular with foreigners, adults no longer view older children as helpless. Rather than the place making the person, however, these young people change their behavior based upon adult others' expectations. Youth respond to the tourist rejection of their "helplessness" by engaging in more illegal practices to make ends meet, which reinforces cultural representations of older homeless youth as inevitably "deviant."

Another site in which identity is explored among children and youth is in the school setting (Blackman 1998; Holloway and Valentine 2000a; Loh 2013). Since much of a young person's time in western industrialized countries is spent in the educational system, the school is an important site for shaping identities. Loh (2013) discusses boys' literacy practices in an elite school in Singapore, where reading and analyzing English-language literature and popular media is seen to be a sign of the boys' identities as global citizens. Their confidence in presenting an affinity to reading complex literature in English upholds the boys' – and their school's – reputations. Practices that might be devalued among their peers at other schools are upheld as evidence for the boys' identities as "naturally" elite scholars.

Literature on children and youth identities has also examined the role of geographic scale. Children's rights differ at international and local levels, based on how relations and responsibilities between adults and children are viewed (Aitken 2001; Holloway and Valentine 2000a). "The spaces of everyday life. . . are produced through their webs of connections within wider global social processes (which in turn are reshaped through their constant rearticulation), just as spatial discourses are

important as they inform socio-spatial practices in the spaces of everyday life (which in turn reinforce our spatialized ideas about childhood)” (Holloway and Valentine 2000a, p. 18). Spaces are created and recreated through the associations and connections they have to wider phenomena. Narratives about place give meaning to the practices, activities, and interactions that occur in these spaces, and these discourses reinforce our ideas about the people and things that are linked to these places. For example, international development projects aimed at modernizing agricultural practices can unintentionally degrade local affiliations, affecting the residency and migration patterns of future generations (Katz 2004). Simultaneously, young people can draw upon local and global symbols, values, and practices as they create a culture that is both congruent with and separate from each (Maira and Soep 2005).

Anthropologists of education and sociolinguists have also researched how place is an aspect of youth identity-making. Using a notion of scale that bridges local and global spaces, scholars such as Blommaert (2007) and Collins (2012, 2013) have argued for an examination of how geographically distant discourses and events can have a significant impact on interpersonal interactions. In their “Introduction” to the edited volume, *Globalization and Language in Contact*, Collins et al. (2009) argue that “scales are multiple, never unitary” (p. 4). Scale is not merely a framework for discussing the local, national, or global, but is a way for approaching the interaction between multiple sites. While sociolinguists have not conceptualized scale to the extent that geographers have, indexicality is “the route whereby scale enters into meaning making” (Collins et al. 2009, p. 6). Indexicality is the process through which a sign, such as a pointing finger, gains significance through its association with something else. A pointing finger is merely a finger until a person understands that the thing being pointed at is the intended focal point, and not the finger itself.

Indexicality, in other words, allows for multiple scales to be associated with each other and gains meaning through these associations. According to Silverstein (2003), “‘Indexical order’ is the concept necessary to showing us how to relate the micro-social to the macro-social frames of analysis of any sociolinguistic phenomenon” (p. 193). Eckert (2008) expands on this, arguing “the meanings of [sociolinguistic] variables. . .constitute a field of potential meanings – an indexical field, or constellation of ideologically related meanings, any one of which can be activated in the situated use of the variable” (454). Eckert is proposing another perspective from which to examine linguistic variation, one that begins with the meaning given to a particular way of speaking. Johnstone et al. (2006) show how differing local meanings of “Pittsburghese” stem from multiple relationships between individuals’ experiences of local speech practices and public representations of different social identities and spaces (p. 78). The speech forms that are associated with “Pittsburghese” vary according to the context or situation and are believed to index particular kinds of people.

While much of the literature on youth identities is tied to the local places in which young people spend their time, other levels of scale also play important roles in making these identities meaningful. In interacting in places like the classroom or the local park, youth may also be drawing upon a variety of symbols and images that are associated with these places at the micro- and macrolevels.

## 4 Belonging to a Place

Other research has examined how young people's identities are linked to particular places, such as through their firsthand experiences with certain locales, the discourses they have heard about these locales, and the ways in which their interactions with others in these places shape their sense of belonging to a place.

Scholars have emphasized how "place-identity" is important for understanding how people gain a sense of belonging and affection for a particular community, whether urban or rural. Place-identity is defined by Proshansky et al. (1983) as a *personal construction* that comes from "direct experiences with the physical environment" (emphasis in original, p. 62). This focus on directly experiencing a place with other people permeates other research. In her work among immigrant children in Paris and Berlin, Den Besten (2010) shows how immigrant children's views of neighborhood belonging stem from the emotional link they have to specific locations. In their maps of their neighborhood and their talk about the places that are important to them, the children marked some places as "favorites" and others as "fearful" based on their firsthand experiences of these places. While some local spaces were described in terms of parental restrictions on their movement there, "the faraway 'country of origin' has an idealized image of place where there are no restrictions imposed on their behavior" (Den Besten 2010, p. 191).

Pretty et al. (2003) add another element to this perspective of place, examining how interpersonal relations are also necessary to developing a strong sense of place-identity. "Location itself is not enough to create a sense of place. It emerges from involvement between people, and between people and place" (Pretty et al. 2003, p. 274). Scholars have studied how personal experience is central to children's and youth's views of rural life (Kloep et al. 2003; Matthews et al. 2000; McCormack 2002; Valentine 1997). Perspectives of the "rural" are often multiple as wider discourses about the rural often contrast with children's direct experiences (Matthews et al. 2000), which are also shaped by the ways in which urban and rural children interact with these places (McCormack 2002). Places can also have multiple identities for an individual: "different understandings of 'the rural' co-exist. The rural can be produced as simultaneously both safe and dangerous" (Valentine 1997, p. 147). These different understandings of the same place are often discussed as stemming from comparisons between rural and urban places. Tyrrell and Harmer (2015) interviewed young people who had moved from an urban to a rural environment. The direct experience of place is central to this research, as the young people have lived in both environments, rather than predominantly only in one or the other.

Though much of the research has focused on the localness of youth place-identities, some research has examined the nexus between youth identities, global processes, and local spaces. Youth of different classes are found to be differentially affected by globalization, as their class gives them differential access to and experiences of global city centers and nonlocal spaces (Hörschelmann and Schäfer 2005). While working class German youth stay physically closer to home due to fears linked to "foreigners," their middle class peers view city centers as exciting and

receive positive adult support for engaging with the “foreign.” Ethnic differences can also be experienced through place, such as when Greek Cypriot children travel to the Turkish side of Cyprus (Christou and Spyrou 2012). The ambivalence towards Turkish Cypriots that some children feel comes from the gap between the negative stories they have heard about Turkish Cypriots, and their own firsthand experiences with this group of people (Christou and Spyrou 2012, p. 310).

Young people’s national identities have also been a focus of research, such as how cultural and spatial identities are constructed and enacted in relation to local, national, and global discourses (Millei 2014; Peacock 2015). Silova et al. (2014) show how post-Soviet school textbooks can influence how young people view the relation between national myths and the physical geographical spaces of the nation. Through schooling children are socialized to the cultural norms and practices of their communities, which also involves learning the community’s “socio-spatial consciousness” (Silova et al. 2014, p. 196), its view of space and the significance of space to the community. Nation-building projects in the focal countries included emphasizing rural spaces above urban ones and framing the homeland as the natural territory of an ethnocultural nation. Although they focus primarily on the influence of these pedagogies, the authors acknowledge the interconnectedness of ideas of place and young people’s place-identities: “geographies of places (or landscapes) are not just written by us – they also inscribe us in ways that we may not necessarily recognize and appreciate” (Silova et al. 2014, p. 206) In Akesson’s (2015) work among Palestinian families, the circulation of stories between generations leads Palestinian children to become emotionally attached to a Palestinian nation-state that is dislocated from its landscape due to Israeli occupation. Both older and younger generations share these stories, with children talking about places important to the family and Palestinian history “as if they have also lived in these places” (Akesson’s 2015, p. 36). Oikarinen-Jabai (2015) also discusses how “collective acts of remembering shared knowledge and memories. . . may lead to a situation in which the place that is experienced most like home is not the place where one lives” (p. 78), which she finds to be the case for some Somali immigrant youth in Finland.

In short, place-identities rely on firsthand experience of particular places, but also the co-construction of the meaning of these places with others. Young people interpret the significance of place in their lives through the lens of their own previous experiences, but also through lenses of others’ perceptions and of circulating discourses about community belonging and exclusion. Any examination of how youth represent their sense of self through their connections to place must acknowledge these other influences.

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## 5 Imagining a Place to Belong (or Not)

Places that have not been personally experienced can also be meaningful sites for identity-making. Few scholars, however, have examined how people’s *perceptions* of places may also be significant for identity construction. “Imagined” places can be just as important to young people’s sense of identity as those places they have



directly experienced. In his early research on boundary-making between ethnic groups, Barth (1969) argued that a key factor in the idea of distinct ethnic groups was not so much what members of the group had in common with each other, but, rather, how they perceived themselves as different from other ethnic groups. While commonalities may bind people together through their shared similarities, the feeling that one is a member of a unique group resides more in how we perceive ourselves in relation to others, both real and imagined (Anderson 1991). Similarly, our perception of a place as “our place” is constructed in relation to other possible places.

Keane (1997) and others have examined the relation between centers of power and more marginal, peripheral spaces. People’s cultural representations of themselves as “marginal” or “local,” according to Keane, are conceived in relation to their acceptance of somewhere else as the “proper, even foundational, frame of reference” (Keane 1997, pp. 37–38). While imagined places cannot be the sole site for one’s place-identity, places that have been experienced are meaningful and significant because of how they compare to (or are thought to compare to) other places, both directly experienced and imagined.

Ongay (2010) shows how Tijuana youth describe themselves and their city in relation to other people and places, such as San Diego and other places in Mexico. Mand (2010) examines Bangladeshi immigrant children’s views of “home.” For these children, “home” can be both London and their place of origin in Bangladesh, depending upon which interactions with family and material objects are being highlighted. However, their experience of each place is different and interpreted in light of the other location. Place and time are intertwined in Salvadoran deportees’ claims to American identity (Coutin 2013). Though they have been removed from the country, their experiences growing up in the USA links their past and present lives: “Though these spaces were inhabited in the past, removed landscapes are reinvoked in the present. As interviewees insisted, they were there. And because they were there, something of these removed individuals was left behind, a trace of their former presence” (Coutin 2013, p. 333). Place-identity, in this way, extends past the deportees’ current situation as a part of them is still imagined as living in the USA. Though these authors do not explore place-identity directly, their work implies a sense of place-identity that plays a significance role in the lives of young people. These young people’s identities are shaped and reshaped in relation to broader conceptions of modernity, and similarities and contrasts in lifestyles, material goods, and values. Multiple places, therefore, are used as frames of reference for thinking about and defining young people’s identities.

