

Geographies of Children and  
Young People 10

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Tatek Abebe

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# Laboring and Learning

 Springer

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# Geographies of Children and Young People

**Volume 10**

**Editor-in-Chief**

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Singapore, Singapore

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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12. Risk, Protection, Provision and Policy

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Editors

Tracey Skelton  
Editor-in-Chief

# Laboring and Learning

With 19 Figures and 10 Tables

 Springer

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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, *Laboring 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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## Preface

For this volume of the Springer Reference Series on “Geographies of Children and Young People,” we have been fortunate enough to secure contributions from a diverse range of excellent scholars, internationally situated, with different but overlapping research interests. Brought together through this work, the chapters present the cross-fertilization of ideas; new and innovative ways of thinking about the relationship between the twin concepts that frame the volume – laboring and learning.

The chapters in this volume attempt to capture the multitude of ways – formal and informal, institutionalized and spontaneous, in place and on the move – in which learning takes place and work is carried out. Ultimately, of course, our interest – and that of our contributors – is in understanding and, in some cases, exposing the fascinating and complicated lives of children and young people, whom so often go “under the radar.” Their contribution to society is rarely, truly, acknowledged.

Over the past decade, geographical scholarship has been increasingly attentive to the significant constitutive role that education plays in societies around the world and we attend, here, to education in the broadest sense of the word. The contributions within this volume provide cutting edge perspectives on a range of educational practices, which includes – but is not limited to – compulsory schooling. We also examine extensively the role that informal forms of learning play in society. The processes, contexts, and spaces that underpin how children and young people learn to labor are foregrounded in several of the chapters.

While education is almost a “given” in the lives of children and young people, the role of work is far more contentious and contested. And yet, work of some kind or another is a lived reality for millions of children around the world, as several of the contributions to this volume attest. Although its primary function is often economic, the social dimensions of work shape young people’s labor participation. Work has also a psychological significance: it is an essential source of identity, which provides children and young people with confidence, relative independence, and feelings of self-worth. Several chapters in this volume underscore the necessity to look beyond the (in-)compatibility of work and schooling to understand how work itself is a learning process and site for the acquisition of knowledge and skills. The boundaries between labor and learning are very often blurred.

To reflect for a moment upon the wider significance of this project, this volume on *Laboring and Learning* comes at a time when geographical research on both young people's employment experiences and young people's learning is thriving – both more abundant and more intellectually sophisticated: empirically, theoretically, and methodologically. In particular, work in this area has contributed to understandings of changes to the spatialities of learning and work; the embodiment (corporeal and visceral) nature of learning and work; the politics of laboring and learning; and methodological innovations in research around children and young people.

The spatialities of learning and work are, as is increasingly recognized, more complex than has hitherto been acknowledged. The chapters contained by this volume reflect upon these complexities, leading to a more enlightened understanding of the present-day lives of children and young people around the world.

The chapters in this volume are diverse in their thematic focus and geographic scope. Over 20 countries are represented in the empirical materials and fieldwork contexts on which the authors report. The topics covered include: geographies of education; the interface between migration, learning, and livelihoods; cultural politics of human capital formation; right to fair education and work; schooling; citizenship education; informal education; nonformal education; families and parenting; socialization; education-induced migration; processes and practices of inclusion and exclusion in educational institutions; part-time work; domestic work; care work; labor migration; informal livelihoods; entrepreneurship; social transitions; generational dynamics in learning; and a wide range of social, economic, cultural, and political (structural) forces that intersect and dissect these topics.

The volume has three sections. Section one deals with conceptual and theoretical perspectives on education and work and is comprised of seven chapters. Section two, which consists of eight chapters, is entitled “Spaces of Laboring and Learning” and is particularly attentive to the value gained by a geographical sensibility. Section three focuses on “Livelihoods, Transitions, and Social Reproduction” and also has eight chapters. Altogether, the 24 theoretically rigorous and empirically rich chapters are drawn from diverse geographical contexts of Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and USA.

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## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all chapter authors for their wonderful contributions, and dedication in meeting deadlines when revisions were requested. We thank Editor-in-chief Tracey Skelton for her gracious invitation that brought us together as editors of this volume, and Meghna Singh and the whole production team at Springer for their hard work.

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## About the Editors



**Tatek Abebe** is Associate Professor and Programme Leader of M.Phil. in Childhood Studies in the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, Norwegian University of Sciences and Technology (NTNU). He holds B.A. in Geography from Addis Ababa University, M.Phil. in Development Studies, and Ph.D. in Human Geography from NTNU.

Tatek's research interests focus on the generational implications of development on young people's lives, rites, rights, entitlements, and transitions. He completed several funded research projects on children, youth, and the structural transformation of their local environments in Africa. His current work intersects youth studies and development geography looking at the ways in which political economic processes transform and are transformed by the livelihood practices of young people. In 2016, he undertook fieldwork on labor, mobility, and material realities of postsocialist youth, complementing his decade long research with children and families found on the margins of society and political economy in Ethiopia.

Tatek is Director of Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa's (CODESRIA) 2016 Child and Youth Institute that engages with the theme of African Futures and the Futures of Childhood in Africa. He also leads Nordic Network of African Children and Youth Research. His most recent project (2017–2018) funded by Nordic Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences involves a series of international seminars to theorize Children's Migration in Historical and Cross-cultural Perspectives.

Tatek has authored over 40 journal articles and book chapters in the following topics: care, work, livelihoods, mobility, poverty, AIDS, wellbeing, intergenerational relationships, education as well as participatory methodologies, and ethics. He coedited one book and guest-edited, with Y. Ofusu-Kusi, a special issue of *Childhood* (2016: (3)): Beyond Pluralizing African Childhoods. He is on the editorial boards of *Children's Geographies*, *Childhood*, and *Fennia: International Journal of Geography*. Tatek's research feeds into his teaching at NTNU which places children and youth at the heart of sustainable development in an interconnected world.





**Johanna Waters** is Associate Professor in Human Geography at the University of Oxford. Previously, she worked at the University of Liverpool (from 2004 to 2010) and University of Birmingham (2010–2013), having graduated with a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of British Columbia, Canada, in 2004. While in Canada, she was fortunate enough to have worked on the Metropolis Project, exploring the impacts of immigration on urban areas, igniting her interest in aspects of migration, and benefited from an exciting and stimulating graduate environment. She also enjoyed her time spent at Liverpool and Birmingham universities immensely.

Her work over the past 15 years can be characterized by an interest in migration, on the one hand, and education, on the other, and how they come to together in various, complex and interesting ways. Most recently, her work has explored the relationship between (im)mobilities and education in relation to transnational education (TNE), but she has also published widely on topics such as international student migration, transnationalism and split households and the internationalization of education. Her regional focus is East Asia – she has carried out extensive fieldwork in Hong Kong, as well as in Canada and the UK. She is on the editorial boards of *Geoforum* and *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.

Johanna is currently working on a series of articles on internationalism within English secondary schools and is writing a book with Rachel Brooks on materialities and mobilities in education. She is participating in HERG’s “shut up and write” initiative, with the hope of finally producing a paper on family narratives around education (that has been many years in gestation). In addition to research and writing, she enjoys lecturing undergraduates on aspects of human geography.

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## Editor-in-Chief



**Tracy Skelton** is Associate Professor of Human Geography in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore. She was previously Professor of Critical Geographies at the University of Loughborough in the UK. The essential elements of her research career focus on people who are socially, politically, and intellectually excluded. Her early work focused on the Caribbean and issues of gender and racial inequality, feminist geographies, and methodological analysis. She has contributed to culture and development debates, particularly through her longitudinal research

on the island of Montserrat. Recently, A/P Skelton returned to this field of scholarship through research with volunteers and host organizations in Cambodia as part of a major comparative and collaborative project on development partnerships. She was the principal investigator of a major comparative urbanism research project on the livability, sustainability, and diversity of four Asian cities: Busan in South Korea, Hyderabad in India, Kunming in China, and Singapore.

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

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following journals: *Geoforum*, the *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, *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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# Geographies of Laboring and Learning: Introduction

# 1

Tatek Abebe and Johanna Waters

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## Abstract

This introductory chapter to the volume “Laboring and Learning” provides an overview of a diverse and fascinating range of contributions made by academics; engaging with some salient themes that inform debates on the area; explaining and justifying the selection of contributors and the division of their chapters into three principal sections. Section 3.1 aims to showcase the breadth and depth of contemporary scholarship in this field, in both theoretical and empirical terms. These papers (compared to the chapters in the volume as a whole) have been chosen for the ways in which they bring to the fore different perspectives on key issues around education and work. Section 3.2 is particularly attentive to the value gained by a geographical sensibility. The papers in this section have a more

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specific empirical focus, often representing particular spatial contexts, but are also geographically diverse, combining perspectives from the Global South and North. Section 3.3 focuses on livelihoods, transitions, and social reproduction. Here, there is more specific attention paid to the questions of age and inter-generationality. The empirical contexts represented are similarly diverse in their geographic scope. As a whole, the volume presents cutting-edge scholarship wherein both “work” and “education” are expansively defined and discussed, often interlinked and interdependent, and sometimes hard to distinguish in any one particular context. It aims to highlight the rich complexity of the lives of children and young people and to give them a voice in wider intellectual discussions of laboring and learning.

### Keywords

Children • Education and work • Globalization • Informal education • Informal economy • Labouring and learning • Livelihoods • Non-formal education • Participation • Skill acquisition • Socialization • Social reproduction • Underemployment • Work and schooling • Young people • Youth • Youth transitions

## 1 Introducing Laboring and Learning

This volume of the Springer Reference Series on “Geographies of Children and Young People” has a special focus on the twin concepts of “laboring” and “learning.” The diverse set of chapters attempt to capture the *multitude* of ways – formal and informal, institutionalized and spontaneous, in place and on the move – in which learning takes place and work is carried out.

Over the past decade, geographical scholarship has been increasingly attentive to the significant constitutive role that education plays in societies around the world. Within these pages, “learning” indicates education in the broadest possible sense. It incorporates views on compulsory schooling, undertaken in institutionally bounded spaces with a view to the acquisition of “recognized” (accredited) academic credentials and the creation of particular kinds of citizens (e.g., Mitchell 2003; Pykett 2009). But it also allows us to see the role of informal types of learning (e.g., Smith and Phillips ► Chap. 4, “Informal Education, Its Drivers and Geographies: Necessity and Curiosity in Africa and the West”), which can include, for example, on-the-job acquisition of skills that takes place almost imperceptibly, over time (e.g., Bourdillon, ► Chap. 5, “Labor as Education”), socialization of young people within the *habitus* (e.g., Baars, ► Chap. 17, “Social Reproduction Through Citizenship Education: Performing the Habitus of Pragmatic Compliance”), or family learning (e.g., Marendet and Wainwright, ► Chap. 3, “Geographies of Education: Families, Parenting, and Schools”).

The issue of education and work is not new to academics. Yet the place of work in children’s lives continues to evoke heated debates, shaped largely by ideologies of childhood. Nieuwenhuys (2007) argues that regardless of what children do and what they think of what they do, modern societies set children apart as a category of people excluded from the production of value. International policy making over the

past decades has squarely placed children *inside* institutions. Labor by children generates emotive reactions, representing an “unchild-like” experience (Aitken 2001) or an antithesis to their presumed idyllic existence (Abebe and Bessell 2011). However, the lived reality of millions of children reveals how, through work outside families and communities, they derive their livelihoods and gain considerable skills for their present and anticipated life.

Work is not just a means of sustaining life for children and young people (e.g., Jensen, ► Chap. 15, “[Learning Skills, Building Social Capital, and Getting an Education: Actual and Potential Advantages of Child Domestic Work in Bangladesh](#)”). Although its primary function is economic, the social dimensions of work shape young people’s labor participation. Work has also a psychological significance: it is an essential source of identity, which provides children and young people with confidence, relative independence, and feeling of self-worth.

Work and schooling have been predominantly analyzed under two competing frameworks: the first framework considers work as detrimental to schooling while the second one looks at the intersection of schooling and work. Several chapters in this volume underscore the necessity to look beyond the (in-)compatibility of work and schooling to understand how work itself is a learning process and site for acquisition of knowledge (Morrow, ► Chap. 8, “[Intersections of School, Work, and Learning: Children in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam](#)”).

Studies on socialization of children show the value of the “chore curriculum” for children’s cognitive and social development (Lancy 2012, Serpell and Holley, ► Chap. 2, “[African Socialization Values and Nonformal Educational Practices: Child Development, Parental Beliefs, and Educational Innovation in Rural Zambia](#)”). Children are encouraged to learn side-by-side, through observing and “pitching in” in familial livelihoods that is seen as a core aspect of nonformal learning (Paradise and Rogoff 2009). In many societies children continue to be socialized at work, and work is seen as form of socialization (Kassa and Abebe 2016). Furthermore, children actively direct their labor contributions in accord with various strategies that maximize their chances of meeting current needs and establishing networks among kin and neighbors that will enhance future security (Kielland and Tovo 2006). Involvement in work is indeed an alternative pathway for many young people who cannot benefit from the school system or are unable to acquire skills that school curricula may not provide. The outcome of this perspective has been a remarkable line of argument that presents a more nuanced approach to children’s work than what appears in the dominant discourse of abolishing “child labor” and exploitation (Bourdilion, Chap. 5, “► [Labor as Education](#)”).