Saldanha (2002) uses the term “imagined geographies” to describe how ideas of western modernities are brought into the practices of wealthy youth in Bangalore, India. “The way global youth in Bangalore construct their sense of place within India’s modernity and globalization can only be understood by interpreting *their* images of the West within India’s specific geohistory” (emphasis in original, Saldanha 2002, p. 344). Wealthy Bangalore youth utilize western popular culture, such as blasting pop music as they joyride around town or throwing mid-day pool parties that echo MTV programs, as a tool for marking their elite social positions. Hegnst (1997) and Holloway and Valentine (2000b) describe a similar concept of



“imaginative geography” to explain how our conceptions of other peoples and places are constructed from representations of these others, irrespective of factual knowledge.

Place-identities can be as situated in imagined perceptions of places as they are in firsthand experiences. This is a critical point to recognize. Young people, as like their elders, strive to construct and present identities that are contextually salient – identities that shift with the moment, depending upon which is most appropriate for the topic, place, and audience. In so doing, both the real and the imagined come together: at times, entwining and reinforcing the other, at other times, colliding and challenging the others’ version of the world. When the latter occurs, it becomes difficult to mediate the chasm, to reconcile the lived experiences with the perceived truths, and to decide which best represents “me, now, in this place.”

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## 6 Spatiotemporal Ambivalences of Identity

“Imagined geographies” (Saldanha 2002) can play a powerful role in the place-identities of young people. Comparisons are often made between one’s current location and other possible places that one could inhabit. Furthermore, competing representations of other peoples and places may lead to ambivalence within one’s own place-identity. The modern and the traditional are often viewed as contrasting values for young people (Fadzillah 2005). On one hand, youth seek to be members of the global youth community, sharing popular culture and mass media. On the other hand, they are also expected to learn and pass on their local cultures. While young people’s ability to balance and hybridize the modern and the traditional is often understated, there are times in which these two forces “rub” against each other and create cultural “friction” (Tsing 2005) that is difficult to reconcile. Rather, young people may find themselves holding conflicting identities based in differing cultural representations of place and time. These “spatiotemporal ambivalences” occur when one’s position is not clear-cut but is cobbled together from competing spatial and temporal frames of reference.

Throughout interviews in the city of L’viv, Ukraine, young people described Ukraine and Europe in contrasting ways, both as positive and negative places. When Ukraine was described as a place of enduring security, social support, and family coherence (“Safe Ukraine”), Europe was a place of perpetual danger where Ukrainian migrants lacked social support and families were fractured (“Dangerous Europe”). However, there was another side to this Ukraine–Europe relationship. Ukraine was also described as a place that was backwards, “stuck” in the past, and so lacking in opportunity that a person could not achieve a normal, typical, modern life (“Impoverished Ukraine”). The Europe to this Ukraine was the “future,” a place full of educational and employment opportunities, where people could gain new experiences and perspectives, and where a Ukrainian could become an equal member in the global community (“Europe of Opportunity”). These versions of Ukraine (safe or impoverished) and Europe (dangerous or filled with opportunity) suggest a diversity

of Ukraine-Europe timespaces, at least for young people living in urban, western Ukraine.

Though a direct application of Wallerstein's five-part model of timespace is untenable, elements of Braudel's cyclical and eternal time scales (Wallerstein 1988) are present in these perspectives. Braudel described four time scales: the short-time "episodic history," the middle and long-time "cyclical history" and "structural history," and the very-long term eternal time scale (Wallerstein 1988, pp. 290–291). The cyclical scale emphasizes the repeated patterns within history, such as the rise and fall of civilizations. Eternal time, which Braudel calls "the time period of the sages" (quoted in Wallerstein 1988, p. 290), envelops such a wide swath of deep time that "historical time becomes in fact irrelevant" (Wallerstein 1988, p. 291). The representations of Safe Ukraine and Dangerous Europe seem to point towards eternal states of being, for both places and the people who live there. Through this lens, Ukraine was, is, and forever will be "safe," just as Europe was, is, and forever will be "dangerous." The alternate views of the Impoverished Ukraine and the Europe of Opportunity, in contrast, are more cyclical in nature. Though Ukraine and her people are "impoverished" now, they will not always be so, just as the opportunities of Europe are not everlasting as evidenced by the economic downturns that began in late 2009.

Spatiotemporal ambivalences complicate young people's identities, which can be seen through the views of two girls, one working class and the other of the middle class, when they were ninth graders in 2007. While both girls share the local norm that promotes language as an important marker of Ukrainian identity, their direct experiences and perceptions of Ukraine and Europe affected the ways in which they viewed Ukrainians who migrate to Europe, and whether they sought to travel abroad in the future.

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## 7 Solya: A Working Class Perspective

Working class Solya voiced many of the same fears about Europe as her classmates, but her family's unique position contributed to her ambivalence over whether it was immoral for Ukrainians to migrate there. Ukraine was both a place of family support and of familial obligations, a place where she naturally belonged but also a place that lacked the opportunities of Europe. In discussing her family's experiences helping relatives with village farm work, Solya gave a nuanced answer. On one hand, her familial village was safe and known; everyone either knew that she was "Ivan's daughter" or they at least recognized her as being a part of the village. However, traveling to the village meant that her urban family had to fulfill certain obligations to avoid local gossip and social stigma.

Well, of course, if there's a lot to do. Dad takes Mom with him. They bring food for the workers if a lot of people come and, in other words, for us it's necessary to go to the village. If the fields just lie fallow, it'll be 'oh-ho-ho' too.

Solya is a part of the village through her connection to her father's family, which brought both a sense of belonging and an obligation to fulfill others' expectations lest her family be shamed.

Ukraine is a place Solya has family, but also a place where decisions needed to be made that might benefit the family at the expense of the individual. During a family interview, Solya's mother described the difference between nurses like herself in Ukraine and those working in Italy.

For us, we work all day. For example, okay, I work for like eight hours every day. And for all this, I have nothing compared to any other professional and what they earn, a doctor or a nurse or a medical assistant. For example, a nurse came over here, I worked with her, this nurse from Italy, and people work there too. They have nurses there. What I earn in a year here, she has in one month. And people think 'why?' Well, 'why is it this way?' And you can work here even harder than they do there.

Despite the longer hours and lower pay, however, Solya's mother said that the benefits of being able to come home everyday to her children outweighed the benefits of seeking work abroad. The perception that Ukrainian migrants "abandon" their families for higher wages was widely held among working class youth. Solya's views again showed some ambivalence over whether becoming a migrant was worth leaving family behind. In her view, migrants worked abroad to improve their children's lives: "They're only there to work and send money so their kids can get an education." However, "they don't come back" or they only return "when they're really old and no one will give them work."

While Solya's mother decided not to work abroad, others in her family migrated to France decades ago. Over the years, Solya's parents saved money in order to visit these relatives. In describing the one trip she took with her father, Solya saw them as "still very Ukrainian," albeit living elsewhere. They spoke the language, ate Ukrainian food, and maintained Ukrainian culture in a way that Solya recognized as similar to her own life. In a way, these relatives were both French and Ukrainian. Going abroad can also lead to better opportunities. During a discussion with classmates about why Ukrainians travel abroad, Solya saw many benefits of studying in Europe.

It's good for transformations. Like, it's a little hard, the teachers might be a little better, they can compare you. . . After you study abroad, maybe there'll be a broader perspective here.

In contrast to some of her classmates, Solya believed that going to university outside of Ukraine could improve individuals' lives as well as Ukrainian society more broadly.

There is always a dangerous side to migration, however. Narratives circulate in the mass media which frame Ukrainian migrants in Europe as being criminals or unknowing victims of crime. At a later point in the discussion, Solya and a classmate described a television program that had recently aired on the human trafficking of young Ukrainian women in Europe.

Solya They're locked up there so they can work.

Valya Because they stole their passports, and later on they can't come back.

Solya's views on Ukrainian migration to Europe are influenced by her parents' decision to remain in Ukraine, her direct experiences of relatives living in France, and the images and discourses that circulate around her – at school, among friends, within her working class neighborhood, and through the media. Unlike many of her working class peers, Solya sees Europe as both a place of “opportunity” and of “danger,” and Ukraine as potentially both “safe” and “impoverished.” Solya acknowledges the image of the migrant as one who abandons their family and seriously considers the stories of human trafficking. However, she cannot quickly judge others' choices to migrate as an immoral act. To do so would be to deny the positive experiences she has had with family in France, and the benefits that may come from studying at a European university.

## 8 Vika: A View from the Middle Class

Vika is similarly ambivalent about Ukrainian migration, and Ukrainians' relations with Europe as well as Russia. As a third-generation urbanite and part of the historical middle class intelligentsia, she agreed with many other middle class youth that they must pass on their language and culture. When it came to Ukrainians working abroad, however, she set aside economic benefits for the social risks involved.

Ksenya	If you work here for that kind of money, like you work. You need to be a manager, Vika, to have a higher education. But they go there without a higher education. There they work for the same money
Vika	They aren't managers
Ksenya	Vika, it doesn't matter. There, they live ideally
Nadiya	They earn more money there, but it doesn't matter. They are there. Later on they abandon their kids.
Maryna	They abandon
Vika	They abandon
Maryna	Yeah, they abandon

Rather than siding with her friend, Ksenya, Vika aligned with working class Maryna. Her friend claimed that the higher wages that people without a college degree can earn trumps any other concerns. For Vika, Ukrainian migrants “aren't managers” abroad no matter what education they might have received in Ukraine. She agreed with Maryna, saying that migrants “abandon their families” when they move abroad to work. More importantly, these risks and dangers were not merely imagined; Vika told her classmates about the actual experience of her grandmother's friend.

Vika	And it's the same in Italy. My grandmother's friend went, and what do you think? They made her illegal documents. She sat in prison, yeah only, only, yeah, for half a year because she had illegal documents with her there. Not here. Illegal ones made for her there, and- and. Yeah, people have to do it
Lana	People might, so what of it?
Vika	And what, so what? People just have to go to jail? Because her bosses made illegal documents for her?

(continued)

Lana	They make all kinds of documents
Vika	And how did she know they were illegal? But people have to. Where do you appeal, if you're not a resident?
Ksenya	Good, Vika. Give us the next one
Nadiya	You have to go to some kind of embassy, to get your own documents. Not have the boss there go and do them for you?
Vika	Yeah, all visas are like that, but if she has documents that she can look over there
Sofiya	But she can verify them
Nadiya	Vika, she can verify them. Someone knows Ukrainian, someone works there and can verify the documents
Ksenya	Tell me, how much does our nurse get? Five, six hundred <i>hryven</i> , not more. A month. How much does this nurse from Ukraine probably get there on her own? I think that
Maryna	A thousand dollars
Ksenya	A thousand dollars, she gets around that, peop- Vika, it's a higher standard of living, you know?
Sofiya	Maybe there's worse information there, but it's an ideal the standard of living, I-I only say

Vika painted a bleak picture of the Ukrainian migrant as a person who had no choice but to migrate with false documents, and who was powerless at the hands of both the Ukrainian and the European states where they found themselves. She claimed that Ukrainians abroad are powerless and that they lack rights in foreign countries and are not protected by their own government.

Italy is a proxy for Europe and a place that is unjust and dangerous for Ukrainians. Other youth might imagine a "Europe of Opportunity," where one can achieve an ideal, modern lifestyle, and a lifestyle that is impossible in the "Impoverished Ukraine." This imagined Europe is fractured for Vika, in light of the direct experience of her grandmother's friend. Ukrainians might be able to have a higher standard of living in Europe, but her story challenges this perspective. Despite her grandmother's friend's attempt to migrate legally, she became a criminal and was imprisoned in the "Dangerous Europe." The uncertainties of working abroad that underlie Vika's narrative question her classmates' perception of an unambiguous migration process.