Work and learning are inextricably linked, as, for example, found with skilled and student migration or in situations where it is used to fulfill the roles of child upbringing. As young people are seen to be “learning to labor” (e.g., Willis 1977), again the boundaries between work and education are necessarily blurred. Work includes formal types of employment, but may also incorporate domestic responsibilities, which are often unpaid, and entrepreneurship (more “creative” and less overtly stable forms of employment). Work may result in tangible products or in the generation of goods and services that are exchanged for material value. Young



people also carry out an array of work predicated on love and reciprocity, including care work (Day, ► Chap. 18, “Education and Employment Transitions: The Experiences of Young People with Caring Responsibilities in Zambia”) and emotional labor. Involvement in labor may involve coercion or free will, and, in the context of poverty young people survival strategies include participation in the so-called “gray economy” or the “black market,” transgressing legal boundaries. As Donovan demonstrates (► Chap. 16, “Homeless Youth Labor Continuum: Working in Formal and Informal Economies from Highland Guatemala to San Francisco, California”) young people may simultaneously labor in multiple economies: seasonal agricultural work, domestic work, sex work, drug sales, playing music, and selling and reselling goods and crafts (see also Shand, van Blerk and Hunter, ► Chap. 19, “Economic Practices of African Street Youth: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, and Zimbabwe”; Ursin and Abebe, ► Chap. 23, “Young People’s Marginal Livelihoods and Social Transitions in Urban Brazil: Tale of Four Lives”).

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## 2 Geographies of Laboring and Learning

To take a step back for a moment and reflect upon the wider significance of this project, the broad focus of this volume on Laboring and Learning comes at a time when geographical research on both young people’s employment experiences and young people’s learning is at an all-time high. A number of seminal studies have shown the intertwined nature of learning and laboring in diverse settings (e.g., Reynolds 1991; Serpell 1993; Nieuwenhuys 1994; Bass 2004; Katz 2004; Spittler and Bourdillon 2012). Today, research in these areas is not simply more abundant but is also more theoretically sophisticated and empirically rich and methodologically innovative (Kraftl 2015; Wainwright and Marandet 2013). Before considering the particular contribution that each chapter makes to these debates, we would like to draw out five salient themes that underpin contemporary scholarship in this area. These are: changes to the spatialities of learning and work; the embodiment (corporeal and visceral) nature of learning and work; ruptures in learning (social reproduction); the politics that an understanding of these concepts uncovers; and methodological innovations.

The spatialities of learning and work are, it is increasingly recognized, more complex than has hitherto been acknowledged. With respect to education, in some ways this simply indicates a recognition that learning takes place in diverse geographical contexts: yes, in schools and playgrounds, lecture theaters, and within university buildings but also “at home,” on-line (in virtual spaces) and, most intriguingly, through embodied mobilities (in cars, on trains, and while walking, climbing, and playing) (e.g., Kraftl 2013). There is also a sense, however, that learning may, in part, *depend upon* various mobilities (Waters 2017) – learning is constituted through movement of different kinds. Furthermore, different material artifacts are enlisted in the production of a learning experience, all with their own distinctive spatialities (see Brooks and Waters [forthcoming](#)).

The conventional understanding is that laboring takes place in sites of production like factories, industries, or farms. Yet young people's spaces of work span from family home, performing domestic chores, through laboring in rather marginal income-generating sector within the informal economy (Ursin and Abebe, ► [Chap. 23, "Young People's Marginal Livelihoods and Social Transitions in Urban Brazil: Tale of Four Lives"](#)), as well as taking up part-time or fulltime formal employment. Labor, also, is undertaken in relation to both traditional and unconventional sites. Whereas children in the minority world might spend a great deal of time "schooling" that might neither be considered as productive nor as "work" in its own right, many children, especially girls, in the majority world perform numerous reproductive tasks within the spaces of the household (Jensen, ► [Chap. 15, "Learning Skills, Building Social Capital, and Getting an Education: Actual and Potential Advantages of Child Domestic Work in Bangladesh"](#)).

Academic literature has also paid heed to the visceral and corporeal nature of labor and learning; in other words, to young people's embodiments. The subject ("the learner" or "the worker") is created through discourse that serves (in different ways) to control the body (Foucault 1977). Young people experience learning and work through their bodies, just as their bodies enable them to enact labor/learning. Young people's bodies are increasingly conceived as "body capital" (Bourdieu 1986; Wacquant 1995), the geographical sites of accumulation strategies (Katz 2008). Both labor and learning often serve the purpose of capital acquisition, and Pierre Bourdieu's theorizations of different forms of capital have been particularly influential in geographers' attempts to understand the role and function of contemporary education strategies (e.g., Waters 2006; Findlay et al. 2012).

This volume on Laboring and Learning uses social reproduction as a lens through which the spatialities and temporalities of young people's learning and work might be theorized. By social reproduction we mean the processes involved in maintaining and reproducing people, specifically the laboring population, and their labor power on a daily and generational basis (Katz 2004). Social reproduction also encompasses the material and discursive practices which enable the reproduction of a social formation (Wells 2009; Baars, ► [Chap. 17, "Social Reproduction Through Citizenship Education: Performing the Habitus of Pragmatic Compliance"](#)). Although a key dimension of social reproduction is the socialization and education of children, we note that recent interest in the concept indicates how the privatization of social provisioning, including, for example, higher education, affects the life chances of youth (Cheng, ► [Chap. 13, "Cultural Politics of Education and Human Capital Formation: Learning to Labor in Singapore"](#)). In particular, the ways in which economic restructuring and the deeper transmission of capital into the structures of everyday life may affect how (and why) young people labor and learn is gaining momentum (cf. Bakker 2007; Aitken 2015). Several chapters reveal the centrality of young people in social reproduction, documenting the myriad ways in which social change generate new ways of social organization that affect the practices around work and education but also how that ties to the lives of their families and communities (e.g., Jensen, ► [Chap. 15, "Learning Skills, Building Social Capital, and Getting an Education: Actual and Potential Advantages of Child Domestic Work](#)

in Bangladesh”; Morrows, ► [Chap. 8, “Intersections of School, Work, and Learning: Children in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam”](#)).

One of the key themes that have transpired in this volume on Laboring and Learning is how young people are able to be “schooled” but not educated. It is critiqued how school knowledge is not only regarded as “superior” to local knowledge but also how schooling is regarded as a key component of child development, often to the neglect of traditional educational practices (Serpell and Holley, ► [Chap. 2, “African Socialization Values and Nonformal Educational Practices: Child Development, Parental Beliefs, and Educational Innovation in Rural Zambia”](#)).

The disconnect between what young people learn in formal schools and what they need in their life as adults is now a very well-documented problem (e.g., Goldsmith et al. 1995; Stambach 2000; Katz 2004; Abebe and Kjørholt 2013). Ansell (2004) shows how access to formal schooling is often difficult for children growing up in remote villages, and especially for girls, and when available it provides little incentive for moving out of their precarious contexts. Nor does the curriculum that schools teach resonate with their gendered needs, livelihood contexts, and aspirations. In questioning the modern education system which is promoted throughout the (majority) world, Goldsmith et al. (1995) have remarked how, whereas traditional education teaches children how to live and work within a particular ecosystem, western-style schools train them to become narrow specialists for the urban environment. This cuts children off from knowledge accumulated about local resources that have been passed down from generation to generation. Goldsmith et al. (1995) argue that modern education contributes to the breakdown of local culture and loss of self-esteem. It also presents young people with a worldview that is an antipode to “traditional” way of learning and knowing. This “rupture” in informal ways of knowing signifies a contemporary crises in education and social reproduction worldwide. Rupture in informal learning is underpinned by, among other things, the privileging of local knowledge over academic knowledge (Akpan 2011), the rise to prominence of the “knowledge economy,” and the “credentialization” of society (Crivello 2011), all of which tend to valorize the significance of school knowledge (as opposed to learning in other arenas of life). Arguably, schooling is but one form of knowledge transmission that is primarily rooted in western culture. Yet, its symbolic significance is so pervasive that it has come to denigrate complex knowledge systems as well as ways of learning that is unknown to us but instead lie at the margins or outside the remit of the formal and institutional settings.

Some chapters in this volume highlight the link between migration and education arguing how educated young people solve their temporal problem of unemployment through migration or accumulation of diplomas and other credentials (Jeffrey 2009; Mains 2011; Heissler, ► [Chap. 10, “Migration and the Spaces of Laboring and Learning for Children and Young People in Asian Contexts”](#)). In this sense, schooling continues to represent a long-term investment (resource and time) with no guaranteed payoff (see Bessell, ► [Chap. 7, “Education, School, and Learning: Dominant Perspectives”](#)). In recent years, entrepreneurship education has been constructed as a possible solution by many governments and international

organizations to address stifling youth unemployment rates (Gough et al. 2013). Several contributions attempt to disentangle how these complex processes of learning (or the lack of them) unfold in young people's material, social, and spatial worlds (e.g., Jorgensen, ► Chap. 21, "Schooling, Generation, and Transformations in Livelihoods: Youth in the Sand Economy of Northern Kenya") as well as experiences of transitions to adulthood (e.g., Day, ► Chap. 18, "Education and Employment Transitions: The Experiences of Young People with Caring Responsibilities in Zambia").

Learning and work are both, in different ways, political acts. This is shown, for example, in research on "underemployment" – a concept that explicitly links education (credentials) and employment outcomes (e.g., Jeffrey et al. 2008). It can also be political in the sense of relating to international political conventions. For instance, whereas the right to (compulsory) education has been acknowledged in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, Article 28), what type of education do children need and benefit from and in whose interest is schooling promoted is far from straightforward (e.g., Kabeer et al. 2003). The League of Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1924) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) explicitly state that children have the right to receive education or training which will enable them to earn a livelihood. Yet, preparation for earning a livelihood is an ignored dimension of education in both Millennium Development Goals (MDG 2000–2015) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2016–2030) that have re-scripted interventions regarding access to, provision, and expansion of schooling. This is striking because issues of relevant education are gaining momentum in recent years, in part driven by the advocacy of young activists. Children and young people struggle for educational justice, as shown in studies of social movements on the right to a fair education system (Aitken, ► Chap. 22, "Reproducing Work, Education, and Revolution: Two Latin American Case Studies"). The right to work for a nonexploitative wage is also equally central in young people's struggle for social justice (e.g., Liebel 2013).

Methodologically, children (in particular) are being given "a voice" and their experiences are being heard (and valued on their own terms and not as some attenuated version of adult experiences) (e.g., Ennew et al. 2009; Lewis et al. 2004). Partly this results from young people being the subjects of research – they are the interviewees, the focus-group participants, and the focus of ethnographic work. Their perspectives, experiences, and interests are seen to matter in relation to understanding learning and work. Contributors to this volume on Laboring and Learning contextualize and locate the views of young people at the heart of structural changes and inter-generational transformations. In this sense, they move beyond a narrow "child" or "youth-focus" to instead reveal (to use Huijsmans et al.'s word (2014)) the relational notion of "generationing" – thereby demonstrating how young people's lives are inseparable from adults and wider society as well as from the very processes of social change within which it is embedded (see Jorgensen, ► Chap. 21, "Schooling, Generation, and Transformations in Livelihoods: Youth in the Sand Economy of Northern Kenya").

### 3 The Sections in This Volume

This volume on Laboring and Learning is divided into three principal sections. Section 3.1 aims to showcase the variety and richness (breadth and depth) of contemporary scholarship in this area, in both theoretical and empirical terms. These papers (compared to the chapters in the volume as a whole) have been chosen for the ways in which they bring to the fore different perspectives on key issues around education and work. It is impossible to summarize them here, other than to say that they are both informative and intellectually inspiring. Section 3.2 is particularly attentive to the value gained by a geographical sensibility. The papers in this section have a more specific empirical focus, often representing particular spatial contexts, but are also geographically diverse, combining perspectives from the Global North and South. Section 3.3 focuses on livelihoods, transitions, and social reproduction. Here, there is more specific attention paid to the questions of age and inter-generationality. The empirical contexts represented are similarly geographically diverse and offer rich variety.

In addition to the theoretical perspectives this volume brings on youth, other prominent conceptual themes present throughout the work are mobilities (e.g., Koh, ► Chap. 11, “Geographies of Education-Induced Skilled Migration: The Malaysian Case”; Beech, ► Chap. 14, “International Student Mobility: A Critical Overview”) and gender (e.g., Ansell (► Chap. 6, “Achieving Gender Parity in Education: Achievements and Limitations of Millennium Development Goal 3”). Following this introduction, seven chapters deal with conceptual and theoretical perspectives on education and work. Then the remainder of the volume is divided into two broad sections. These are entitled “spaces of laboring and learning” that comprises eight chapters and “livelihoods, transitions, and social reproduction” that will also have eight chapters. Within these sections, chapters offer a broad spectrum of empirical examples, covering Europe, Asia, Africa, USA, and Latin America. As the reader will become aware, there is no such thing as a standard educational trajectory, a “normal” transition, or a straight forward relationship between work and social reproduction. Indeed, one of the aims of the volume is deliberately to showcase the diversity that young people’s lives hold in this regard.