## 9 Understanding Solya and Vika

Solya's and Vika's ambivalences over Ukrainian migration are connected to their direct experiences and perceptions of Ukraine and Europe, the kinds of places they are, and the sorts of people who belong to these places. Their views highlight multiple contrasting cultural representations of Ukrainians who decide to migrate and those who do not, between of Ukrainian emigrants and those living in their host countries, and of the typical life in Ukraine and the imagined typical life in these host countries. An idea of normality echoes the perception that the world is divided between the "haves" and "have-nots."

The "Impoverished Ukraine" and the "Europe of Opportunity" that many middle class youth describe represents a struggle between a European-centered identity and

the financial realities of living in Ukraine. Ukraine is neither “good enough” for the people they are, nor for the people they want to become: Ukrainian jobs do not have the wages, security, or prestige to support what they imagine to be a European middle class lifestyle. The middle class, therefore, lives in a Ukraine that cannot live up to their expectations. Progress and development is absent or comes too slowly for them to ever be able to live the lives they seek. Europe, then, becomes the solution to their sense of being excluded from the rest of the western world. For them, Europe is a place of opportunity: for a better education, higher wages, and the chance to live a middle class lifestyle, not by Ukrainian standards but on a global scale set by European standards. Ukraine is stuck in the past and remains there because of some Ukrainians’ resistance, such as that of the older generations and poorer classes, against the European normality that the middle class has earned. In this view, Europe is both the present and the future: it represents where the middle class believes it should be and where it hopes the rest of Ukraine will be eventually.

The fears of many working class youth represent Ukraine as a place of security and comfort – with well-paid jobs and familial support – in contrast to a Europe that is filled with corruption and unknown dangers (Peacock 2012). The stories they hear of migrants support this view: lacking the financial resources to migrate legally to work or study, members of this class often end up as part of the European underclass of illegal workers. As a result, these working class teenagers reject migration and deem migrants to be either immoral or helpless victims. In terms of temporality, Ukraine might be “behind” Europe, but if it is, Europe is a future that these Ukrainians do not wish to achieve.

There is friction between these multiple space-times of Ukraine-Europe. The ambivalence that Solya and Vika expressed stem from the disjuncture between their class and friendship identities, their experiences and the experiences of those close to them, and the possibilities and expectations each girl has for her future. Both Solya and Vika understand their peers’ positions towards Ukrainian migration, but their direct experiences and their imagined geographies provide them with alternative representations of Ukraine and Europe, and alternative perspectives on the potential outcomes for migrants. As the first generation of independent Ukraine works to transform their country – through the 2014–2015 Maidan protests, the ousting of former President Yanukovich, the annexation of Crimea by Russia, and the continuing conflicts in the eastern regions bordering with Russia – they ask “who are we as Ukrainians?”

Solya’s and Vika’s views reflect diversity in identities, created through their own experiences and the images and discourses – from their parents, friends, communities, and the media – that circulate around them. In these ways, youth construct their own imaginary geographies that shape and reshape cultural representations of their “place” in the world. For many middle class Ukrainians, the Ukrainian nation is “here,” but located in an eternal past that exists separately from the here/now of their present lives. As long as one continues to speak Ukrainian, passes along Ukrainian culture, and returns to Ukraine periodically, a person remains a part of Ukraine (for a part of Ukraine is carried with them). For some working class youth, however, the nation as a symbol is only significant if it is embodied in living, breathing people.

If a person leaves Ukraine, they risk no longer “belonging” – being seen as rejecting their homeland and the people they left behind: with increasing temporal and spatial distance comes a weakening of connection. For youth like Solya and Vika, anxiety lies in the no man’s land in-between. On one hand, to stay in Ukraine means to retain one’s “natural” place-identity. On the other hand, to go to Europe may mean risking the loss of one’s place without being able to belong anywhere else.

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## 10 Conclusion

An examination of youth identity-making involves taking into account the places to which young people feel connected, the meanings these places have for youth, and how youth represent these places in relation to other possible places. Places are meaningful because of the interactions that occur there, the activities associated with these spaces, and the perceptions people have of places even if they have never experienced them firsthand. Place-identities are not only spatial; every space also has temporal significance. Wallerstein (1988) examines how the narratives we tell about ourselves involve places that have contextually and temporally defined significance. These identity-narratives are based on experiences, later interpretations of past experiences that are revised in light of more recent events, and representations of the world that are constructed from other narratives that circulate. Massey (1991) describes the multiplicity inherent in space-time, which allows for layering, friction, and the ambivalence of spatiotemporal identities proposed here. “It is thus. . .specifically the spatiality in space-time which opens up in the first place the possibility of multiplicity and thus of (co-existing) difference” (Massey 1991, p. 259). Not everyone will directly experience other places, but this does not mean that these other places cannot be important in shaping and reshaping young people’s notions of identity. Imagined geographies can play an important role in the construction of place-identity: a sense of belonging in, of, and to a place. Young people’s direct experiences of places and their perceptions of nonexperienced spaces can collide, however. The friction between these reference points can lead to ambivalence between the multiple ways of belonging to contrasting kinds of places.

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# Trekking, Navigating, and Travelogueing in the Youth Trek Project: The Documentary Photography and Photo Essays of a Young Research Collaborator Traveling in the United States

# 26

Amy Donovan Blondell

## Contents

1	Introduction: The Eye of the Beholder .....	512
2	The Limits of Participatory Research and the Effort to Work with Youth as Full Research Collaborators .....	513
3	The Youth Trek Project .....	515
3.1	Mapping Workshops and Oral Histories .....	516
3.2	Documenting Travel Routes .....	517
4	Creating Travelogues with Travel Routes, Personalized Maps, and Geo-narratives, Documentary Photos, and Photo Essays .....	517
4.1	Documentary Photography and the Photo Essay Writing Process .....	520
4.2	The Content of the Pictures .....	521
5	Youth Mobilities: The Displacement, Relocation, and Travel of Homeless Youth .....	521
5.1	Documenting the Ephemeral, Representing a Moment in Time .....	522
5.2	The Camera as a Tool for Documenting Present Harms and Future Possibilities .	523
5.3	Documenting the (Re)Invention of Identity .....	524
5.4	Documenting Work in the Informal Economy: Travelogueing about Labor Exploitation .....	526
5.5	Subjectivity and the Self-Portrait: Crafting an Image of Oneself in the Face of Exploitation and Stigma .....	527
5.6	Using the Camera to Document the Industrial Landscape and its Environmental Impact .....	527
5.7	Documenting Hazards on the Road and Deciding Which Direction to Go .....	528
5.8	The Compass of Choice: The Complexities of Decision-Making on the Rails . . .	529
5.9	Desire, Destination, and Decision-Making .....	530
5.10	The Odyssey of Longing .....	531
6	Conclusion .....	533
	References .....	535

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**Abstract**

This chapter focuses on the first-person perspective of an 18-year-old homeless young woman as expressed through her travelogues, which she created while walking, hitchhiking, and riding the rails across the United States during the 2 years she participated in the Youth Trek study. Youth Trek was a transdisciplinary, longitudinal study which used mobile phones to maintain contact with homeless young people as they traveled, collaborating with them to document their lives. Using her smartphone and a point-and-shoot camera, one participant, called Hero, helped sketch out her travel routes by contributing GPS coordinates, uploading 549 documentary photographs to the research site, recording geo-narratives about her travel experiences, and cowriting photo essays with the researcher. Through travelogues, Hero documented landscapes she witnessed passing through rural and urban settings from the Northwest to the Southeast. She described ways she used the camera: to create self-portraits and selfies during joyful and trying times; document a mood, feeling, or ephemeral scene; and capture a love affair in motion and a crush that never reaches fruition. She utilized the camera as a tool of admiration, photographing her dog, street art, and public art of heroic proportions. In her photo essays, she explains how she creates and finds community through art and uses the camera to make a visual record of her environment documenting her dwellings and squats, train-hopping experiences, pollution, and beauty. These travelogues cannot characterize the experiences of all traveling homeless youth, but they do offer insight into the unique perspective of one.

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**Keywords**

Homeless youth • Participatory research • Documentary photography • Visual research • Youth mobilities • Migration • Geospatial, GIS • Travelogueing

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## 1 Introduction: The Eye of the Beholder

Which geographies do homeless youth see, and what does a homeless young woman, traveling the country, focus upon when she is taking a picture? As a photographer, what motivates her to capture something within her frame? Questions about identity, meaning, and representation animate this chapter, which focuses on the photography, photo essays, personalized maps, and travel routes of an 18-year-old homeless young woman in the Youth Trek study. The Youth Trek study piloted a participatory method called *travelogueing*, in which homeless young people were full research collaborators documenting their lives.

In the United States, Homeless youth and transition-aged young people are estimated at over 5 million in number (Ringwalt et al. 1998). Although they are a highly mobile population, little is known about why and where homeless young people travel or how they interpret the world when they do. Many researchers and service providers lose contact with young people, as they are often dislocated and

leave town. Most research is cross-sectional, with surveys and interviews done at one particular time and place. It is therefore difficult to learn about the perspectives and life challenges of homeless youth over time, although there have been a few successful longitudinal studies in which interviews and surveys were repeated at several month intervals (Lankenau et al. 2008; Cochran et al. 2002; Des Jarlais et al. 2005; Noell et al. 2001). The Youth Trek study differed from these studies in that it was designed with a “real-time” element. The researcher almost “traveled with” the young people while they traveled from place to place over the one and a half to 2 years that they were in the study, as she was able to remain in contact with them through the use of mobile phones.

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## 2 The Limits of Participatory Research and the Effort to Work with Youth as Full Research Collaborators

In her incisive text, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics*, filmmaker and theorist Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1991) addresses the politics of representation, asking the questions of participatory research: who determines who can participate, and to what extent, and which party will characterize the projects in publications? Trinh has been critical of participatory research stating that “shared anthropology has been tossed around for a try. . . but it will be shared only partly and with much caution, and on the condition that the share is *given*, not taken” (Trinh 1991, p. 67).

Like many participatory research projects (Pain and Francis 2003), participants did not design the Youth Trek study from its inception; however, they did inform how it was carried out, and they expressed their interest in the project to varying degrees and in different ways. As in many participatory research projects, the level of participation differed with activity (Punch 2002). While some enjoyed the interview process, sharing stories and speaking extensively on different topics, others were more forthcoming during the mapping workshops or in taking and sharing photographs. Some young people transmitted a great deal of geographical data to create travel routes, while others transmitted comparably little. Although it is not uncomplicated, in participatory projects participants ideally are full collaborators in the research process. Rather than being the objects of study, they are knowledge producers expressing their first-person perspectives (Beazley and Ennew 2006; Van Blerk and Barker 2008).