#### 3.1 Perspectives on Education and Work

This section offers perspectives on how education and work is understood in diverse contexts. The chapters engage with cutting edge debates on the intersection of education and work, the value of childhood, child upbringing, parenting, informal and nonformal education, as well as the implication of these debates to thinking about, in new ways, the experiences of laboring and learning by children and youth.

Serpell and Holley (► Chap. 2, “African Socialization Values and Nonformal Educational Practices: Child Development, Parental Beliefs, and Educational Innovation in Rural Zambia”) look at how traditional societies afford children the opportunity to learn through work and how participation by children in family

work is construed as “priming” for social responsibility. Here, involvement in work is seen as an important dimension of intelligence and social competence. They argue that such dimensions of learning through laboring are undermined in the competitive model of institutionalized public basic schooling. The chapter exemplifies how nonformal education via agriculture and food preparation are used as foundation for health and nutrition; how play, work, and creative learning all intertwine; as well as the role of sibling care in promoting values of interdependence. In so doing, Serpell and Holley identify sites for change for formal education in ways that foster young people’s social responsibility and contribute to peaceful coexistence in society.

Marandet and Wainwright (► [Chap. 3, “Geographies of Education: Families, Parenting, and Schools”](#)) provide a fascinating new perspective on a different type of learning – so-called “family learning,” where parents are “educated” with the aim of improving children’s outcomes in school. This links to the increased “professionalization” of parenting in recent years, as certain “types” (gendered and classed) of parents are especially targeted for learning. The chapter draws attention to the notion of “parenting policy” – the politicizing of education in this context and the ways in which governments attempt to control behavior through learning.

A different conceptual take on informal learning is provided by Smith and Phillips (► [Chap. 4, “Informal Education, Its Drivers and Geographies: Necessity and Curiosity in Africa and the West”](#)), which focuses in particular on the roles of necessity and curiosity in driving why children learn. The chapter asks: how is informal learning different in different parts of the world? Two geographically contrasting case studies inform this argument – one from Tanzania and one from the UK. The authors disturb conventional ideas related to geography of learning by demonstrating how and why curiosity-driven informal learning is not confined to the West nor necessity-driven learning to less wealthy parts of the world.

Perspectives on children’s work are often negative and accusatory in tone. In contrast, Bourdillon (► [Chap. 5, “Labor as Education”](#)) argues that in many societies labor is seen as beneficial for the child and an important part of “attentive child-rearing.” It may have a wide range of benefits, beyond the immediate economic benefit to the family. The chapter argues that a combination of work and school may, in certain circumstances, provide the best overall prospects for the child.

Themes of gender and inequality are explored by Ansell (► [Chap. 6, “Achieving Gender Parity in Education: Achievements and Limitations of Millennium Development Goal 3”](#)). The chapter coalesces around how MDG 3 relates to schooling in the lives of girls. Ansell notes that the educational enrolment of girls has historically fallen short of that of boys in countries around the world and particularly in poorer societies. Drawing attention to why the gender gap has attracted policy makers and explaining the discrepancies, she suggests alternative ways of conceptualizing the relationships between schooling and its impact on the lives of girls. The chapter makes broader points about capitalism and gender relations.

The disconcerting problem of schooling as the dominant site of learning and the hidden consequence it has over the “narrowing” of knowledge is discussed by Bessell (► [Chap. 7, “Education, School, and Learning: Dominant Perspectives”](#)).

She argues how narratives of development and gender equality are reliant upon the hopes of schooling and employment in white collar jobs. Her chapter also focuses on discourses that connect childhood, education, and learning. Despite the argument that formal education is seen as a human right that empowers girls and breaks the vicious cycle of poverty, the reality of schooling and its actual benefit for children is far complex than is normally perceived. Bessell discusses the myriad ways through which children's lives have progressively been shaped by institutionalized learning and how the "scholarization" and "futurization" of childhood have become the prominent characteristics of contemporary model of education.

Morrow (► Chap. 8, "Intersections of School, Work, and Learning: Children in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam") synthesizes recent research from a longitudinal study of children growing up in poverty in four different countries. She looks at different spatial and temporal dimensions of schooling and work in the lives of these children – from the forms of work undertaken to the influence of poverty on work activities to how school and work intersect in practice. Morrow argues that although children are involved in work, the nature of work they do and its impact on their life is contextual. Work is also contested because nowadays children have access to formal schooling that before, which poses an alternative on how they use their time. The chapter makes a valuable contribution to how we understand the temporal rhythms and interactions of work and learning – arguing that children's time use is contested and activities do not follow some sort of assumed linear progression.

## 3.2 Spaces of Laboring and Learning

In this section, a geographical perspective is particularly evident. O'Connor's contribution (► Chap. 9, "Encounter, Interaction, and the University: Producing Practices of Inclusion and Exclusion of International Students") centers on the space of the university, to explore how social differentiation of students is produced and reproduced through sites of encounter and interaction within this bounded setting. The chapter discusses how young people's experiences of interaction are mutually constitutive in the formation of sites of encounter and the production of practices of inclusion and exclusion. It argues that university – while employing rhetoric of inclusion of diversity – is experienced in a more complex and ambiguous way by the students themselves and that multiple forms of inclusion and exclusion co-exist, maintained by particular patterns of interaction. Space (and the function that space plays) is also central to her argument.

Like several of the chapters in this volume, Heissler (► Chap. 10, "Migration and the Spaces of Laboring and Learning for Children and Young People in Asian Contexts") examines the *intersection* of migration with learning and work. In particular, the chapter asks what learning occurs during the course of children's migration for work or school? For young people migration has multiple and often overlapping motives and is integral part of livelihoods and social transitions. The chapter notes differences between boys and (not on) girls – whereas girls may acquire status by undertaking paid work "at home," males increase their social standing through migrating.



Koh (► [Chap. 11, “Geographies of Education-Induced Skilled Migration: The Malaysian Case”](#)) focuses on the growing phenomenon of skilled migration in contemporary Malaysia. The chapter historicises how contemporary skilled migration is a continuation of migration for education overseas but is also influenced by a prevailing classed and racialized education system that benefits few. In this sense, skilled migration is not only linked to unequal geographies of education but also increasingly tied to migrants’ wider life aspirations. Koh contributes an interesting discussion on how the migration pathways of youth need to be seen as a continuum of learning to laboring because, in many instances, education-induced migration is a stepping stone for obtaining employment as a skilled laborer.

Young people who combine school and part-time work have much better chances in labor markets after leaving school. Yet, unless appropriate guidance and support is given to youth who work, this can be detrimental to educational opportunities and can result in negative outcomes such as school disengagement. This is documented by Ju and Lee (► [Chap. 12, “Adolescents’ Part-time Work and Its Linkage to Educational Outcomes: The Case of South Korea”](#)) exploring the socioeconomic changes and cultural contexts that propel part-time work while attending school and its implications for young people’s educational achievements. They argue that although part-time work in South Korea is seen as part of the opportunity structure, this may not result in positive outcomes for youth with disadvantaged family backgrounds. The chapter outlines important aspects of institutional guidance, resources, and social support that would encourage adolescents successfully to combine part-time employment and school attendance.

Cheng (► [Chap. 13, “Cultural Politics of Education and Human Capital Formation: Learning to Labor in Singapore”](#)) focuses on three prevailing issues around education-to-work transitions in present day Singapore: (a) the significance of credentials; (b) the politics of learning; and (c) young people’s responses to economic change. Capitalism and neoliberalism remain dominant themes in this chapter, too. Formal education represents a “crucial tool,” used by government, to ensure that the logics of economic productivity and hypercapitalist efficiency are reflected in the learning undertaken by students. The chapter makes a call for critical debates on the neoliberal restructuring of education and youth citizenship and the role of education in shaping young people’s political agency under capitalism.

Beech (► [Chap. 14, “International Student Mobility: A Critical Overview”](#)) contributes directly to a burgeoning body of scholarship on the international mobility of students and focuses on the question of how students choose their education and the role that “economic” considerations play in this. Although decision-making for international mobility includes economic factors (e.g., improved job prospects), these go hand-in-hand with the sociocultural aspects of overseas study (such as the improved intercultural communication skills). Beech argues that sociocultural factors are equally salient in providing “explanations” for student destinations than are other (e.g., economic) considerations. Yet, they are frequently side-lined in more pragmatic and economic debates around the need to attract international students and keep hold of skilled and productive workers.



Jensen's (► Chap. 15, "Learning Skills, Building Social Capital, and Getting an Education: Actual and Potential Advantages of Child Domestic Work in Bangladesh") perspective on children's work considers laboring in the domestic sphere. Like Bourdillon's contribution, this chapter also attempts to nuance extant debates around children's work, arguing that it is necessary to take account of a whole range of complex geographical factors before judgement on the risks and benefits of child domestic work can be passed. In particular, Jensen focuses on the "conditions" of the child's place of work vis-à-vis their "home" domestic set up in Bangladesh, and whether or not their basic needs can, in fact, be met at home or are better met within the context of an alternative (albeit potentially exploitative) domestic arrangement. The chapter makes a case for fighting inequality and offers realistic interventions including improving the working conditions of live-in domestics rather than preventing them from working.

Donovan's first contribution (► Chap. 16, "Homeless Youth Labor Continuum: Working in Formal and Informal Economies from Highland Guatemala to San Francisco, California") focuses on the labor trajectories of youth, exploring how their involvement in "off-the-book" and often stigmatizing work shapes and is shaped by their migration pathways. She discusses how laws and policies governing minors' consent to work and accept shelter services shapes the work that young people can take and their need to relocate/migrate for those work opportunities. While the chapter presents rich ethnographic material on the labor of undocumented youth, it also engages with how informal work is the only viable option for them in the face of shrinking (and inaccessible) formal employment opportunities. Donovan offers an alternative model, with examples, to conceptualize the labor of young people in what she regards as the "labor continuum chart."

### 3.3 Livelihoods, Transitions, and Social Reproduction

In this third section, the category of youth is particularly foregrounded. The chapter by Baars (► Chap. 17, "Social Reproduction through Citizenship Education: Performing the Habitus of Pragmatic Compliance") examines the creation and performance of identities through schooling, and how these identities relate to conceptions of "good citizenship." Here, Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" is particularly informative in understanding how performances may reproduce the "social order"; in contrast, Butler's work on performativity suggests how this order may in fact be transformed. The chapter focuses in particular on youth identity in Singapore, to uncover the paradoxical way in which young people may both internalize uncritically an imposed vision of good citizenship while also partly resisting it. It further explains why social norms of good citizenship, which are internalized by youths, can also be expressions of resistance that cover deep resentments.

Informal economies have opened space for youth employment but have also increased their exposure to and exploitation by market forces (Rakodi 2002; Sommers 2010). Despite the vitality of small-scale income-generating activities for youth livelihoods, new groups have, over the past decades, entered the informal

economy, creating a tight space of competition. The transformations are experienced in different ways – integration into the formal economic structure, exclusion because of inability to compete with rapid changes and competitions, increased tax, and globalization. There is a growing trend in regards to the informalization of formal economies and formalization of informal economies (e.g., Donovan, ► [Chap. 24, “Undocumented and Documented Homeless Youth in the US Labor Force: Economically Useful and Politically Disenfranchised”](#)). In many places, the informal sector is also regulated by the state that has introduced stringent rules. Yet, how these processes influence intergenerational relations, livelihood opportunities, or constraints is not fully understood especially in children and youth geographies.

The theme of how informal care work shapes youth transitions is discussed in the chapter by Day (► [Chap. 18, “Education and Employment Transitions: The Experiences of Young People with Caring Responsibilities in Zambia”](#)). She examines the implications of care-giving responsibilities which are becoming a growing feature of young people daily work for later life in Zambia. Drawing on debates around “youth liminality” and critiquing conventional “standards” of youth transitions, she discusses the hidden consequences of care work to young people’s schooling and employment transitions. The chapter not only discusses how wider social change intersects with life course of young carers but also the ways in which it complicates the process of transition from childhood to adulthood.

Shand, van Blerk, and Hunter (► [Chap. 19, “Economic Practices of African Street Youth: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, and Zimbabwe”](#)) discuss street youth’s economic precarity in three African cities. The chapter explores how youth who come of age on streets in contrasting geographical contexts use the informal economy to generate livelihoods to get by on daily basis. Their contribution lies in their analysis of how young people navigate the city economy to boost their livelihood prospects. The chapter also details the variety of economic practices young people undertake, how that is tied to their perception of risk and work, as well as the patterns of coping as they go about looking for better employment opportunities.

As noted above, the past decade saw policy shifts in relation to solving the problem of youth unemployment. There has been a move away from genuine “employment generation” to an increasing emphasis on promotion of “entrepreneurial” skills in international (e.g., World Bank and ILO) policy discourses as well as national youth policies. This approach builds on the discourses of producing a generation of youth who are not job seekers but instead job creators or “entrepreneurs.” Yet, in many ways this approach resonates with the neoliberal ideology of “do-it-yourself” and of downloading systemic problems onto the individual. The chapters introduced below not only provide broad-brush and structural contexts of underpinning young people’s labor but also how young people themselves navigate livelihoods and skill acquisition amidst rapid social and economic transformations.

Chiguta (► [Chap. 20, “Entrepreneurship as a Possible Solution to Youth Unemployment in Africa”](#)) discusses the role of entrepreneurship in addressing the unemployment problem that young people face in Sub-Saharan Africa. Drawing on surveys from Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) he discusses some of the

pathways through which youth benefit from self-employment and promotion of entrepreneurship efforts by governments and NGOs. He identifies the challenges that youth face in self-employment including the difficulty of accessing start up capitals, (in)appropriate skill training, and the presence of cheap and often extremely competitive youth labor. There is a discrepancy between the theoretical assumption underlying entrepreneurship as a development intervention through which youth can escape out of poverty and the institutional spaces and realities that young people navigate on a daily basis. The recommendations Chiguta provides have important directions for policy and planning by stakeholders who work to improve employment conditions of young Africans and beyond.

Jørgensen (► [Chap. 21, “Schooling, Generation, and Transformations in Livelihoods: Youth in the Sand Economy of Northern Kenya”](#)) focuses on how the intersection between environmental change and new political and economic interests generate growing pressure on land, and livelihoods of youth. Her chapter discusses the transition in livelihood activities of youth from pastoralism to sand harvesting against the backdrop of complex processes of schooling, skill degradation, and environmental change. She argues that as environmental changes generate pressure on pastoral livelihoods, young people turn to new, uncertain, and morally precarious livelihood activities. The chapter makes unique contribution on how competing and overlapping interests, expectations, and moral economies of youth are mediated in and through changing livelihood practices, restructuring social and generational relations in profound ways.

Aitken (► [Chap. 22, “Reproducing Work, Education, and Revolution: Two Latin American Case Studies”](#)) brings together young people’s stories of the right to work and just education. By juxtaposing children’s right to work in Mexico and young people’s activism for access to quality education in Chile, he sheds light on how neoliberal state restructuring affects the young people but also their transformative capacities in their quest for social justice. The chapter weaves together complex processes of work, play, and education in the context of capitalist order and how young people’s fight for decent education and right to work indeed exemplifies the quest for space and the right to creative (imaginative) development. One of Aitken’s contributions is how, through direct labor and engaged activism, children both possess and enact moral and revolutionary imaginations that can transform their lives and those of their societies.

Ursin and Abebe (► [Chap. 23, “Young People’s Marginal Livelihoods and Social Transitions in Urban Brazil: Tale of Four Lives”](#)) provide a rare and valuable in-depth account of the narratives of a small number of boys coming of age on the streets in Salvador, Brazil. Their contribution has an important temporal as well as spatial dimension – the past, present, and future are all important in guiding the livelihood choices of young people in this context. Their chapter counters the prevalence for “unidirectional” accounts of social transitions and takes care to balance the “agency” of the boys against the structural constraints within which they live. Similar to other chapters in the volume (e.g., Chiguta, ► [Chap. 20, “Entrepreneurship as a Possible Solution to Youth Unemployment in Africa”](#); Shand, van Blerk and Janine Hunter, ► [Chap. 19, “Economic Practices of African Street Youth: The Democratic Republic](#)

of Congo, Ghana, and Zimbabwe”), they suggest that the tendency to view young people’s struggle to derive daily income within the urban informal economy as “self-employment” not only depoliticizes the social inequalities but it also individuates systemic problems that require collective action.

The legal and policy dimension of youth labor is discussed by Donovan’s second contribution (► [Chap. 24, “Undocumented and Documented Homeless Youth in the US Labor Force: Economically Useful and Politically Disenfranchised”](#)). Donovan draws on the political economy framework to contextualize how undocumented young people’s reliance on informal jobs with unpredictable shifts makes school attendance and second formal sector job difficult. She argues that homeless youth in USA are produced as fugitive subjects kept mobile by laws that keep them ambulatory through police sweeping of public spaces. She provides examples and engages with the implication for youth when an illegal and informal economy that they depend on becomes a formal one. The conclusion she arrives at is that in order to improve the lives of homeless youth the focus should not be on homelessness per se but on establishing the legal right of minors to work, ensuring wages that can sustain a livelihood and housing, and worker protections including workplace safety and solid contractual terms of labor for those with and without citizen status.

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## 4 Concluding Remarks

Education and work are commonplace in children’s and youth’s lives, yet what they mean, how they are valued, and how they intersect with other dimensions are complicated by local geographies. The contributions in this volume bring to the fore diverse theoretical and empirical examples of young people’s labor and education from a variety of social science disciplines. The perspectives demonstrate multiple, overlapping, and sometimes contradictory meanings and contexts of work and education, how they are encountered by children and youth as well as how they unfold in their lives. The contributions also reveal how geography is as important in shaping the realities, and experiences of laboring and learning as much as economic policies, politics, social structures, institutions, and traditions.

All the chapters in this volume on Laboring and Learning have provided unique and ground-breaking new perspectives on the contributions that children and young people make to their societies. They have explored the interface between learning and laboring but more concretely on the institutional, spatial, cultural, and local as well as everyday manifestations of these in young people’s mundane lives, and often from their own perspectives. Seen in totality, the range of ideas and insights generated here helps us to think in new ways about the places, spaces, times, and ideologies of learning and laboring and the capacities of young people in transforming them. Perhaps, the most important contribution of the volume as a whole, however, is the way in which it draws attention to the need to view learning and work as intimately and significantly related and yet unbounded by more traditional spatial and social categorizations.

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# African Socialization Values and Nonformal Educational Practices: Child Development, Parental Beliefs, and Educational Innovation in Rural Zambia

# 2

Robert Serpell and Dorothy Adamson-Holley

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## Abstract

The authors reflect on lessons learned from a series of research collaborations in Zambia about the potential and sustainability of educational innovations designed to build on indigenous cultural values and practices while promoting progressive

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social change. A case study in 1996–1997 documented innovation at a government primary school in a small rural town, using the child-to-child approach. A follow-up study assessed the degree to which socially responsible dispositions cultivated in grades 5–7 at the primary school were compatible with the demands of further formal education in grade 9. Longer-term follow-up explored with some of the same cohort in early adulthood how the child-to-child curriculum had influenced their personal development and life-journeys.

The African traditional practice of assigning social responsibility to young people from an early age is highly compatible with contemporary goals of education in Africa and elsewhere. At best, it can serve as a context for learning about health and nutrition, as well as fostering the values of cooperation and nurturant support of others, contributing to peaceful coexistence in society. Participation by children in family work is construed in many African societies as priming for social responsibility, an important dimension of intelligence. Work and play are better understood as complementary dimensions of activity than as discrete alternatives. Cooperation with peers can be mobilized as a resource for co-constructive learning. Strategic opportunities for countering systemic bias in educational systems include generative curriculum development, teacher sensitization to psychosocial dimensions of learners' development, and legitimizing local community impact as a criterion of educational success.

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**Keywords**

Socialization values • Child-to-child • Cooperation • Social responsibility • Cooperative learning • Curriculum development • Work • Play • Health and nutrition • Agriculture

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## 1 Introduction

The relationship between childhood participation in productive work, formal education, and life-course personal development is understood in different ways depending on the wider sociocultural and politico-economic context. In many African societies, the cultural meaning systems that inform parental socialization practices, especially in rural communities, differ from those that inform the pedagogical practices of public schooling.

Rapid social and economic change in Africa calls for reappraisal of the functions of formal education in preparing the next generation for adaptive and transformative participation in society. Academic success has been widely construed as a competitive pathway for escape from the child's community of origin (Serpell 1999). But traditional African socialization values and nonformal educational practices focus on preparing children and youth for socially responsible participation in the local community.

The topics of food security, nutrition, public health, and nurturant care of younger children have powerful implications for quality of life in all societies and deserve



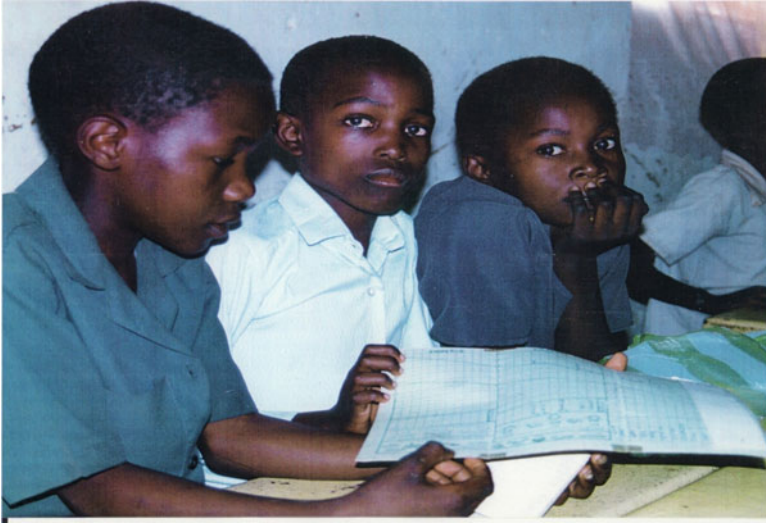


**Fig. 1** Teacher Paul Mumba in Mpika, Zambia, with one of his upper primary school students, escorting a young child to the under-5 clinic, for growth monitoring

greater attention in the design of educational curricula. Cooperative relationships are key to peaceful human coexistence, a major challenge facing the world today. Such relationships are highly valued in most African cultures and are actively promoted in traditional African educational practices. However, they are often undermined in the competitive model of institutionalized public basic schooling (IPBS – Serpell and Hatano 1997) that was hegemonically imposed by Western colonial powers on many African states and only minimally adapted after the attainment of political independence. Cooperative learning arrangements can be effectively incorporated into school curricula as vehicles for motivating socially responsible applications of new knowledge.

The authors of this chapter collaborated in the 1990s on a follow-up study of a group of Zambian youth, enrolled in different strands of the national secondary school system, whose primary education was informed by an innovative child-to-child approach (Adamson-Holley 1999). An earlier case study at their primary school in a small rural town documented curriculum and instructional practices, parental views, and student learning outcomes (Serpell and Mwape 1998/1999; Serpell 2008). Teachers leading the innovation actively promoted cooperative learning among their students and structured community outreach activities around principles of primary health care (see Figs. 1 and 2). Longer-term follow-up later explored with the same cohort in their late 20s how their experiences had influenced their personal development and life-journeys (Serpell et al. 2011).

In this chapter we reflect on what we learned from this series of research collaborations about the potential and sustainability of educational innovations designed to build on indigenous cultural values and practices while promoting



**Fig. 2** Grade 5 students studying growth charts at Kabale Primary School, Mpika, Zambia

progressive social change. In particular, we focus attention on the positive social value of cultivating prosocial motivation among children and youth through active engagement in domestic and community work as part of the educational curriculum. We argue that the African traditional practice of assigning social responsibility to young people from an early age is highly compatible with contemporary goals of education, both in Africa and elsewhere around the world. At its best, it can serve as a context for learning about health and nutrition, as well as fostering the values of cooperation and nurturant support of others for maintaining a peaceful and humane society.

Children and youth in every community participate in various ways in the domestic economy. Such participation affords opportunities for the younger generation to discover technical knowledge accumulated by society, to practice and refine their psychomotor skills, to learn how to cooperate with other people in order to achieve socially co-constructed goals and how to communicate their emotional states, to reflect on their status as members of a community of practice that shares a system of meanings, and to assert their right as co-owners of that system to innovate within the constraints of intelligibility.

Several lines of cross-cultural interaction informed this research. Parents in rural Chewa society explained to Serpell and his colleagues in the 1970s how they conceptualized children's intelligence as a blend of cognitive alacrity with social responsibility (Serpell 1977, 1993). This raised his awareness of cultural limitations of the model of institutionalized public basic schooling (IPBS) prevailing in the Zambian educational system. Observation of children participating in the routine care of infants in several African and Asian countries raised the awareness of the British pediatrician, David Morley, that healthy early childhood development can be

enhanced by focusing intervention on child-to-child interactions (Morley and Woodland 1988). The child-to-child (CtC) approach was taken up internationally across a wide range of societies and coordinated by the London Institute of Education, under the leadership of Hugh Hawes (1988), an educator with extensive experience in Uganda and Nigeria and strongly influenced by Piaget's theoretical ideas.

In Zambia, a Jesuit missionary with keen interest in indigenous African culture, Frank Carey was Inspector for Religious Education in the 1980s in the Zambian Ministry of Education. Carey saw the potential of CtC for integrating moral education into the basic school curriculum and introduced the approach to a network of rural primary school teachers. Patrick Kangwa, Paul Mumba, and Clement Mumbo shared through correspondence their experiences with the CtC approach at several rural primary schools and eventually teamed up at Kabale school in Mpika to launch what soon became a national program (Udell 2001). These experienced teachers recognized the affordance of CtC for educational innovation in rural schools, giving local practical utility and social meaning to IPBS. Their innovative use of the approach was studied by a research team based at the University of Zambia (UNZA), who interpreted the curricular activities in which the learners were engaged as an opportunity for participatory appropriation of health science (Serpell and Mwape 1998/1999). The theoretical origins and rationale of the concept of participatory appropriation are extensively discussed in Forman et al. (1993).