Power relations in the research context can be extremely complicated (Cleverly 1999) and can be exacerbated by financial pressures. In the Youth Trek study, participants were introduced to the study before they elected whether or not they wanted to join. They heard about the objectives of the study and all the different methods and had an opportunity to discuss some of the possible ways that the material could be published. An important first step in pursuing this research was to elicit their feedback and preferences, in advance of the study (Boyden and Ennew 1997). Although they received small remuneration for some research activities, as is often the case in studies supported by public health research institutes, no money or

gift certificates were given for the contribution of geographical data, so there was no possibility of financial coercion in this respect. Employing a multi-method approach resulted in fuller participation as different youth participants gravitated toward different research activities (Morrow 2008). This approach also rendered a complex, multilayered picture of daily life (Pain 2004), as maps could be combined with photographs, questionnaire responses, and testimony about experience on the road.

The power relations between the researcher and participants have an impact on the research, and it can be argued that if the art or research project is organized from outside the group, then the questions and concerns of the external researcher will be overrepresented in either the artworks themselves or in the way they are represented by the researcher. For example, in the Youth Trek project, there was an express focus on health, housing, and income generation on the part of the researcher. Since these concerns about housing, healthcare, and income generation were shared by the youth participants, the participants didn't seem to mind focusing on them in interviews and sometimes welcomed the conversation as an opportunity to think out loud about how to deal with these issues when they surfaced. While these concerns may well be overrepresented in the documentation of their lives and goals, the concern about documenting these issues did not entirely eclipse other concerns introduced by the participants during biweekly telephone interviews. Because there were many telephone interviews over a very long period of time, participants brought up a number of topics that were then pursued by the researcher, including musical events and other festivities, political activities, difficulties with local authorities such as police, and kinship and social relationships with romantic partners, family members, and companion animals. These issues were documented and revisited in subsequent telephone interviews, in what became a dialogic and iterative research process. There was also a cross pollination of insights and analysis across the participant group, although there was no sharing of specific information about any one participant with any another. Fundamentally, the success of the research collaboration is underpinned by the relationship of trust developed over time, and this social relationship does not occur outside of the wider set of power relations within which both researcher and youth participant are living (Gallagher 2008).

In her critique of participatory projects, Trinh Minh-ha (1991, p. 67) argues that power "creates its very constraints," and indeed both participants and researchers are compromised in the process since the hazards of the world are greater than both actors. Ethical quandaries are often resolved through highly delimited approaches to the dissemination of knowledge. For example, while participants in the Youth Trek project were asked, at the legal age of 18, whether they preferred to have their photographs presented under their own names, if the researcher determined that it was advisable to do so, they all expressed a preference to do so. It is with sorrow that the researcher has determined to withhold the name of the highly accomplished participant photographer in the context of this online publication, erring on the side of caution for fear of unintended consequences. With today's Internet, it is much easier for people to share photographs and other creative work and communicate

with the public through blogs, for example. The Internet-savvy photographer, whose work is featured here, may well use online venues to publicize her creative work and may or may not choose to discuss her participation in the Youth Trek project. In any case, an effort is made to share all creative works and writings coming from the Youth Trek study with the research participants.

The question of whether it is possible to discern a perspective, set of values, or esthetics of a group of people from studying their artworks was raised by one of the pioneers of visual anthropology, the late John Adair, coauthor of the groundbreaking book, *Through Navajo Eyes* (Worth and Adair 1997). Adair problematized the idea of the “authentic perspective,” focusing on the complexity of the world and the cultural hybridity of its members. He argued that the young Navajo film makers, in their participatory film projects, reflected their own values, the outlook of the Navajo, and their individual artistic preferences developed in a multicultural world. For example, he talked about the influence of French New Wave Cinema on the films of one of the young Navajo filmmakers. What the photographer called Hero chooses to represent in the photos presented in this chapter may well be influenced by her homeless status, age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc., but it is also her unique expression as an artist. Her artistic work can offer insight into her life as a traveling homeless young woman, but it cannot be reduced or collapsed into a reflection of this identity.

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### 3 The Youth Trek Project

The Youth Trek study followed many years of working with migrant and homeless young people in ethnographic and mixed methods research beginning in the nineteen nineties. This research involved doing participant observation as a counselor in a drop-in center for homeless and runaway youth and conducting street outreach. (Donovan 2002). In addition to participant observation in social service and street-based settings, three participatory research projects were conducted with homeless young people. The first was a “Shooting Back” type photography project called “Urban Scape” in which youth photographed the police, their squats, their friends, and other aspects of daily life. The second was a mixed media museum exhibition, “Refuse and Refuge: Youth at the Edge of Consumer Society”. This exhibit on homelessness was produced collaboratively with homeless and formerly homeless youth, squatters in Homes Not Jails, clinicians, and service providers. The third participatory research project was The Labor Memoir Project, a year-long weekly writing workshop in which homeless and formerly homeless young people wrote about their employment and income generating experiences. Between the participatory research projects and participant observation, approximately 700 homeless young people were involved in the research in various institutional and street based settings. These research projects were carried out in conjunction with San Francisco State University and New School for Social Research in New York City, and were supported in part by grants from the Bay Area Homelessness Project and the San Francisco Arts Commission.

The Youth Trek project was launched in 2011, in San Francisco, California, a destination city on the West Coast of the United States (the research began at the Institute for Health and Aging and continued at the Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies, both at the University of California, San Francisco). The Youth Trek study was funded by the National Institutes of Health, and like most public health studies, participants received gift certificates and Visa gift cards as compensation for the time they took to participate in research activities. As part of the study, Youth Trek participants received smartphones, with unlimited voice, text, and data (Internet) service. At the start of the Youth Trek project, smartphones represented only about one-third of the market share of cell phones. While about a third of homeless youth had cell phones, most were not smartphones, and many had only intermittent service. The phones proved useful in the daily lives of participants and proved to be exceptional tools for documentation and research. For a more detailed description of the Youth Trek methodology, see Volume 12 in this series (Blondell et al. [in press](#)).

### 3.1 Mapping Workshops and Oral Histories

When the study began, Youth Trek participants sat down with the researcher to do intensive oral history interviews and mapping workshops. Three personalized, captioned maps were made during these workshops, documenting past employment and other income-generating activities, healthcare, and housing history. Project phones were preloaded with Youth Trek Gmail accounts, through which the participants were sent quarterly online surveys and weekly questionnaires. These instruments addressed the participants' shelter, housing, and healthcare needs as well as their success in accessing needed resources and services. This chapter does not address this quantitative dimension of the study, rather, it focuses on travelogueing.

Travelogueing is a multipronged approach with geographic, cartographic, photographic, and narrative elements. It was developed by the Youth Trek study so that highly mobile participants, who preferred to express themselves in different ways, could collaborate with the researcher in documenting their lives while they traveled and moved. In addition to making personalized captioned maps in the initial mapping workshops, participants uploaded documentary photographs and cowrote photo essays, sent geographic information electronically to enable the researcher to trace their travel routes, and gave narrative testimony about their travel experiences in the form of geo-narratives recorded during biweekly telephone interviews.

To add dimension and enhance first-person perspective, visual methods have been increasingly used by social researchers and geographers, who have incorporated participatory research strategies such as photovoice, photo elicitation, photo-walks, and photo-talks (Kullman 2012; Ingram 2014; Gant et al. 2009; Allen 2012; Singhal et al. 2007; Svensson et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2010; Shea et al. 2013; Wang 2006; Power et al. 2014; Pyry 2015).

### 3.2 Documenting Travel Routes

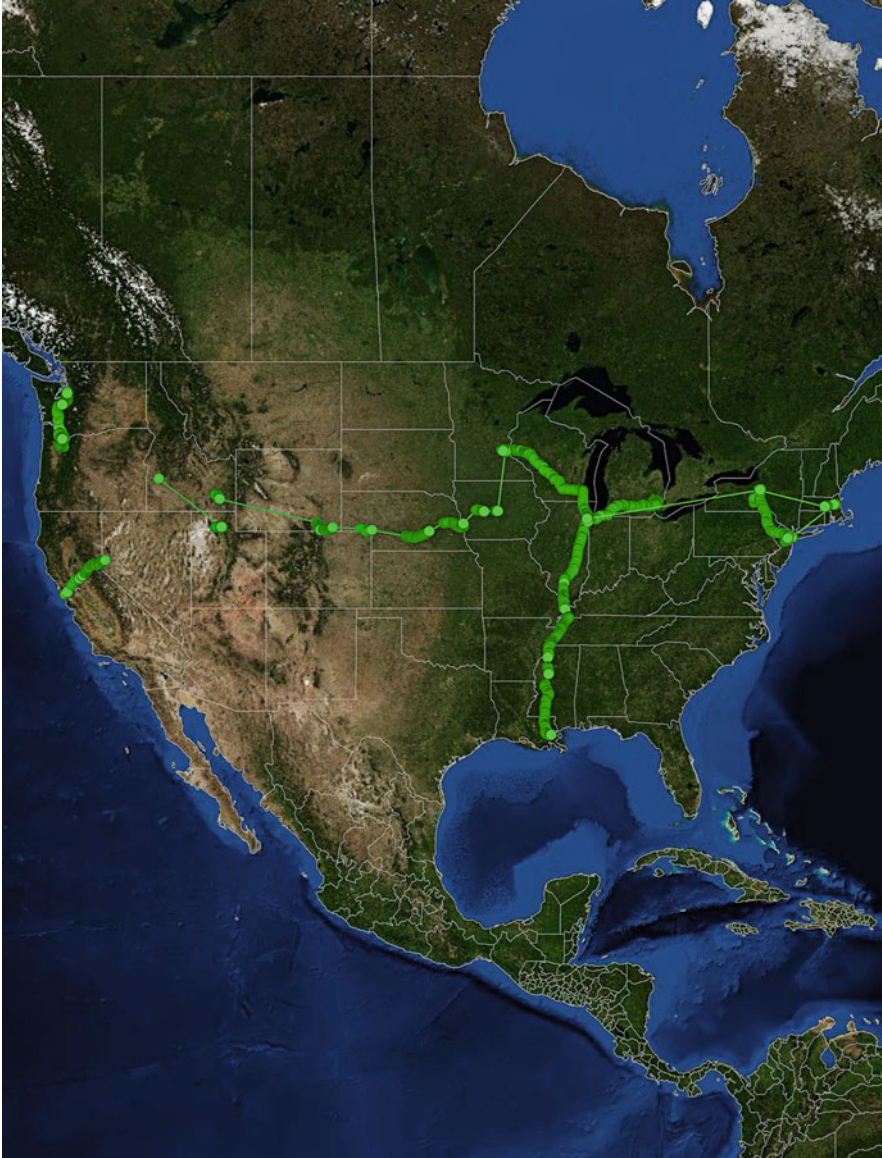
Homeless youth in the Youth Trek study were excited about their travels and eager to see their travel routes documented. Whenever they chose, they could either turn off or turn on the InstaMapper© application on their phones, and they often did both. The transmitter sent de-identified geographical coordinates to the research website. These geographical coordinates were later aggregated by the researcher in a time-consuming process that finally resulted in a sketch of their travel routes. If participants wanted to keep their whereabouts private from the research, they simply didn't turn on the transmitter. Youth Trekkers often turned off the transmitters for other reasons, including the conservation of battery power, especially during long train rides. When asked what they liked best about their phones, they most often referenced "maps." For mobile homeless youth, navigation is critical, and they often turned on the GPS when they were unsure of where they were. At night, while riding trains in the dark, it was difficult to make out signs, and without the phone they were often unsure through which city, town, or state they were passing. The mapping function only worked where there was cell phone service. Unfortunately, many of the rural areas through which they traveled had few cell phone towers at the time, and these "dead zones" both frustrated them and resulted in significant gaps in the geographical data when there was no connectivity and therefore no transmission of GPS coordinates. Gaps also occurred when participants ran out of battery power or elected to turn transmission off, to conserve what little battery power they had. The consulting geographer at the Geospatial Innovation Facility, Mr. Kevin Koy, helped to sketch out the travel routes by connecting the dots that represented each point in which geographical data was sent. In this way, the big picture of the youths' travel routes could be discerned.

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## 4 Creating Travelogues with Travel Routes, Personalized Maps, and Geo-narratives, Documentary Photos, and Photo Essays

This chapter focuses on the Youth Trek travelogues of one young woman who will be referred to here as Hero. Hero's travelogues included maps of her travels. The map in Fig. 1 shows her travels between Spring 2011 and Summer 2012. The primary reason that Hero gave for leaving home earlier in her adolescence was to unburden her mother financially, as her mother was the sole supporter of her family. She had also lost a low-wage job in a bakery that she had held for a year (Stack 2002). Although hardship precipitated her leaving, and traveling as a homeless young woman often proved difficult, Hero reported that she, nevertheless, enjoyed visiting places and regions where she had never been and meeting new people. As indicated by the transcontinental scope of her map, Hero traversed enormous distances relying primarily on the freight trains for transportation. If a line were drawn directly from the farthest Northwest point of her travels to the farthest Southeast, that would represent almost 3,000 miles or about 4,800 km. Since she





**Fig. 1** Map, overview of one youth trek participant's transcontinental travel routes (*green colored*). Spring 2011-Summer 2012 (Created with the assistance of Kevin Koy at the UC Berkeley Geospatial Innovation Facility using InstaMapper© and ArcGIS computer software. Amy Donovan Blondell © Rights remain with the author)

did not travel in a straight line, she actually traveled much farther. During biweekly telephone interviews, Hero described her mapped travel routes and many of her experiences in the rural and urban locations she visited including San Francisco,

California; Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; Sparks, Nevada; Boise and Pocatello, Idaho; Ogden, Utah; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Chicago, Illinois; Columbus, Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Montpelier, Vermont; Boston, Massachusetts; Syracuse, Selkirk and New York City, New York; Linden, New Jersey; Baltimore, Maryland; Birmingham, Alabama; Athens, Georgia; and New Orleans, Louisiana.

While travelogueing, as a research method, creates a multilayered understanding of travel and daily life, the researcher must use discretion, especially when working with individuals who may be living “off the grid.” When determining which material to present, or not to present, it is important, for example, not to publish geographical information which identifies an active squat or abandoned building where someone may be living. For a fuller description of squatting, see Volume 12 (Blondell et al. [in press](#)).

Like most participants in the Youth Trek study, Hero documented her travels for about 2 years. While the travel routes offer an outline of geographical mobility during the particular time period, they are far richer when combined with the documentary photos that Hero took on the road and the photo essays that describe them. During the telephone interviews, which often took place while she was waiting alongside the tracks to “catch out” on a train, Hero described the advantages and disadvantages of using different modes of transportation. These included riding freight trains (and occasionally passenger trains), hitchhiking, walking, and getting rides from people she met through electronic ride boards or from acquaintances and friends.

While the focus in this chapter is on this first-person perspective of Hero, the following is some background information. At the time when the Youth Trek study was initiated, Hero was 18 and could be described as a homeless, bisexual, white (Euro-American) woman, and it might be said that, as a homeless young person, she possessed both strengths/advantages and disadvantages. Hero disliked labels, and she mentioned that she was “not straight enough for the straight people or gay enough for the gay people.” As a homeless youth on the road, some things may have been advantageous for her. For example, she was an adult and a US citizen, and as stated earlier, minors and undocumented travelers have an additional set of risks. She rode side by side on the trains with undocumented youth from Central America and Mexico and often spoke of nice relations with them.

Her light skin privilege may well have given her advantages, especially in a country where dark-skinned individuals have historically been the targets of racial profiling and violence (DePastino 2003; Baldwin 1985; Mead and Baldwin 1971). She also had the benefit of being able-bodied, articulate, intelligent, and inventive. A mild-mannered person, Hero was very principled and resourceful. She undoubtedly received strength from the positive relationship she had with her mother, who was able to provide little in the way of financial support but was emotionally very supportive. Although Hero loved traveling, she had to cope with significant disadvantages as a homeless youth on the road, principally her lack of financial resources, increased vulnerability as a female, and potentially her interrupted educational background.

As Hero traveled, she used both the smartphone and a point-and-shoot camera to take pictures. Unfortunately, the smartphone did not have a flash, so some photographs came out underexposed. Like other Youth Trek participants, Hero had the option of uploading the images she photographed to the Youth Trek website. While one participant uploaded 15 photographs over the study period, Hero uploaded 549 pictures in almost 2 years. Hero described herself as an artist and often used the small gift certificates that were given to research participants to purchase art supplies, so that she could draw and paint. She reported being depressed when she didn't have any paints, markers, or other art supplies. She was also very fond of music. She knew how to play the drums and had been in several bands. Hero said that one of the most difficult things about being homeless was not having a place to store an instrument and practice. She missed playing in a band, and she attended musical events and organized trips to visit musician friends. She said that she was proud of her photography and told the researcher that she would like it to be seen on the Internet.

#### **4.1 Documentary Photography and the Photo Essay Writing Process**

Hero gave initial captions to many of the photos she uploaded. Later, she discussed the images with the researcher and cowrote photo essays to go along with the photographs. In Hero's case, the photo essay writing process took place over a period of a month or two. When Hero and the researcher were in the same town, they sat down and looked at the photo together. When they were in different locations, they looked at the picture together utilizing a screen share program (Skype). The cowriting process was dialogic. Hero began by offering a new title or choosing to stay with the caption she had originally given the photograph. Then she described the photo, while the researcher took dictation, typing what Hero said. After the initial photo essay was typed, Hero read the essay on the computer screen and told the researcher how she wanted it changed. After Hero was satisfied that the alterations had been made correctly, the researcher might then ask a question about the photo or ask her to elaborate on an aspect of the photo essay. These questions and requests for elaboration were informed by things that the researcher had learned about Hero in the past – either from the initial oral histories and mapping workshops or from the months of telephone interviews that followed.

When Hero responded to the questions, the researcher once again took dictation and then made alterations according to her specifications. At times, Hero would reedit the photo essays on her own. This process was both internal and translational. As she looked over and again at the photographs, she recalled moments, events, and contexts. She then made an effort to translate these memories into narratives in a way that would make sense to others. This is not unlike what Pyry (2015) describes as

“...the creative potential of ‘sensing with’ photography and the event of ‘thinking with’ photographs...” (Pyry 2015, p. 149). Although the photo essays were cowritten, it was the research participant who determined when the photo essay writing process was complete – when she was satisfied with the result. As other researchers have argued, this process assists the young person in “voic[ing] . . . narratives that were previously marginalized, silenced, overlooked, or rejected” (Singhal et al. 2007, p. 223).

## 4.2 The Content of the Pictures

Hero took a number of self-portraits and “selfies” which offer a window into the way she saw and wanted to present herself. She also documented the landscape around her, including a wide range of buildings and natural landscapes, a selection of which are included in this chapter.

Based on the subject matter and the reasons Hero offered in the photo essays, the photographs can be grouped in the following ways. Hero took photographs with an eye toward documenting the beautiful, crystallizing a moment and feeling so it is not forgotten, and preserving an image of objects or scenes that are ephemeral or transitory. In her selfies and self-portraits, Hero put forward different selves. Through a myriad of self-presentations, she documents herself in different roles, situations, and environments. Hero utilizes the camera as a tool for planning a future, as she envisions “fixing up” a building and potentially living there. She documents environmental conditions around her and laments that she cannot capture all of what she sees in the world within the camera’s frame. Hero documents challenging situations, with regard to decision-making on the road, and talks about how she is able to create and stay connected to community through art.

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## 5 Youth Mobilities: The Displacement, Relocation, and Travel of Homeless Youth

While it is often acknowledged that homeless youth are displaced, forced to relocate, harassed on the streets by authorities, and forced to “move on” or sometimes leave city limits (Donovan 2002), few of their experiences with travel, positive or negative, have been documented. When homeless youth travel, they express curiosity as travelers. They witness and document the natural phenomena that catch their eye. They document loved ones, artwork, and other things they admire. Homeless youth have less access to private accommodations and privacy and have a heightened awareness of the street. This is evident in their appreciation for street art as well as formal artwork. In the hundreds of photographs Hero uploaded, many pictures were of street art and some of them included artists at work (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2** [My Dog] . . . in Baltimore (Photographed by a Youth Trek participant called “Hero.” 10 April 2012. Amy Donovan Blondell © Rights remain with the author)

My dog . . . is the prettiest and most well behaved dog I have ever seen. And I often take pictures of her in front of street art I find. (Photo essay for [My Dog] . . . in Baltimore, 2014)

Although homeless youth are often characterized as living “under the radar” and “off the grid,” they walk on the same streets and visit many of the same sites as other travelers. One young researcher in the Youth Trek study visited Yellowstone National Park and uploaded numerous photographs of the famous geyser, Old Faithful. She explained that she took so many pictures because she wanted to get one with a rainbow in it.

With few resources and little expendable income and purchasing power, homeless youth are often not understood as tourists, given the construction of tourism as a form of consumerism. Nevertheless, homeless youth define spaces in part through the economies that were developed to serve their needs. As Susan Ruddick describes in *Young and Homeless in Hollywood*, homeless youth define areas in multiple ways: through the squats they occupy, through their presence and activities in public spaces where they congregate, as well as through the industries that locate near them and sell to them, like social service agencies and merchants (Ruddick 1996, 1998).

## 5.1 Documenting the Ephemeral, Representing a Moment in Time

Like other research participants, Hero describes how carrying a camera alters her relationship to the world, in terms of her ability to document it, and to her own internal state, as she is able to reflect her mood in the photographs she takes (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3** jar (Photograph by a Youth Trek participant called “Hero.” 4 July 2011. Amy Donovan Blondell © Rights remain with the author)



Having a camera while traveling, or even just in daily life, impacts my mood. I feel I can express what I was feeling during that time in my life. With each photo I can look back seeing the past in a different way. (Photo essay for *jar*, 2014)

## 5.2 The Camera as a Tool for Documenting Present Harms and Future Possibilities

In the photo essays of two photos taken at the same site on the same day (12 April 2012), Hero conveys her experiences discovering a space and addresses some of the hopes and hazards of squatting (Fig. 4).

*Selfie* (picture not shown)

. . . found this squat in Baltimore, the door we broke open to enter the building we had left leaning against a wall and somehow during the mix the door fell on my head. The door knocked me out, and gave me a small concussion. I was trying to capture the wounds on my face in this image.

The next day we left our packs so we could wander about and check out the city. When we went to check on our gear, the building owner found us and asked us what we were doing, I explained we just needed a place to sleep and surprisingly the owner said that he understood the situation, but that we probably shouldn't stay there again.