Noting that the pedagogical themes of cooperative learning and nurturant care for younger children are well represented in indigenous African cultural practices, the UNZA research team explored parental views on the approach. Pridmore and Stephens (2000, p. 77) contend that "the underlying philosophy of Child-to-Child. . . reflects strongly held beliefs <that are> not shared by most of the communities where Child-to-Child ideas are being implemented, societies where adults hold a very different view of children . . . from those of Western and Westernised societies." But in Mpika in the 1990s, the UNZA research team found that many of the indigenous African families of children enrolled in classes using a CtC approach considered it to be a natural and welcome extension of a practice embedded in traditional Bemba culture that they were using with their children at home and had experienced as children themselves in an earlier generation (Mwape and Serpell 1996). A minority of the parents interviewed expressed concern about the amount of time and effort devoted in CtC classes to outreach activities, fearing that it might detract from their preparation for the highly competitive national secondary school selection examination. However, when the examination results were analyzed, it was found, to the contrary, that students enrolled in CtC classes at Kabale Primary School outperformed on the national exam their peers enrolled in non-CtC classes at the same grade levels.

The doctoral dissertation project of Dorothy Adamson-Holley (1999) was designed to assess the degree to which the socially responsible dispositions cultivated in grades 5–7 at Kabale Primary School were compatible with the demands of further formal education. She invited grade 9 teachers at four post-primary schools to rate a sample of their students on several dimensions emphasized among the educational objectives of the child-to-child approach: taking responsibility,

cooperating with others, nurturance, healthy lifestyle, self-confidence, and practical problem solving. She then compared the grade 9 teachers' ratings of two groups of students, one of which had completed grades 5–7 in CtC classes at Kabale Primary School, while the other had graduated from other upper primary classes following the regular curriculum.

The post-primary schools sampled in this study fell into two categories: basic school (BS) and secondary school (SS). In the Zambian public school system, all grade 7 students sit for a centrally set and marked national exam and are offered placements at SS or BS in accordance with separate cutoff grades for boys and girls. Students who are offered places at secondary school have systematically higher secondary placement grades; thus, they are considered academically stronger than students who are offered places at basic school.

Adamson-Holley also conducted group interviews with teachers and with students at both types of school. While teachers and students felt strongly that prosocial cooperative attitudes and practices were essential to education and to child development, secondary school teachers, in particular, envisioned no room or appropriateness for these types of attitudes and practices in the curriculum, which they deemed as already overburdened. The secondary school teachers placed great emphasis on education as a means to promote and ensure national development, but relatively little on education for the development of local families or communities. Overall, the more selective national secondary schools were less supportive of the prosocial cooperative attitudes emphasized in CtC than were the lower prestige, basic schools attached to primary schools.

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## 2 Participation by Children in Family Work as Priming for Social Responsibility

The cultural practice of including children from an early age in domestic work is widespread in African societies. According to Nsamenang (1992, 2009), West African traditional ethnotheories of socialization construe this, not only as an economically efficient deployment of human resources but also as a way of priming the developing child to recognize, understand, and rehearse social roles that pertain to four hierarchical spheres of life: self, household, network, and public. Children are thus construed as “social apprentices,” whose developmental progress requires adaptation to the demands of their family’s eco-cultural niche (Super and Harkness 1986, 1997).

### 2.1 Socially Responsible Intelligence

Parents in rural Chewa village communities of Zambia’s Eastern Province explained to Serpell (1977) that in their culture, children’s intelligence (*nzeli*) is gauged not only by their cognitive alacrity (*ku-chenjela*) but also by the degree to which they can be relied on to perform assignments responsibly (*ku-tumikila*). Bemba parents in

rural village communities of Zambia's Northern Province studied by Kingsley (1985) offered a similar interpretation of their key term for intelligence (*mano*). Moreover, the finding that indigenous conceptualization of children's intelligence includes a dimension of social responsibility has been reported by numerous other studies in Africa (e.g., Dasen et al. 1985; Grigorenko et al. 2001 and other studies reviewed by Serpell 1993).

## 2.2 Agriculture and Food Preparation as Foundations of Nutrition and Health

Nutrition is an essential foundation of human health, and food security underpins all economies. In the agrarian subsistence economies that characterize the eco-cultural niche of development for the majority of African children, production, processing, and preparation of food for consumption are pervasive preoccupations of everyday life. Unlike the children of middle-class, urban families whose cultural practices tend to be portrayed as "normal" in many introductory textbooks published in the Northern Western More industrialized countries (NoWeMics), the majority of the world's children are not shielded from their parents' working lives but observe and imitate them from an early age (Morelli et al. 2003). In subsistence agricultural communities, children not only observe agricultural work activities, but are actively engaged in them as "legitimate peripheral participants" (Lave and Wenger 1991).

Even the International Labour Organization, despite its intensive advocacy against "child labor," acknowledges that "in the context of family farming, small-scale fisheries and livestock husbandry, some participation of children in non-hazardous activities can be positive as it contributes to the inter-generational transfer of technical and social skills and children's food security. Improved self-confidence, self-esteem and work skills are attributes often detected in young people engaged in some aspects of farm work" (ILO 2015).

As Yuyen and Nsamenang (2011, p. 497) observe, "most children in rural Africa and some in peri-urban areas combine schooling with socialization into a variety of agricultural productivity from an early age, <and yet> knowledge and skills on agriculture and nutrition are not integrated into school curricula of most African countries commensurate to agriculture being the core of Africa's political economies." The segregation of productive work from learning opportunities in schools has informed the design of the basic educational curriculum in IPBS and been reciprocally strengthened by it, with students receiving literacy and numeracy instruction in abstraction from most of the real world tasks to which those skills could usefully be applied in their everyday lives. Ng'asike (2014) has advanced a similar critique of the absence of any connection between formal programs of early childhood education offered to children of the cattle-herding, Turkana people of Kenya and the indigenous knowledge system and animal husbandry skills that inform the nonformal educational practices of the society. This alienating disjunction between the explicit curriculum of schools and the indigenous socialization agenda

of children's home community poses a major challenge for the design of public education in Africa (Serpell 1999).

Given the recurrent prevalence of food scarcity and the central importance of food security for the survival and well-being of African societies, design of a relevant basic education should "plan the integration of a lot of new knowledge and skills into school curricula, if the African school would become a true partner in development and healthier citizens <with a> focus on how to prevent post-harvest losses and enrich nutrient values in local starchy staples (cereals, roots and tubers) among others, with legumes, vegetables and vegetable oils" (Yuyen and Nsamenang (2011, p. 505). Moreover, there is ample evidence that the nutritional status of children has an impact on their learning in school. "Actual nutritional well-being is determined by a number of interrelated factors, which besides food security include health and sanitation, adequate supplies of safe water, parents' education, time to prepare food and care of vulnerable individuals within the household" (op.cit., 507). Implementing an effective strategy for breaking the vicious circle of infection and malnutrition that plagues so many rural African communities demands the provision of practical learning opportunities in locally accessible contexts such as kitchen gardens and school farms.

### **2.3 Work and Play as Complementary Dimensions of Activity, Rather than Discrete Alternatives**

Another exogenous constraint on the design of relevant basic education in societies of the Majority World is the notion promoted in modern Western culture that the experience of childhood should be insulated from work in order to allow children time to play. Punch (2003) has drawn attention to two conceptual dichotomies that have tended to converge in generating contrasting stereotypes of childhood in the Minority World of the NoWeMics and in the Majority World. These dichotomies are between child and adult and between work and play. The stereotypical minority world child is naturally disposed toward playfulness and ill-equipped for the demands of adult work, against which she is deservedly protected. By contrast, children in the Majority World are stereotypically represented as miniature adults, unjustly burdened with work and deprived of their entitlement to play. In reality, as Punch shows in her account of rural Bolivian children, the boundaries that define these conceptual dichotomies are "fluid" or "blurred," since there is considerable overlap between the spheres of social activity of children and adults, and engagement in work offers many opportunities for play. In a similar vein, Katz (2004, p. 60) concluded from her observations of children in South Sudan that "an element of play is almost fused with the work of children – they work at play and they play at work – temporally, metaphorically and imaginatively."

Moreover, "play is not adequately defined by contrasting it with work or with seriousness, because it is closely connected to the highly valued cultural domain of aesthetics" (Serpell 1997, p. 592). Indeed, applied psychologists have often



emphasized the benefits of “intrinsic” motivation for both academic study and industrial production. Some have even sought ways to emulate in industrial work settings the conditions of play that are exceptionally conducive to intrinsic task motivation and the sustained commitment to a task over long periods of time. Professionals in the modern world often take pride in declaring that they enjoy their work, as an indication not of its triviality but rather of their profound vocational commitment to it.

Harkness and Super (1992) describe the traditional pattern of shared care for young children in East Africa as including an expectation by parents that children engaged in the role of child nurse will not only protect and feed the infant in their care but also “sing to, play with, and entertain their young charge.” And this is indeed what generally happens, such that the younger child is perceived by the older child less as a burden than as a companion. When our colleague Gertrude Mwape inquired of a crowd of children, who had gathered in Mpika to welcome the UNZA research team, why several of them had brought infants along with them, “they seemed incredulous. One responded ‘*Baiche besu!*’ (‘they are our younger kids!’). The children did not see anything unusual about this practice as it is something accepted as part of life” (Serpell and Mwape 1998/1999, p. 83).

Koller and her colleagues (2015) have offered a trenchant account of moral issues raised by the participation of children and youth in the high-risk activities of commercial sex and armed combat, with careful attention to the complexity of interpreting young people’s motivation in contexts of severe economic and political disadvantage. Based on extensive empirical research, mainly in South America, these authors note that “children/adolescents often have difficulty recognizing themselves as victims of a situation of exploitation, thus incorporating the prevailing discourse in society that CSECA <commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents> is a ‘survival’ alternative” (p. 464). Policy and programmatic interventions thus have a special responsibility to protect younger members of society. But it is often difficult to define the principles that should guide such protection, since both material conditions and moral norms vary widely across societies and cultures (Bissell et al. 2015). In our estimation, the moral arguments against CSECA and CAAFAG (children associated with armed forces and armed groups) have more to do with issues of social planning for the enhancement of sexual relations and the reduction of armed conflict than with the general human rights of children and youth. It is therefore inappropriate to link them theoretically to the topic of child participation in domestic work.

Criticism of the widespread African cultural practice of including children from an early age in domestic work (which has been mounted by some children’s rights advocates) seems to overlook several important features of the practice: participation in this kind of work affords numerous opportunities for enjoyment; it is valued by many of the children involved as an expression of trust by their parents and as a role in which they can take pride; and it is understood by the adults who assign them this role as an effective means for socializing the children into a major developmental goal: the capacity to assume social responsibility.

### 3 Nurturant Care of Younger Siblings as a Normative Feature of African Family Life

The initial insight that inspired the child-to-child movement in 1979 was that in the Majority World, most children are entrusted from an early age with the care of younger siblings (see Figs. 3 and 4). Critics of this widespread cultural practice have tended to focus on the unequal burden of domestic responsibilities carried by women

**Fig. 3** Village scene in Malawi: young caregiver with her charge



**Fig. 4** Not only girls take care of their younger siblings. Grade 5 boy in Mpika





**Fig. 5** Middle-income Mpika mother supervising her grade 7 daughter's carrying of the family's baby on her back in traditional "papu" style

and girls as an obstacle to women's enfranchisement. Invoking the historical struggle in Western societies for equal access to education by women, they construe the assignment of child caring responsibilities to pre-adolescent and adolescent girls as a form of exploitative domination that prevents them from accessing the benefits of schooling. However, as Nsamenang (1992) observed, the indigenous West African ethnotheoretical perspective on socialization construes the assignment of child caring responsibilities to youth as a sign of respect for the youth's moral capability and a deliberate priming of socially responsible behavior that marks the developing person's progress toward adulthood.

In the Mpika study, Gertrude Mwape conducted in-depth interviews with a stratified sample of 41 families of children enrolled in grade 7 classes at Kabale School that were following the CtC approach.

Most parents said they regard the practice of children of primary school age caring for younger children as part of an old Zambian tradition and reported that they were expected to do this in their own childhood at home. But only about half of them recalled this being a theme at their own school. Most parents (of both boys and girls) said they require their children to do this at home (see Fig. 5). On the question of what benefits the older child derives from such activity, parents cited growth of a nurturant attitude, a sense of responsibility and preparation for parenthood, but also intrinsic pleasure and a sense of personal worth. While the pattern of these responses did not vary significantly according to the gender of the child, the more subjective benefits were especially apparent to parents of academically low-achieving students. (Serpell 2008, p. 84)

More recently, the UNZA research team has collected empirical evidence that the CtC experience did indeed have long-term consequences for the personal

development of the older children. This follow-up study was conducted primarily from a phenomenological perspective. Interviewers sought, with minimal prompting to elicit from a sample of adults in their late 20s, their recollections and evaluations of the education they received in Mr. Paul Mumba's upper primary school class, about 14–16 years earlier when they were in their early teens (Serpell et al. 2011).