It was a beautiful space. We had all sorts of ideas on how to fix the place up so I took a lot of pictures for our plans. (Photo Essay for photo *Selfie*, 2014)

*blue window*

I was taking pictures, because I had a whole plan to make this our future squat, but it wasn't abandoned. (Photo Essay for photo *blue window*, 2014)



**Fig. 4** Blue window (Photograph and painting by a Youth Trek participant called “Hero.” 12 April 2012. Amy Donovan Blondell © Rights remain with the author)

Hero thinks constructively about how to fix up a place, and her camera becomes a tool in the transformation of an abandoned building to a squat.

As she photographs parts of her intended squat, she uses the camera to jog her memory about the space, creating a visual record. Documentation is part of the planning process in which Hero lays the groundwork, creating a mixed media memoir through which she weaves a vision, with an eye toward her future home. As political anthropologist Joan Vincent (1990, p. 430) has written, “the historicist project is one and the same time a presentist project given meaning by way of the future.”

### 5.3 Documenting the (Re)Invention of Identity

In the photo she called *Trash*, taken the tenth of July, 2012 (image not shown), Hero uses the camera to document herself in an outfit which she describes as ephemeral. The photo is a self-portrait in which Hero stands in a field wearing thigh-high socks, short shorts, and a shirt with race cars driving back and forth across it. Her hair is pulled back in a hairband in a “retro” style. Her glance is down and to her right, where her dog lies some three feet away.

The photo essay that accompanies *Trash* addresses what sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) called “the presentation of self in everyday life.”

I often have a different sense of style day to day. I find people often treat me differently depending on how I present myself. If I’m more dirty, people feel more empathy for

me. People look at you differently when you're not dirty all the time. If you look like you're trying to present yourself differently, then people treat you differently.

I wear a lot of found clothing. On the road, I often had issues with hoarding clothing, but I would try to save my back some strain, model the clothes, and leave them behind. This was one of those times, I was in Detroit, and I found this great NASCAR shirt. I had to ditch it, too much weight. Since I have the photo, I can remember the outfit. (Photo essay for *Trash*, 2014)

The camera helps Hero to capture an image of an outfit she has put together from found objects. In modeling for the self-portrait *Trash*, Hero creates a souvenir of her presentation of self and a memory of precious material things that are best discarded in nomadic life.

In *Trash*, and the essay that accompanies it, Hero also offers a new dimension to modeling, commenting not only on how she creates a look in the moment out of found clothing but also reflecting upon different presentations of herself. Hero remarked that she often used the camera as a mirror, and she speaks self-assuredly, as many adolescents do, about reinventing herself.

She describes the sense and sensibilities of others, explaining that different looks elicit different responses. In the essay she refers also to the impact of being dirty, an aspect that cannot be entirely captured through photography. In particular, she states that "being dirty" affects how people treat her. She says people feel more empathetic or caring toward her, when she is dirty. Her knowledge base comes from experimentation, enabling her to predict and explain how the way that she presents herself will affect the way others view and treat her.

Homeless people often lack privacy, but Hero has made both an art and science of being seen. This critical process, which is sometimes referred to as "audiencing," is when the person or organization making the presentation gauges the effect of that self-presentation on the public (Fiske 1994). As Hero documents one presentation of herself, she gains a distanced self-view as both the subject taking the photograph and the object of the gaze. The process of self-portraiture, discussing the self-portrait, and writing the photo essay all create critical distance through which she can identify the working components of the performance of self and potentially improve it.

In another self-portrait entitled "**me**" (image not shown), Hero stands outdoors under a contemporary wooden canopy. The sky is blue, the grass green, and the scene bucolic, with a meadow and stand of trees in the distance. There are also trees flanking the sides of the wooden arbor under which she stands. Hero wears a youthful white, short-sleeve cotton dress, buttoned to the middle of her neck. Her shoes are black Mary Janes with straps just under the ankles. Her stance is forthright with her legs apart, but her foot is tilted inward at the ankle in a contrastingly girlish pose. She wears a bracelet and a ring, with her hair pulled up in a high ponytail. Behind her on the right is a table with a lace table cloth and two glasses of champagne. In her right hand, she holds a red leash, and a big black terrier lies just to her right. Although she is squinting, she looks directly into the camera. In terms of expression, she has what is sometimes



called a “Mona Lisa,” or closed-lip smile. The photo essay that accompanies *me* reads:

I went to . . . [his] sister’s wedding on Sauvie Island right outside Portland, OR [Oregon]. I was really excited for the wedding because I got to wear my favorite dress. His family was really surprised to see me dressed up. I asked him to take a nice picture of me, It took several shots before he got it how I envisioned it.

I frequently go to Sauvie Island to pick blueberries, pet goats, and go to the nude beach. (Photo essay for self-portrait *me*, 2014)

As this photo and photo essay demonstrate, homeless young people often maintain connection with family and friends. Although it is underrepresented in the literature, homeless young people participate in rites of passage, and their relationship to place is often strong: they choose meaningful locations to create rituals and memorials for friends who have died (Donovan 2002), attend weddings of family and friends, celebrate birthdays with siblings, and head “back home” to see grandmothers, a parent, a family friend who helped raise them or make a visit after the birth of a child.

#### **5.4 Documenting Work in the Informal Economy: Travelogueing about Labor Exploitation**

To generate needed income, Hero worked in both formal (official) and informal (unofficial) economies during her travels. She held a number of jobs, including working in restaurant kitchens, working as an extra in a movie, picking crops, panhandling, or “spanging” as many young people call it (asking for spare change), cleaning houses, and working in an antique store. The photo *Job Selfie* (December 7, 2011, image not shown) and the attached photo essay relate to these last two positions which she held in the Southeastern United States.

I took this selfie at my first job in New Orleans. I worked in an antique shop for a really horrible guy. He offered me to clean his house, and he paid really well so of course I said yes. He got me several other cleaning jobs which were great jobs.

One night I was cleaning his house and right as I was almost done he asked me if I would like to make more money. He offered me 100\$ to shower while he massaged me. “Nothing creepy” he said. Dude, that is creepy.

So I declined, and eventually I lost all those [cleaning] jobs. I later found out he had been telling people he couldn’t trust me. (Photo essay for *Job Selfie*, 2014)

Hero later stated that other young women she knew had also been sexually harassed by this antique shop owner, an employer who used his contacts and credibility to increase their indebtedness to him and potential cooperation with his requests. He later leveraged his credibility and reputation to undermine theirs.

## 5.5 Subjectivity and the Self-Portrait: Crafting an Image of Oneself in the Face of Exploitation and Stigma

Selfies are commonly taken to capture an image of one's self during happy times, and *Job Selfie* stands in contradistinction to that practice. The photo itself is spellbinding. Her large eyes are wide open and the still presence of her look is magnetic. With its dramatic use of light and shadow, the photo may be compared with Johannes Vermeer's painting "Girl with the Pearl Earring," with piercings that are more contemporary in style (Museum 2013).

*Job Selfie* is a close-up, taken in an uncomfortable place, at once her workplace and at the same time the home of a man who is sexually harassing her. The frankness of Hero's look is in stark contrast to the playful cap she wears with the face of a bear sewn on it. On her cheek is a small blue tattoo, two lines that can be identified as the equal sign. In this self-portrait, Hero documents a moment in which she has stood up, as an equal, to a much wealthier employer attempting to leverage his power over her current and future employment to coerce her to accept money for sexual services, which are not part of the job. It may be argued that the act of taking a self-portrait on that site is in itself a way of affirming her right to bodily self-determination in that space. After he has told her how he wants to manipulate her body in his space, Hero's response is to decline and proceed, as a photographer, to organize her own body in that same space as if to say, "I am here, I said no, and yet here I am looking at you." Like Édouard Manet's controversial painting "A Bar at the Folies-Bergère" (Wikipedia 2015), it is the barmaid's view that is primary. Hero takes the space and makes herself the subject, rather than the object, of the gaze (Ingram 2014; Tsinhnahjinnie 2003).

## 5.6 Using the Camera to Document the Industrial Landscape and its Environmental Impact

Hero expresses frustration with the limitations of the camera and her own inability to represent the reality she witnesses. In the essay that accompanies *Rolling through Pittsburgh* (29 June 2012, image not shown), Hero laments her inability to capture the degree to which industry dominated the landscape.

I contemplated how people survived here with all the industrial pollution. Since we were on a moving train, I wasn't able to get the image I was trying to capture. This image barely shows what I saw. We were going under tons of bridges, and I saw factory after factory and lots of train yards. (Photo Essay for *Rolling through Pittsburgh*, 2014).

While Hero was unable to get the number of factories she passed into one frame, she was able to document the environmental effects of atmospheric pollution on the sunset sky. As she put it in the photo essay for *Pittsburgh on Fire*, "The Sky Really Was This Red" (photo essay for *Pittsburgh on Fire*, 2014) (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5** Pittsburgh on Fire (Photographed by a Youth Trek participant called “Hero” 29 June 2012. Amy Donovan Blondell © Rights remain with the author)

Crossing the Great Salt Lake on a freight train, she once again expressed her frustration that the camera did not capture all of what she saw and valued so much. The geo-tag that shows where the photograph, *Salt Lake*, was taken shows only a narrow “road,” representing the train tracks, crossing a sea of blue (Fig. 6).

I wish I could have captured the way the lake looked. One side of the tracks the water looked red and the other side the water looked blue. There was a wrecked boxcar on the side of the tracks in the water. The only people who get to see this part of the lake are people on trains. Something I really appreciate about riding trains. (Photo essay for *Salt Lake*, 2014)

## 5.7 Documenting Hazards on the Road and Deciding Which Direction to Go

Like the other participants in the Youth Trek project, Hero had many uses for the phone. Along the route, it was a navigational tool, helping the young travelers both to identify where a train was headed and to use the phone’s mapping capabilities to figure out where the train was located at the time. As described in the photo essay that accompanies *The nails that went in [his] foot*, 11 June 2011, Hero not only documents some of the hazards of riding the rails (Littlejohn 1993, pp. 169–199) but she also describes the complex process of decision-making during travel.



**Fig. 6** Salt Lake (Photograph by a Youth Trek participant called “Hero.” 8 May 2012. Amy Donovan Blondell © Rights remain with the author)

## 5.8 The Compass of Choice: The Complexities of Decision-Making on the Rails

See Fig. 7.

[He] and I were trying to hop out of Portland for a couple days. I’m not comfortable getting on a train while it’s moving, especially with a dog, but [he] was built like a superhero. This train came rolling around the bend, he got excited so I called in the train [calling in the tracking number for each train car to find out its direction and destination]. Every car on the train called in with different info, so with that knowledge I knew the train was going east. I told him that this wasn’t our train but he insisted we get on it.

We jumped on a Gondola [a train car with an open top and low sides] which, while moving, is really hard, on top of it with a dog. So we’re on the train and he looks up realizing we are headed the wrong way. I was furious. Now he’s telling me I need to get off the damned train and the speed is kicking up. We start throwing our packs off and I try to help with the dog. I’m standing on the last rung on the ladder and the speed is way faster than I’m comfortable with. I jump off bruising and scraping my knees. I look behind and he seemed to be in pain. I’m yelling at him but I realize he can’t walk, I look down and there’s 2 nails sticking out of his shoe.

What made me even more mad is that I had told him before we even decided to leave town that he shouldn’t get these shoes IN CASE he steps on nails or glass. But alas, here I was dragging him, the dog, and our packs to the highway to get help. (Photo Essay for *The Nails that went in [His] foot*, 2014)

**Fig. 7** The nails that went in [his] foot (Photograph by a Youth Trek participant called “Hero.” 11 June 2011. Amy Donovan Blondell © Rights remain with the author)



## 5.9 Desire, Destination, and Decision-Making

What propels personal choice and how decisions get made while traveling is also the subject of the photo essay for *Still Sleeping* (14 April 2012, image not shown). The photo essay takes the form of a travel narrative in which Hero explains that when she was preparing to leave Georgia, a male friend requested that she not travel alone but instead travel with one of his male friends for protection. Although she didn’t particularly like his friend, and in traveling together found him to be a “manipulative” person, she compromised her true wishes and continued traveling with him because of the promise she made to her friend back in Georgia. She also acknowledged that she continued traveling with him because of the dangers of traveling alone as a woman.

In her photo essay, Hero describes some of the ways that gender roles and gendered inequalities affected life on the road. She explained that females are less likely than males to get arrested. She also stated that when flying signs with a guy, if the girl holds the sign, people are less likely to offer them “kickdowns”/contributions because “the guy’s supposed to be taking care of her.” On the other hand, when flying signs separately, girls receive more kickdowns – “people are very responsive to girls and puppies.” While females receive more contributions from passersby, they are also harassed and sometimes preyed upon. Hero reported that women seldom ride the rails on their own.

I’ve traveled alone and it was really unnerving sometimes – they’d see a lost girl and wonder ‘What is she doing?’ People think they can take advantage of you, when you’re alone. The girls always have boyfriends on the road, but there are occasions when they don’t have boyfriends with them. I traveled with 2 girls from Chicago to Ohio, they were a couple.

When Hero and her traveling companion reached Baltimore, she become even more frustrated with him when he pursued a romantic involvement with a girl with whom she had a mutual crush.

I saw this girl, and I said, ‘she’s really cute’. I was trying to think of how to talk to her, and then she came up to me and gave me a present. So it wasn’t just me, [who was interested in her] she’s the one who came up to me. She invited me to go to Thailand with her. I was trying to figure out a way to go but I had a dog and I didn’t have a passport, and I didn’t have any money.” (Photo Essay for *Still Sleeping*, 2014)

In *Still Sleeping*, the girl with whom Hero has a crush is sleeping on the floor among a heap of bedding and backpacks. She is curled up, asleep, in an American flag.

In the narratives of train riders, a recurrent theme is that of freedom, a spirit which is reflected in one of Hero’s earlier photos entitled *Most Romantic Ride Ever* (2 May 2011, image not shown). In this self-portrait, Hero shares a kiss in an open boxcar with a young man who is her romantic partner. In the background is a gorgeous mountain scene in the Sierra Nevada’s. The title *Still Sleeping* contrasts sharply with *Most Romantic Ride Ever*. It attests to the compromises made in a world where gender-based violence is normative and must constantly be factored into decision-making and where gendered privileges, like being taken care of, come at the cost of not being taken seriously, condescension, disrespect, and sometimes danger. The backstory for *Still Sleeping* highlights the influence of gender dynamics and class differences on personal trajectories of love and travel. In *Still Sleeping*, not only is international travel a desire deferred but the relationship between the two women never fully awakens (Inspired by Langston Hughes’ poem “Harlem” which begins “What happens to a dream deferred.”) (Hughes 1990; [Poetry Foundation](#)).

## 5.10 The Odyssey of Longing

During her travels, Hero often reported that she felt lonely. Seeing familiar tags (graffiti signatures) often relieved her of that isolated feeling. As she rode the trains, she would see the same tags again and again on different cars. She explained that she sometimes felt as if someone was going before her, a trailblazer for her journey. Hero took a photo of one such tag (18 May 2012, image not shown), which is the name of a Caribbean dish, also served in the Southeastern region of the United States.

This is my friend’s tag – I had missed him dearly. When I saw this tag, I was looking for the hopout [location to board the freight train] under a bridge in Selkirk, NY. He lived in New Orleans, but he was from upstate New York. It was a pleasant surprise to find something familiar. (Photo essay for unnamed tag, 2014)

Though homeless youth may not have property or a fixed place in the built world, they cultivate special places and inscribe a kind of history, marking their presence, and, in the case of train riders, their passage, creating community through art and illustration (Fig. 8).





**Fig. 8** Water tower (Photograph and painting by a Youth Trek participant called “Hero.” 28 February 2012. Amy Donovan Blondell © Rights remain with the author)

*water tower*

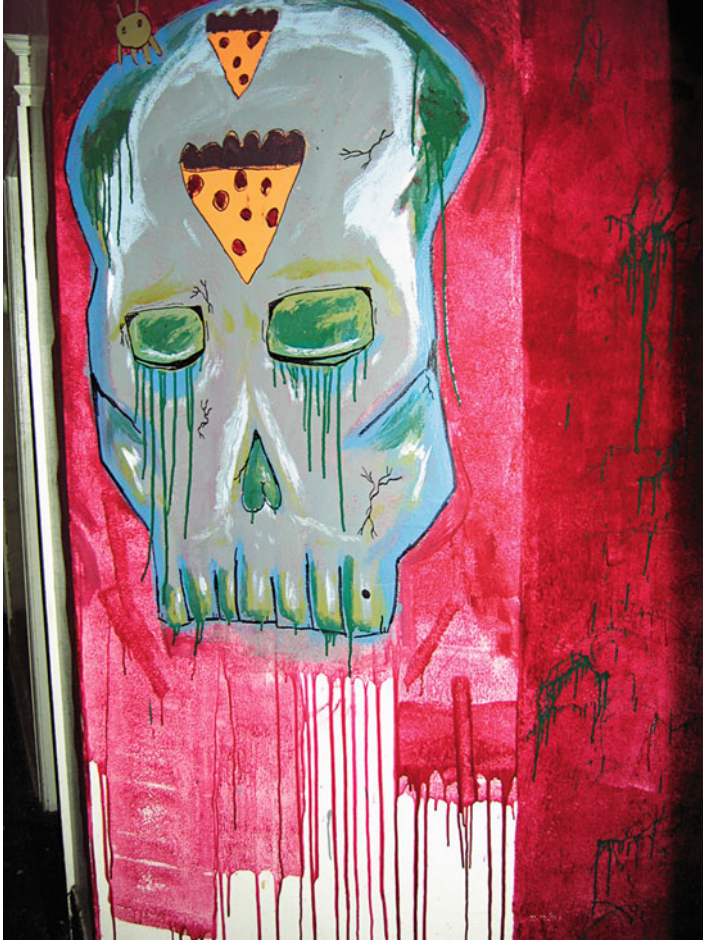
This water tower is very significant in my life. I’ve been on countless dates up there. I love the piece that is on it and I eventually got to meet the artist and become friends with them. I still continue to hangout around this water tower. (Photo essay for *water tower*, 2014)

The water tower is at once a destination and a place of return. Here, artists congregate, and exciting things happen as people come to admire the art and experience the view.

Hero is an artist for whom being part of a community is important. Through her nomadism, Hero became acquainted with other artists. The narrative description that accompanies the photo of her mural, *Skull*, further illustrates the relationship between art and community (Fig. 9).

I was in Detroit hanging out at a squat called the \_\_\_ house. It had been around for 4 years at this point. I helped fix things around the house and they let me paint a piece on their wall. There was a community space downstairs complete with a computer room, a free box room with clothing and shoes, a bike shop, and a library. (Photo Essay for *Skull*, 2014)

Hero was enthralled by the resources available in the squat. In a place where sharing and giving were the order of the day, she could contribute her energy and creativity. Hero offers a visceral depiction of life in the form of this pulsing skull and represents desire as pizza “on the brain.” Her bold strokes and vibrant colors suggest



**Fig. 9** Skull (Photograph and painting by a Youth Trek participant called “Hero.” 15 July 2012. Amy Donovan Blondell © Rights remain with the author)

that she felt free to express herself and make, through the contribution of her mural, this collective home also her own.

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## 6 Conclusion

Taken together, the travelogues of the Youth Trek participant called Hero create a kind of history of a life lived on the go, visual, geographical, and narrative. Although her experience does not reflect that of all youth traveling on their own, or all homeless youth, her experiences lend insight into some of the challenges and joys



she experienced as a young, homeless, female traveler. Her testimony calls attention to dilemmas faced by young women (and some men) who are working, documented and undocumented, in informal economies. Her stories elucidate the significant compromises that are made in exchange for basic safety. Hero's travelogues are instructive: to be self-possessed and to hold one's own in decision-making require great determination when consequences are dire.

Homeless young people have to cope constantly with presumptions about them. Hero's narratives demonstrate how she developed strategies to cope with scarcity and manage the way she is perceived by others. Her style and creativity are conveyed both through her personal artistry and through her creative works in landscape, self-portraiture, painting, and illustration. She used her own creativity as a tool to connect with others, finding "belonging" and community in spaces through artwork (Baker 2015). Whether capturing a crimson sky in Pittsburgh, a painted rooftop in New York City, street art in Baltimore, or a train going through the Great Salt Lake, Hero's esthetic awareness and appreciation of the world around her is clear and palpable.

The smartphone proved a successful tool for staying in communication over time and space with highly mobile homeless young people. Hero was creative in her use of the camera: to capture the feelings of a moment in time, to plan for the future, to document the reinvention of self, to address the hazards and challenges of riding the rails, or to forge community through art. Perhaps most importantly, the phone allowed for multiple interviews and the building up of trust over time. The streaming together of different types of knowledge – visual, geospatial, and narrative – created a deeper understanding of Hero's experiences and perspectives on the wider society. Through her participation in the Youth Trek project, her personal values were elucidated – freedom, agency, respect, equality, community, and self-determination.