Respondents from Mr. Mumba's class reported much more vivid recollections of their primary school educational experience than a small control group of respondents who had been enrolled in other grade 7 classes at the same school. Key developmental outcomes identified in their personal testimonies were a prosocial orientation toward helping others, an egalitarian perspective on gender relations, and a commitment to promotion of children's health. Most of them explicitly attributed their own personal growth and philosophical outlook to the CtC curriculum, and several also described their career choices as inspired by their CtC experience. All of them expressed a desire to see their own children experience similar primary schooling, often regretting that this was unlikely to be available, since the CtC approach is no longer widely used in Zambian schools.

In a recent, wide-ranging review of research on prosocial development, Eisenberg et al. (2015) noted that “school-based programs designed to enhance prosocial values, behaviors and attitudes in children can be effective . . . However, these programs are often difficult for schools to implement given their cost and a number of policies in the US educational system that requires teachers to focus on academic testing, rather than socioemotional learning” (p. 634). Yet, as they point out, implementing intervention programs, especially in such settings as schools, “that are both cost-effective and impactful is an obvious goal for researchers and policy makers” (p. 644).

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## **4 Cooperative Peer-Group Activity as a Context for Co-constructive Learning**

### **4.1 Cooperation with Peers as an Aspect of Socially Responsible Intelligence**

One of the pedagogical resources for promoting socially responsible intelligence is peer-group cooperation (Serpell 2011). This potential was recognized by parents in the rural Chewa community studied by Serpell (1993), who cited cooperativeness with peers (*agwilizana ndi anzace*) as a marker of intelligence (*nzelu*) when explaining their choice of children for the assignment of responsibilities for hypothetical tasks. Peer-group cooperation has also received attention by Western educational psychologists in a number of intervention studies designed to enhance learning in school settings (e.g., Slavin 1990), especially among American children of African heritage (Boykin and Allen 2004). From the theoretical perspective of Vygotsky (1978), children of any society can assist their less competent peers to learn by providing support to the learner in his or her zone of proximal development

(Forman and McPhail 1993). However, the effectiveness of channeling such instructional support through children may be enhanced by some cultural dispositions more than others (Tharp and Gallimore 1988; Serpell et al. 2006).

During interviews conducted with former CtC students currently enrolled in grade 9 secondary schooling, peer-group cooperation stood out as a major pedagogical resource that students sought to continue in their post-primary educational and community pursuits (Adamson-Holley 1999). Group work, cited as the most effective learning method, stood out as a practice that was particularly helpful. Students spoke with a sense of longing for the types of learning processes they were exposed to during their years in CtC. These students also expressed a sense of anger and resentment that their current educational placements did not support these types of processes and practices or recognize them as valid. This response was particularly noticed during interviews with secondary school students who were in residential placements, far removed from the support, guidance, and nurturance of their local communities.

While cooperative peer-group activity, thought by teachers to promote dependency, was not necessarily supported by basic schools and strictly forbidden by secondary schools, basic school students found ways to incorporate cooperative peer-group activity into their lives outside of the formal educational system. Basic school students took advantage of opportunities to collaborate with peers on academic and other areas of importance, such as community work, including beautification of the environment, recreation, mutual support, and helping each other with family problems. This cooperative approach to life and learning is rooted in the strong cooperative tradition in African culture and is also rooted in CtC ideological and instructional techniques, which capitalize on traditional African values of cooperation and interdependence.

What stood out in the responses of basic school students was a keen sense of social conscience and social responsibility that was clearly not present in the responses of secondary school students. Basic school students were very much concerned about the state of the community and the welfare of those within it, particularly the vulnerable, the disadvantaged, and the unemployed. These students communicated a sense of personal responsibility and commitment to using what they had learned and what they anticipated learning for the benefit of the community as a whole. For basic school students, then, peer-group cooperation also helped to promote socially responsible intelligence.

Secondary school students, on the other hand, spoke nostalgically about the value of group work as it related to personal gain and personal development, i.e., improving individual grades and academic competencies, not as it related to mutually supporting one another. It appeared that these students had adjusted to the high level of competition required for survival in that type of educational setting.

Whether for its role in helping to build and sustain individuals, families, and communities or in improving individuals' academic outcomes, cooperative peer-group activity proved to be a highly effective learning tool in education for basic and secondary students who participated in the CtC program. Post-primary educational

settings would do well to consider incorporating cooperative peer-group activities in their curricular designs, as capitalizing on this high level of cultural continuity between home and school can only serve to enhance student learning and academic, moral, and social outcomes.

## 4.2 Orchestration of Peer Interaction as a Pedagogical Method

Cooperative learning arrangements have been used in a variety of different ways to enhance learning in classroom settings (Mergendoller and Packer 1989). Tharp and Gallimore (1988), in their seminal book, *Rousing Minds to Life*, use the term “orchestration” to characterize the role of the teacher in a classroom organized around a configuration of students learning in small groups. They cite their colleague’s observation that when the number of students enrolled in a class reaches 30 or 40 (let alone the 60+ class size typical of many African public primary schools), “the teacher finds it difficult to dialogue in an effective way with one student in any developmentally productive way” (Shuy 1986, p. 3). As a strategic response to this widely recognized constraint, they argue that teachers of such large classes should design and coordinate a variety of activity settings. They discuss three in particular: teacher-led small groups, independent learning centers, and the whole group. “In each setting, students are moved through their ZPDs (zones of proximal development) by the means of assistance and sources of assistance . . . however each setting is characterized by different patterns of means and sources, and each must orchestrate them differently to achieve the educational goals” (Tharp and Gallimore (1988, p. 162).

One of the teachers who played a leading role in the implementation of the child-to-child approach at Kabale Primary School in the 1990s, Paul Mumba (2000) has described in detail how he mobilized peer support as way of “democratizing” his classroom. His account illustrates in rich detail how he orchestrated this process to generate a democratic community of learning in which the learners became active in the design and implementation of their own education.

The first step was to distribute the 60+ learners enrolled in his class into cooperative learning groups.

These groups were of mixed ability and sex. Each group . . . was composed of six pupils. Two pupils represented each group as leaders and both sexes were represented on Leadership. I, therefore, implemented the chain of responsibility for assisting . . . Which meant that I had to help the group leaders how to help other pupils participate in their own learning. . . Pupils developed the following roles for Group Leaders. They were expected to:

- ensure that each pupil had the required material to use in the classroom such as pencils and exercise books and possibly the group would help those that were lacking.
- - ensure that members were neat in writing. Encourage corrections before any new work.
- - plot with the members the group progress graphs- evaluate their group’s performance and discuss problems in the group- keep and write end of day report for the teacher to evaluate his work- represent the group in the academic meetings with the teacher- suggest other new ways of learning in consultation with other members according to their

needs- monitor late coming and ensure that late comers were paired with responsible pupils for encouragement- monitor absenteeism in groups. They were to visit pupils that were often absent from school.- assist performance in other pupils.

Results of the co-operative grouping revealed the following:

- (a) Leadership qualities were developed in the leaders. They began making simple plans for their groups to continue the work when they went back to their homes. They prepared additional homework for their members which I allowed after going through. They were often heard discussing ways of improving their own groups consulting from other leaders and their members.
- (b) Punctuality was improved as children picked their friends to school.
- (c) Vivid discussions often characterised the time of plotting the group graph after an assessment or evaluation test. Children discussed ways of improving performance of slow learners.
- (d) The participation of girls was much higher than that which was observed in the boys. As a result groups that were led by girls did better than those led by boys. Girls shared their ideas more than boys did. . . . towards the end of the study boys appreciated the girls' contribution in their learning process. They socialised easily. In the end one boy testified to his group leader who was a girl that her ideas helped him do well during examinations. The segregation between girls and boys lessened. (Mumba 2000)

In the same report, Mumba identified three key processes that mediated the remarkable growth of learning and development in his students: discussing progress, self-evaluation in class, and decision-making.

#### *Discussing progress*

Many times the children in this study had followed this author and demanded discussions concerning their progress. They were interested in discussing progress. So I introduced children to evaluating their own learning. Children under study were helped to evaluate themselves. (. . . self-evaluating pupils are able to take greater responsibility for their own learning when the goals are set clearly and when they can monitor progression towards such goals.) I shared with the pupils everyday what we were expected to achieve. I helped them understand the importance of time and unity if we were to achieve our goals.

#### *Self evaluation in class*

I developed a method within their co-operative groups by which each child's contribution and behaviour was observed by classmates during the learning process with the following format on self-evaluation: (i) What good things did your classmates observe in you today? (ii) What good things did you fail to do?

Once the child was aware of such 'good things', they tended to regard some of their actions as unworthy, and tended to exclude these from their self concepts . . . desiring to improve upon and repeat good things which have been observed by classmates. I was however, very quick . . . to protect individuals in case of undesirable influences from the behaviour of one or other individuals. Which meant that I intervened where others needed clarifications on good things, because sometimes immaturity of the young leads to wrong judgement. I was also very careful so as not to be perceived as underrating their abilities. (Mumba 2000)

Mumba's report includes examples of the "good things" discussed and of his students' evaluations of his own behavior as teacher, including praise for his introduction of self-evaluation and his responsiveness to the students' suggestions and criticism of some of his handling of particular classroom events.

### 4.3 Decision-Making

Self-evaluation helped children to think critically of the next step of action to take in class. . . .According to Hawes (1988), the capacity and ability of children to act responsibly in the management of their own learning has been under-estimated and we are all guilty. Methodologies of Child -to-Child world wide such as children in this study have evidence to prove that children are capable of educating each other and even contributing to their own learning. Decision-making can be introduced to the classroom in such a way that it becomes part of the school curriculum. With relevance to the activities in the school, children can be helped to (a) set goals, (b) implement and (c) evaluate decisions.

There are so many opportunities in our classrooms that may be used for training pupils in decision making. There are so many problems and difficulties we encounter as teachers in the execution of our duties. According to Hawes and Stephens (1990), teachers want to do everything and monopolise all decision making which is an exhausting business and this wears them out daily. Pupils should be co-deciders with teachers as they pass through daily encounters. . . . the two questions I addressed to the pupils prepared a ground for deciding what to do next which is known as the 'language of critique'. They discussed alternatives and looked at viable and non-viable choices. The discussions on the solutions led them to involvement and responsibility to participate in deciding collectively and correctly since they were affected by the problem in their classroom and needed a change. (Mumba 2000).

Central to Mumba's analysis of how the democratization of his classroom generated educational benefits is the principle of respect for children's rights:

When pupils were asked to narrate reasons why they enjoyed the right to speak freely and voice own opinions in their classroom, they responded as below: -

" We are able to argue and defend our views"

" We are able to ask freely"

" It builds our confidence"

" We are able to contribute"

" We are able to express our problems"

" We are able to challenge bullies and other people that oppress us." (Most girls expressed this).

" It removes shyness."

" Get ideas from peers"

While most teachers have found it difficult to practically implement awareness of children's rights with an emphasis to the right of expression, I have however, observed that children exposed to rights become very responsible; their behaviour and attitudes are challenged by people around them with reference to the rights they claim to have. Children under study started avoiding laziness, late coming and absenteeism. They planned their day and did many other good things. Critically they did not accept anything freely from their teachers and peers without analysis. (Mumba 2000)

It is noteworthy that, although his report cites a number of texts by Western authors, the curriculum development described by Mumba in this report was conducted before he was exposed to Western sociocultural theory as expounded by Vygotsky (1978), Tharp, and Gallimore (1988). His original inspiration came from African cultural traditions and the activities advocated by the Child-to-Child Trust (Hawes and Schotchmer 1993).

## 5 Strategic Opportunities for Countering Systemic Bias in Educational Systems: Zambia and the United States

### 5.1 Generative Curriculum Development

Earlier sections of this chapter have emphasized the importance for basic education, especially in Africa, of the intimate links between nutrition and food production, growth and child development, and of the central theme in African traditional child-rearing practices of cultivating social responsibility.

Nutrition and social responsibility are not rejected outright as irrelevant to preparation for adult life by the mainstream model of institutionalized public basic schooling (IPBS) that has become increasingly standardized across the world and receives the lion's share of educational funding. But they tend to be treated as marginal. Yet, as Serpell and Hatano (1997, p. 370) point out, "the pre-eminent emphasis on cognitive technological skills in IPBS arises from a very particular, historically situated set of circumstances including industrialisation and cultural imperialism, and is ill-suited to the primary needs of many of the world's contemporary, local communities." Rather than encouraging young people to appropriate expert knowledge by participating as apprentices in meaningful cultural activities, IPBS tends to focus on the manipulation of abstract symbols as advance preparation for the demands of future adult life.

Likewise, "orthodox western higher education tends to decontextualize the learning process by extracting learners from everyday life into a detached mode of full-time reflection, with an emphasis on structured exercises and analytical review of authoritative disciplinary texts. . . The alienating hazards of a socioculturally detached, text-based curriculum are accentuated in Africa by the remoteness of the factitious exercises and formal texts of the academy from the cultural practices of everyday life" (Serpell 2007, pp. 24–25). Engagement in productive work affords uniquely clear opportunities for learning that, as Paradise and Rogoff (2009) point out, are often absent or constrained in IPBS (Serpell and Hatano 1997) arrangements for learning. Lancy (2012) offers an integrative account of "the chore curriculum," distilled from a wide range of ethnographic studies around the world. Its key organizing principles include age grading and gender segregation, "...fitting the maturing child into its society like a key into its lock" (46). In traditional agrarian societies around the world, children master this curriculum by imitating role models (generally older siblings or neighbors) with only occasional, abstract feedback from adults in the form of reprimands for failure to meet expectations of socially appropriate behavior. Lancy (2012) contends that in the NoWeMics, "contemporary society is not supportive of the chore curriculum" and "teaching has all but replaced observation and imitation as the primary means of transmitting culture to the descending generation" (45). But, as Paradise and Rogoff (2009) illustrate, the paradigm of learning through participation "side by side: learning by observing and pitching in" is still followed in certain socialization contexts within contemporary "schooling societies," such as family businesses and workshops and even the home-based academic socialization of young children in professorial families.



The enthusiasm with which children learn how to perform domestic chores in agrarian communities arises not just from collectivist or compliant social attitudes, but also from the self-evident effectiveness of the child's participation and the sense of agency that this inspires (Gaskins 2015). This motivational asset of the side-by-side participatory arrangements described by Paradise and Rogoff (2009) is marginalized by the ideological separation between play and work in modern Western culture and by the emphasis of IPBS on advance preparation for future adult activities in artificial classroom contexts insulated from the real world.

In their editorial preface to the *Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices*, Nsamenang and Tchombe (2011, p. xxvii) observed that "education curricula in Africa seldom take into explicit account its grounded subject-matter – the theories and concepts with which the beneficiaries of education see their cultural world and their ways of thinking and engaging with the world." As a corrective to this significant shortcoming of current curricula, they advocate for a *generative teacher education curriculum* "that will produce children who understand and appreciate human diversity, teachers who will frame their own contextually sensitive research questions, and leaders who will appreciate and gain from the riches of the past, as much as the possibilities of the future."

## 5.2 Teacher Sensitization to Psychosocial Dimensions of Learners' Development

Sensitizing teachers to psychosocial dimensions of learners' development offers an opportunity for countering systemic bias in educational settings. While most students enter school enthusiastically and optimistically, hoping to gain a return on their economic, labor, and emotional investment, the reality is that the vast majority of those who eagerly enter school leave the experience with a sense of failure. One of the many barriers to full realization of human potential is the limited way in which educational systems measure, evaluate, and reward competency. Humans are multidimensional beings who possess a broad range of competencies, yet most educational systems only recognize and reward those related to academic achievement. Broadening the definition and criteria for success by evaluating students on psychosocial dimensions of development would help to alleviate systemic bias and would help students to emerge from educational experiences believing that they derived some benefit from their years of schooling.

Adamson-Holley (1999) used teacher rating scales developed by Serpell and Mwape (1998/1999) to measure the impact of the CtC curriculum on students' psychosocial development: practical problem solving, healthy lifestyles, self-confidence, social responsibility (caring toward other human beings), cooperation with others, and nurturance. These dimensions were selected because they were among the most important attributes advocated in the CtC perspective as the focus of teachers' pedagogical efforts. In order to ensure that they were intelligible and relevant to Zambian teachers, the research team asked a sample of Zambian teachers who had been using the child-to-child approach for more than a year in their classes



to provide us, in their own words, with concrete examples of behavior they had observed that illustrate the higher and lower ends of each of those dimensions. A selection of these defining examples was printed as a “glossary” to assist teachers, to whom some of the dimensions might be unfamiliar, to understanding their meaning in a Zambian cultural context.

The interest of these scales was that they provided a systematic way of assessing students’ development along dimensions not specifically related to academic achievement. In the study conducted by Adamson-Holley (1999), because students were receiving secondary level school lessons from multiple teachers, an opportunity arose to elicit independent ratings of each student by multiple teachers, and these were compared to estimate the reliability or concordance of the scales across different teachers. Teachers responded to the scales differently as a function of the type of school (basic or secondary) they represented. Between half and two-thirds of the inter-rater correlations at the basic schools were over the value of .33 (representing 10% or more of shared variance), while at the secondary schools only about one-third of the inter-rater correlations met that criterion.

Some clues to understanding these differences were observed very early in Adamson-Holley’s research. When the rating scales were introduced by the researcher, basic school teachers approached them with curiosity and eagerness, posing questions about the content of the scales as well as instructions for their appropriate completion. By contrast, secondary school teachers seemed apprehensive, posing relatively few questions related to the scales. This may have been because of a perceived expectation that secondary school teachers, who are university trained, would have greater familiarity and facility with rating scales. These teachers may not have wanted to appear naïve regarding use of rating scales.

Psychosocial dimensions of development appeared to have particular relevance for basic school teachers, reflecting the close relationships that many of them had with their students, the high level of overall collaboration and cooperation among basic school teachers, and basic school teachers’ concern for students’ overall, not just intellectual, development. Basic school teachers assigned greater importance to the psychosocial dimensions and their appropriateness in the curriculum than secondary school teachers, who viewed psychosocial dimensions as less important, if not inappropriate, to formal education. Secondary school teachers may not have taken the psychosocial dimensions seriously or considered them as attributes that are relevant to education nor within their responsibility to nurture or promote. It was also clear that while secondary school teachers may have had experience with rating scales based on their university experience, they had no experience in rating students on psychosocial dimensions. It is possible that secondary school teachers did not have as good a grasp of what they were assessing with their ratings as the teachers at basic schools, where the Kabale School CtC team had concentrated their efforts at disseminating the CtC philosophy.

The teacher rating scales used in this study may be effective tools in sensitizing teachers to psychosocial dimensions of learners’ development. It is important, however, that there be a participatory process wherein secondary and basic school teachers collaborate with researchers, including Zambian researchers, to develop

instruments based on indigenous concepts. While most of the psychosocial scales used in the 1999 study were developed in part by Zambian educators using indigenous Zambian concepts, teachers in the 1999 study were not a part of the group who participated in the development of the scales. In future, including teachers who are expected to apply the rating scales would help to ensure their validity and, in the case of secondary school teachers in the 1999 study, help to ensure buy-in by teachers. Increasing teacher sensitivity to psychosocial dimensions of learners' development would help to broaden their conception of what constitutes success in education beyond the widespread preoccupation with climbing the "narrowing pyramid" that radically constrains opportunities for progression within the structure of educational provision in Zambia and most other African nations (Serpell 1999).

### **5.3 Legitimizing Local Community Impact as a Criterion for Evaluation of Educational Outcomes**

Even in the United States, with its vast and vibrant economy, at the leading edge of technological innovation and some plausible claims to leadership of the "free world," it is common to find enduring pockets of social and economic adversity. Some of these are located ironically close to powerful centers of wealth and/or policy sophistication: witness the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, DC, within easy walking distance of the central business district, the White House and Congress. The cycle of poverty and its enduring correlates of academic underperformance, substance abuse, and family disintegration have received close attention from social scientists for more than half a century and have been targeted by vigorous social intervention programs informed by evidence-based policy formulations. Yet, despite all that, they remain ghettoized and marginalized.

Looking back on the findings of her investigation in Mpika in 1999, Adamson-Holley reports a sense of deep despair similar to the despair that she feels when interacting with educational systems in inner-city Baltimore, Maryland. In her current profession, Adamson-Holley works primarily with low-income African American youth who see little relevance of education to their everyday lives. As a result, many students opt out of the system, feeling let down by an educational process that is supposed to prepare them for productive citizenship. Indeed, many students in inner-city schools become "burdens to society" since they lack the requisite skills to advance in their education or to secure gainful employment if they happen to stay in school long enough to get passed through the system. This reality is due in large part to systemic inequalities and injustices that plague most American cities.

In a similar vein, Serpell (1993) has argued that the "narrowing pyramid" structure of educational provision in Zambia generates an "extractive definition of success," whereby students are defined as failures if the outcome of their schooling is not a career that takes them away from their community of origin. In a further elaboration of that argument, Serpell (1999) proposed that, especially in rural Zambian neighborhoods, the local primary school should expand its public criteria of what constitutes a successful outcome of several years of enrollment. For instance, instead of only

celebrating the achievement of students who pass the national selection exam that allows them access to a national secondary school, schools and educational authorities might award recognition to students whose efforts have made a direct and positive impact in the local community. Such local impact achievements might include conspicuous agricultural outputs, domestic enhancements, or compassionate and constructive support for vulnerable or needy members of the local community.

At a more communal level, most low-income families in American inner-city neighborhoods rely on “corner stores” that have no selection of fruits, vegetables, or healthy food options. Learning the importance of a healthy diet and learning to prepare healthy meals empower youth with valuable knowledge and skills, and these can be shared with their families. A number of innovative programs in the United States and Europe offer opportunities for youth to reap the vast benefits of Urban Agriculture. However, their reach is rather limited, as they are only offered in a small number of schools. In order for these programs to have any meaningful, lasting impact on individuals, families, and communities, it is imperative that they become a part of public policy and that their scope be broadened to include more than just a few schools and particularly to include inner-city schools that serve low-income populations.

Large-scale implementation of “Urban Agriculture” or “Urban Farming” programs (Schooner and Muller 2006) may constitute a sustainable option not only for reducing the incidence of obesity and diabetes, but also for providing American youth with post-primary education that will help to prepare them for healthy engagement with domestic and other forms of work in early adulthood. The benefits of Urban Agriculture are numerous: enhancing community cohesion, improving the quality of the local environment, increasing access to healthy foods, and providing income for city residents (Poulsen and Spiker 2014).

In Africa, as Pence and Nsamenang (2008, p. 43) noted in their critique of early childhood development, care, and education services, “the next step is for those who are committed to the well-being of Africa’s children and to the development of . . . services that draw on contextual and cultural practices and on understandings at local levels, to come together and begin the process of identifying Africentric possibilities in a landscape that has long denigrated such knowledge. These possibilities should not be considered in isolation from other perspectives but should form part of a respectful, generative process that opens new channels for discussion and dialogue.”

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## 6 Conclusion

The dominant paradigm of international cooperation in the field of education has been the export of models and practices from the Northern/Western hemisphere More industrialized countries (NoWeMics) to so-called “developing nations.” But the pattern of institutionalized public basic schooling (IPBS) was modeled after a set of practices rooted in particular sociocultural, historical circumstances in Western Europe. Although it has become increasingly internationally standardized in the twentieth century, IPBS affords very inadequate opportunities for personal

development to the majority of the children enrolled in it, even in the so-called advanced societies of the NoWeMics. Education both in Africa and in the United States stands to benefit from research-based innovation in Africa. The research reviewed in this chapter revealed a sharp disjunction between African socialization values and nonformal educational practices on the one hand and the norms and current standards of IPBS in Zambia. Similar conclusions were reached by Paradise and Rogoff (2009, p. 130), who noted that

as practices associated with ordinary formal school learning become increasingly hegemonic, and the inequalities associated with modern schooling practices become more evident, we are faced with a growing need to identify, validate, and promote other ways of organizing learning. The particular strengths of an educational system based on observation and participation in activities repeatedly carried out in family and community settings, with the implied group belonging and collective commitment, can complement school learning precisely where the need is greatest.

A challenge for educational policymakers, planners, and professionals is to reflect not only on the potential benefits of new technologies but also on the glaring omission from “expert models” of time-honored principles of cultivating social responsibility that are embedded in the cultural meaning systems informing family socialization practices and nonformal community educational practices. Theoretical analysis and empirical research experience suggest to the present authors that three normative features of African traditional socialization practices hold valuable pointers for a process of progressive curriculum development: childhood participation in family work, nurturant care of younger siblings, and cooperative peer-group activity. Each of these cultural practices can be applied effectively to the design of contexts for learning that will prepare young people for success in adult life and should not be neglected in the design of public education.

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## Abstract

Schools are central to the everyday geographies of parents as well as children and have become a “new” space through which family policy is executed and families are targeted and appraised. Increasingly, schools have sought to influence children and young people’s behavior and achievement through work on/with their parents. This chapter focuses on the role of schools in educating parents and uses the example of family learning in the UK as a prism through which to explore geographies of laboring and learning. It draws on a wide body of literature as well as on our own research conducted with providers of, and parents involved in, family learning programs to illustrate a range of issues arising from the increased and expected participation of parents in schools and their children’s education in the UK. In particular, by tracing family and parenting policy in the UK and the increased professionalization of parenting in recent years, we demonstrate how parent-school interactions are both gendered and classed, being clearly targeted at certain “types” of families and parents. We argue that a focus on children’s

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learning and laboring must be placed within contemporary conceptualizations of family and linked to the learning and laboring of parents, specifically that of mothers. Attending to the geographies of children's formal and compulsory education thus requires a focus on the relationships between families, parents, and schools and their increasingly formalized and regulated links. Placing children within in the familial context is therefore necessary for a wider appreciation of current discourses of learning and laboring.