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# Index

## A

- Ableism, 26–27, 36, 45
- Acculturation, 316, 318–323
- Adolescent, 431
- Adulthood, 13–18
- Affect, 299
- Age-grade system, 225
- Age identity
  - adulthood, 13–18
  - age norms, 7–8
  - apolitical, 12
  - care work, 9–11
  - child labour, 11
  - developmental psychology, 5–6
  - lifecourse, 6–7
- Ageism, 7
- Agency, 58–60, 295–296, 365
- Ambivalencies
  - identity, 502–503
  - understanding Solya, 506–508
  - understanding Vika, 506–508
- Animals, 414–416
  - The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation*, 418
  - The Jungle Book*, 417
- Anti-terrorism laws, 201, 210
- Apartheid, 166–167

## B

- Belief, 55, 58, 60–61, 63
- Belonging, 104, 107, 110, 114
- Biopolitics, 364
- Blank Noise*, 273
- Blink, 430
- Body, 373, 379, 382, 384
- Boundaries, 144, 149, 152, 154–155

- Britain, mixed race young people. *See* Mixed race, ethnic options
- British Infanticide Law 1938, 222
- Bustees*, 270
  - young people and purdah in, 276–277
  - education mobility and eve-teasing in, 283–288

## C

- Capitals, 241–245
- Care, 9–11
- Caution, 430
- Changing perceptions of place, 444–448
- Children, 410–414, 417–424
- Children and young people
  - later generation, 111, 113, 115–118
  - of migrant descent, 105, 112–118
- Cities, 410, 415–416, 424
- Civic engagement, 210
- Civics and Moral Education curriculum (CME), 394
- Class, race and gender
  - capitals, habitus and field, 241–245
  - identity, subjectivity and performativity, 233–237
  - relationalities and intersectionalities, 238–240
- Collegiality, 481
- Community Involvement Programme (CIP), 394
- Community radio
  - civic cultures, 477
  - Indonesian broadcasting system, 478
  - KCC Live, 478–482, 484, 488
  - public educational campaigns, 478
  - role of, 477
  - youth voice, 483–488
- Consumption, 372–373, 377, 382–385

**D**

- Developmental psychology, 5–6
- Disability, 25–28, 30–33, 38–41
- Disableism, 27–28, 33–38, 40, 46
- Discourse
  - of being different, 73–74
  - neoliberal, 82
  - self-development, 81
- Discrimination, 321–323
- Documentary photography, 520–521

**E**

- Early childhood, 143, 145, 147–148, 151–153, 155–157
  - beyond play, 149–150
  - generational order, 144
  - identity/subjectivity, 143
  - injustice and subjectivities point, 146
  - quotidian world, 145
  - socio-spatial relations, 146–148
- Education, 89
- Education mobility, and eve-teasing in *bustees*, 283–288
- Embodiment, 143, 145, 153, 238–240, 242
- Emerging adult, 431
- Emotion(s), 411–413, 416–425
  - elicit, 419
- Emotional agency, 104
- Emotional landscapes, 115–116
- Emotional transnationalism, 112
- Empirical reflections
  - changing perceptions of place, 444–448
  - personal reflection of identity, young adults, 438–441
  - place-related identities, children, 437–438
  - young adults, role of feet, 442–444
- Ethnic diversity, 197
- Ethnic options, mixed race. *See* Mixed race, ethnic options
- Eve-teasing, 289
  - definition, 270
  - and education mobility in *bustees*, 283–288
  - as expression of wounded masculinity, 283–284
  - as flirting, 286–288
  - as harassment and violence, 285–286
  - impacts, 271
  - and *purdah culture*, 279–283
  - tackling in India, 272–274
  - and youth culture in India, 274–275
- Exclusion, 26, 37–39, 41, 44
- Experiences of mobility, 354, 357–359, 365

**F**

- Fast food, 383–386
- Field, 241–245
- Foodscape
  - children's food lives, 373–374
  - concept, 373
  - family food, 375–378
  - fast food, 383–386
  - school food, 379–383
  - young people's foodscapes, 374
- Forms of governmentality, 355, 358

**G**

- Gender, 73, 77–78, 80–83, 411–414, 418
  - habits and social transformation, 297–299
  - in Palestine, childhood and family, 299–302
  - and spatial differentiation, 302–307
- Gender and generation, young men
  - birth cohorts, 91
  - crisis in masculinity, 89
  - education, 89
  - first generation, 92
  - generational differences, 93
  - inheritance of culture, 93
  - insider/outsider status, 90
  - intergenerational approach, 90, 98
  - migrant integration, 94
  - post-industrial era, 91
  - psychodynamic approach, 91
  - second generation, 92
  - social gerontological approach, 91
  - structuralist approach, 91
  - third generation, 92
  - working-class, 93
- Gender and race. *See* Class, race and gender
- Generation, 143–144, 148
  - embodied action, 156–158
  - play territories and subjectivities, 153–156
  - time-space of play, 150–153
- Geospatial, GIS, 517
- Girlhood, 295, 298, 311
- Great Famine, 94

**H**

- Habitus, 241–245
- Health, 372, 376–377, 380, 382–383
- Heterogeneity, 431
- Homeless youth, 512, 517, 521–533
- Honor/shame, 298–299
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 204

**I**

Identification, 124, 126–127, 129–135  
 Identity, 54–56, 71, 232–237, 242, 251, 254, 256, 260–261, 495–498  
   age (*see* Age identity)  
 Imaginative  
   agency, 119  
   play, 143, 153, 156  
 Imagined geographies, 501–502, 507–508  
 Inclusion, 37, 44  
 Inequality, 81–82, 339–340, 343  
 Inequities. *See* Early childhood  
 International volunteering, 251–253, 256  
 Internet, 209–210  
 Intersectionality, 238–240  
 Interstitial subjectivity, 356  
 Irish diaspora, young men. *See* Gender and generation, young men  
 Islam  
   ethics, 296, 307–308  
   and gender (*see* Gender)  
   identity, 311  
   parental and societal expectations, 295  
 Islamic Council of Victoria, 201  
 Islamophobic racism, 205

**L**

Labour  
   child, 11  
   market, 337–338  
 Language, 222–224  
 Later generation children and young people, 111, 113, 115–118  
 Leisure activities, 168  
 Life course, 5–7, 13–17  
 Liminality in childhood. *See* Personhood  
 Literary places, 436–437

**M**

Mental maps, 171–178  
 Migrant, students, 317–323  
 Migration, 352–354, 356–359, 364  
 Mind-body-emotional differences, 24, 30–32  
 Ministry of Community, Culture and Youth (MCCY), 390–391, 404  
 Ministry of Community Development and Sports (MCDS), 391  
 Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), 391  
 Ministry of Education (MOE), 394–395, 403  
 Mixed race, ethnic options

  cross-sectional study design, 127  
   ESRC-funded project, 127  
   female bias, 128  
   non-White, 130–131  
   racial ambiguity, 133–135  
   racial identifications, 127  
   White, 132–133  
 Mobility, 295, 298, 302–303, 310  
 Modernization theory, 336  
*Moon Over Manifest*, 430  
 Morality, 373, 375  
 Mothering, 378  
 Multiculturalism, 197–200, 204, 211  
 Multifunctional rural transition, 336  
*My Little Pony* (MLP), 419

**N**

National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security, 200  
 National Education (NE), 394  
 National Youth Council (NYC), 398–400  
 Nature, 410–424  
   forests and farmlands, 423  
   MLP, 419–421  
   teenage turtles, 423  
   TMNT, 422  
 Neoliberalism, 75  
 Ninja Turtles, 422  
 Non-White, 125, 130–131

**O**

Occupation, 73, 78, 83  
 Our Singapore Conversations (OSC), 390

**P**

Palestine, 296, 298–302  
 Participatory research, 513–515  
 Personhood  
   genital cutting, cultural logic of, 224–227  
   language, 222–224  
   neonaticide and infanticide, 221–222  
   religious belief and social recognition, 220–221  
   religious/cultural rituals, 218  
   rites of passage, 219  
 Physical appearance, 128–129, 131–132  
 Place(s), 499–500  
 Place-based education, 343–345  
 Place-identity construction, 431  
 Postsecularity, 194

- Poverty, 339, 344
- Power, 233–234, 239, 244  
dynamics, 431
- Psychoanalytic approach, 91
- Public space, 42–46
- Purdah*, 277–278  
culture and eve-teasing, 279–283  
and young men, 278–279  
and young women 277–278
- R**
- Race. *See* Mixed race, ethnic options
- Race and gender. *See* Class, race and gender
- Real landscapes, 436–437
- Religion, 52–55, 57, 59–64, 308–310
- Religious, 54–56
- Representation, 478, 487–488
- Rural places  
definition of, 335–336  
and mobility, 340–342  
place-based knowledge, 343–345  
social inclusion/exclusion, 338–340  
youth and education policies, 337–338  
youth transitions, 342
- S**
- Scaffolding, 435–436  
mirrors, 435
- School, 25, 27, 29, 32–42  
beyond school spaces, 42  
informal aspects, 37–40
- Sexual harassment, 270
- Social inclusion/exclusion, 338–340
- Socialization, 56–58
- Social media, 198–199, 208, 210
- Social mobility, 89
- Social recognition, 217, 220–221, 228
- Soundscape, 489
- Street children, Indonesia  
Alun-Alun, 182–183  
Gerbong, 185–186  
Jalan Malioboro, 179–180  
leisure activities, 168  
mental maps, 171–178  
social and spatial apartheid, 166–167  
Surgawong, 183–185  
survival strategies, 167–169  
time and space, 169–171  
toilet, 180–182  
train station, 178–179
- Students, 316–323
- Subjectivity, 71–72, 233–237, 242
- Suburban Australia, young Muslims  
civic engagement, 210  
counterterrorism, 208  
cultural elements, 202  
Dandenong, representations of,  
196–202  
individual self-empowerment, 203  
racial profiling, 205–206
- Switzerland, 72–80
- Symbolic transnationalism, 115
- T**
- Technologically mediated communication,  
316, 321, 323–324, 327
- Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (TMNT), 422
- Television media, role, 417
- Theorizing place, 432–434
- Timepass*, 274
- Timespaces, 495–496
- Tourism  
and international volunteering, 259  
interviews and participant observation, 257  
working-class, 257  
youth charity, 257
- Trade liberalization, 197
- Transmedia franchises, 417
- Transnational families, 109–115
- Transnationalism, 251–252, 263–265
- Travelogueing, 512, 516, 526
- Tyneside Irish community, young men.  
*See* Gender and generation, young men
- U**
- Urban, 410–411, 413–416, 419, 422–425
- V**
- Value, 241, 243
- Visual research, 516
- W**
- War on Terror, 197
- White, 129, 132–133  
Australia policy, 196  
Irish, 95
- Writing, Reading, and Place project  
(wRePlace), 437



## Y

- Young adult(s), 72–80
  - fiction, 431
- Youth, 71, 75, 81, 235, 237, 497–498
  - charity, 257, 260
  - cultures, 5, 13, 260, 264
  - diaspora associations, 253
  - marginalised youth, 251
  - mobilities, 521–533
  - working-class, 251
- Youth participation, Singapore
  - economic development, 393
  - focus group discussion, 391
  - governmental and media discourses, 390
  - ‘learning by doing’ approach, 394
  - NE programmes, 394
  - NYC, 398–399
  - OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment, 396
  - physical and emotional setting, 395
  - political negotiations, 392
  - politics of, 392
  - post-secondary education, 393
  - public spaces, 398–402
  - school-going Singapore youth, 391
  - secondary school education, 393
    - social, spatial and temporal negotiations, 391
    - theoretical and policy-related analysis, 391
    - transformative power, 392
    - tuition centres, enrichment activities and social participation, 397–398
- Young people
  - airwaves, 479–483
    - and community radio (*see* Community radio)
  - identities of, 482
  - learning opportunities, 482
  - media projects, 486
  - NEET status, 478
  - personal views, vocalization of, 484
  - romantic relationships, 480
  - traditional restrictions and social norms, 479
- Young people, in graffiti writing
  - academics and urban managers, 452
  - criminalization, 463–465
  - legal graffiti, 465–467
    - and spatial politics, 453–454
  - street art and creative economy, 468–469
  - youth subculture, 454–462
- Young people, mixed race. *See* Mixed race, ethnic options
- Youth voice, 476, 483–488