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**Keywords**

Education • Families • School • Parenting • Policy • UK

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## 1 Introduction

Schools are central to the everyday geographies of parents as well as children and have become a “new” space through which family policy is executed and families are targeted and appraised. Increasingly, schools have sought to influence children and young people's behavior and achievement through work on/with their parents. This chapter focuses on the role of schools in educating parents (and carers) and uses the example of family learning as a prism through which to explore geographies of laboring and learning. It draws on a wide body of literature as well as on our own research (Wainwright and Marandet 2011, 2013) conducted with providers of, and parents involved in, family learning programs to illustrate important issues arising from the increased and expected participation of parents in schools and their children's education in the UK.

In recent years, parenting has become a key area for policy intervention (Gillies 2005), whether through explicit classes aimed at “improving” parenting skills (Vincent and Warren 1998) or enhancing home-school relations with parents as “active partners” in their children's education (McNamarara et al. 2000; Cullingford and Morrison 1999; O'Brien 2007). Crucially, parents, especially mothers, are to be engaged in the work of both production and social reproduction, with the “double shift” of paid employment and care now a normative expectation (Smith et al. 2011). Successive UK governments have thus placed family and parents at the forefront of various policy initiatives, with the traditionally private sphere of the family repositioned as a thoroughly public space (Fairclough 2000) worthy of close examination and involvement. Parenting has become a key area for policy intervention, most notably in relation to education, and formal education has been framed by increasingly structured and regulated links to home and family.

In geographical literature, while home has been given extensive treatment (Blunt and Dowling 2006), Valentine (2008) has been alert to the “absent presence” of family. Harker (2010) notes that family has often been “forgotten” or “bracketed out” from research, with family and family spaces often playing a supporting role to other geographies, notably those focusing on intimacies, relationships, and social reproduction. Yet “Children's Geographies” in particular would benefit from moving

beyond the “all-knowing child” (Holloway 2014) to consider the contexts and concepts of family and parenting. This has been somewhat redressed in recent years, for example, with interest in familial relations and spaces (Harker and Martin 2012) and particularly in parenting (Jupp and Gallagher 2013). This chapter seeks to focus specifically on family and parenting in relation to education, in particular on children’s formal and primary education in the UK, highlighting how government has sought to influence children and young people’s behavior and achievements by working on/through family, especially parents. The chapter starts with an account of family learning programs and our research on family learning, which forms the basis of this paper. It then traces more general social policy interventions aimed at family and parenting in recent years in the UK. The rest of the paper highlights the pertinence of family learning to explore the relationship between education, families, parenting, and schools, with consideration of the professionalization of parenting and the gendering of parents’ involvement in, and the targeting of certain “types” of parents through, schools. The chapter then finishes with reflections on neoliberal parental expectations of caring, learning, and laboring and emphasizes that children’s learning and (future) laboring is tied explicitly to that of their parents.

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## 2 Family Learning

Family learning has become an important mode of education deployed by governments in the UK over the past 20 years. It refers to formal programs, normally run in schools and nurseries, which are aimed at engaging parents in tackling educational underachievement (DfES 2003), encouraging family members to learn together and pursue further learning. It is normally comprised of two strands: Family Learning Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) and Wider Family Learning. The former has been linked closely to the Labour government’s (1997–2010) *Skills for Life* (DfEE 2001) strategy and the recent Coalition government’s (2010–2015) *Skills Investment Strategy* (BIS 2010) and is targeted at parents and children with basic skills needs. The latter, although it may contain elements of FLLN, has been linked to a broader agenda of widening participation, community capacity building, and neighborhood renewal and regeneration. Family learning is therefore positioned at the nexus of a number of social policy areas with a focus beyond education and draws on normative versions of family roles and responsibilities.

In this chapter, we draw on already published findings from a qualitative research project which explored “the meanings of work, learning and motherhood in family learning” and which had the broad objective to examine the various themes and issues arising from family learning programs and problematize the targeting and involvement of parents through schools (Wainwright and Marandet 2011, 2013). The project was conducted in West London and entailed three key fieldwork stages. Stage 1 consisted of 16 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, such as local education authority lifelong learning managers, family learning tutors, and local training advisors. Stage 2 involved three focus groups with a total of 33 women

engaged in family learning in Acton, Kenton, and Hounslow. Locations were chosen on the advice of stakeholders and agreement of tutors and point to the spatial targeting of family learning policy. The focus groups were conducted in the respective learning venues of local authority-funded nursery, learning center adjacent to a primary school, and community center, reflecting the variety of venues used to accommodate these council-funded courses. The sample of mothers were taking a range of courses in wider family learning (including music and movement, arts and crafts, and a course called “Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities”) and FLLN classes. Participants ranged in age from early 20s to mid-40s, and, importantly, only two of the three 33 women were White British. The others self-identified as Indian (13), Sri Lankan (2), Black African (8), Black Caribbean (1), Arab (3), mixed/other backgrounds (2), and other Asians (2). Many of the women explained that they were recent immigrants to the UK, a reflection both of the transient West London population and those participating in/targeted for family learning in this area. From the focus groups, one-to-one and paired-depth follow-up interviews were conducted with a sample of ten focus group participants to enable more personal and detailed discussions of issues considered and evoked during stage 2. In the qualitative data we draw on here, we use numbers to identify different family learning providers and pseudonyms for those mothers with whom we conducted in-depth interviews. Due to difficulties identifying individual voices, mothers in the focus groups are not separately named but identified by group location.

Notably, in spite of efforts to include more fathers in family learning, programs are dominated by women, particularly by mothers. Motherhood is acknowledged as a crucial defining aspect of many women’s lives and identities yet, at the same time, it carries a number of (often problematic) normative prescriptions (Gregson 1999; Holloway 1998). Though the role and place of “mother” in relation to the family are contested (Walby 1990; Aitken 1999), a normative maternal discourse still constructs mothers in relation to their children and prescribes them as the main carers and educators of them. The overwhelming number of women compared to men who participate in family learning demonstrates the continued and extensive gendered division of labor operating in the home and through families, especially in relation to educational work, and points to education as a means through which more traditional familial arrangements and expectations are reproduced (Reay 1998). But with more women expected to (re)enter paid employment after childbirth, society’s understanding of a mother’s role and place has shifted, and this extends to an expectation that they should be working for pay as well as caring (Wainwright et al. 2011). Motherhood has become a discursive identity framed round both production and social reproduction, and this is added to and complicated through the expectations placed on parents by schools in relation to children’s learning. Drawing on the example of family learning is therefore timely for exploring these concurrent and problematic positions and, through reflection on the geographies of education that bind together school and home, effectively highlights the ways in which education is being used to (re)focus family life and (re)shape the role of parents as educators, economic actors, and citizens.

### 3 Family and Parenting Policy in the UK

Although the interest of policymakers in the relationship between parents and their children is not new (Rose 1989), the Labour government precipitated and legitimized a more direct and far-reaching role for the state in regard to family and parenting (Daly 2010) with both pushed to the forefront of various policy initiatives. This focus stemmed in part from a “social investment perspective” which views improvement to children’s upbringing and education as a way of reducing future costs through early intervention (Giddens 1998; Esping-Andersen 2002; Jenson and Saint-Martin 2006). Following the “third way approach” (Giddens 1998), families and communities have increasingly been viewed as crucial in shaping suitable and active citizens.

Policy interventions have been influenced by medical and psychological research that has problematized parental practices in terms of their impact on children’s development and behavior (Daly 2013) and educational achievement (Clark 2007). This idea has led to the adoption of the view that the parent/child relationship is “the most critical influence on a child’s life” (Her Majesty’s Treasury 2003, p. 39). Indeed, the intergenerational legacy of educational achievement, marshaled through a discourse of social mobility, has been prominent in UK government policy in recent years (Brown 2008; HM Government 2009, 2011). As a result, the focus on children and their education has been extended to parents and their parenting competence (Gambles 2013). It is also worth noting that this policy interest has developed in a context of public anxiety about parenting and families, marked by a perceived crisis of childhood and the development of popular literature and entertainment programs on “how to parent” (Gambles 2013; Daly 2013).

The idea of teaching parents to do a “better” job has gained increased prominence and is now almost de rigeur in contemporary social policy. The creation in 1998 of Sure Start spearheaded the development of parent-oriented programs and was followed by the establishment of children’s centers. Although parenting programs were initially designed for parents whose child(ren)’s behavior was perceived as inappropriate, they soon became part of a much larger package of “parenting support,” a term which, as Lewis (2011, p. 107) articulates, “gives expression to the state’s desire to work ‘in partnership’ with parents.”

The role of parenting in engendering a culture of learning has been central to policies such as *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2003) and *Every Parent Matters* (DfES 2007). From 2006 all local authorities were required by law to assess parenting-related need in their area and put in place appropriate services including education programs but also parenting practitioners and a parenting service commissioner. By 2010, access to parenting programs had become universal on a voluntary basis while parents of children whose behavior was seen as problematic could be requested to attend. The UK now has one of the most expansive parenting programs in the EU (Daly 2013), some of which is run through family learning classes or in/through schools. Indeed, it is often through schools that certain “types” of parents are recruited to family learning classes (Wainwright and Marandet 2013) as we will discuss later. Family learning, as well as other parenting support interventions, has

been included in the “reenvisioning” of the role of and services offered by schools (Daly 2013). Primary schools are now sites where families are identified for early intervention and where parenting skills can be molded (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2014).

Parenting support is considered a valuable type of policy intervention but also a means of addressing a myriad of issues including child poverty, social mobility, and antisocial behavior (Daly 2013) as well as parents’ own learning and employability. This latter element has been particularly targeted through family learning. In 2001, the government green paper *The Learning Age* described family learning as “a vital means of improving adult literacy and numeracy” but noted that “it also fosters greater involvement between children, their parents and their communities at all levels” (DfEE 2001, p. 31). In this context, participation in family learning has been aimed at encouraging parents to partake in their own children’s learning and develop their parenting skills while encouraging their own personal development and economic and social futures.

Family learning falls under the remit of adult and further education which has been considered vital to achieving twin goals of social inclusion and economic prosperity (DfES 2002). It is one example of learning that is part of a process of encouraging employability and has been promoted to ensure people have the skills and education to respond to the modern labor market. Successive governments have attempted to combat family poverty and social exclusion through tackling worklessness (DfEE 1999) with paid work considered the best way to avoid poverty and social exclusion. The *Skills for Life* policy (DfEE 2001) and the *Skills Investment Strategy* (BIS 2010) have driven this, emphasizing the costs to the individual, but also to society, of poor numeracy and literacy, and linking improved literacy and numeracy levels with increased economic participation. Family learning is one vehicle for focusing on numeracy and literacy, and explicitly so in the FLLN programs, and works on and through both parents and children to raise educational levels and future aspirations (Wainwright and Marandet 2011).

For parents who are constructed as both guardians of their children’s learning as well as (potential) economic participants in the global economy, family learning is considered one way of encouraging both roles. This has important implications for parents’ place in society and their children’s lives, especially for mothers who are the main participants in family learning, as indicated by a family learning provider in our research:

[the] courses can really benefit the family life in general and help women perhaps see their role in a different way. They start to see, ‘oh, I’m not just a mother, I can do different things, perhaps I can go into learning again, perhaps I can think about working’, so I think it does change their perception of themselves. (Provider 1)

Moreover, family learning can be viewed as a particularly targeted form of social policy and parenting support, mobilized in more deprived areas and with a focus on families that are constructed as outside of the “mainstream.” As Gillies (2005) argues, while policy has emphasized the need for all parents to have access to

support, advice, and guidance, in practice the emphasis is placed on bringing marginalized parents into the “mainstream.”

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## 4 Professionalization of Parenting

As Daly (2013) highlights, parenting support is not a new type of intervention but the focus of recent policies on standardized and hierarchical programs teaching parents how to carry out their role is a distinctive element, setting the UK apart from programs developed and rolled out in other EU countries. As Daly (2013) explains, parenting classes in the UK rely largely on three international evidence-based programs which are “Incredible Years” and “Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities,” both developed in the USA, and “Triple P” which was created in Australia. These programs stem from concerns about child poverty and child development, as well as antisocial behavior, whereas other EU countries have focused on issues such as family/child well-being, social cohesion, or health.

Recent policies have also drawn on a tradition of utilitarian approaches to education and the care of children (Penn 2007) which view childhood as important insofar as it shapes tomorrow’s adults, rather than a period of life relevant for its own sake. In this regard, parenting has been recast as a set of skills, a “technical exercise that you can either get right or wrong” (Gillies 2010, p. 1996). As Daly (2013, p. 160) argues, efforts to shape what has, traditionally, been considered the “private practice” of parenting learned through societal norms have moved to become “object of resource building and education and training.” This can certainly be critiqued as offering a very particular middle-class notion of parenting based on the normalization of a “warm and authoritative” ethos (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2014), and this is particularly pertinent for the family learning research we draw on here which focuses on the parenting experiences of many migrant women. Daly (2013, p. 162) notes that the term “parenting” has replaced child-rearing, and discourses on parenting have espoused three characteristics: they are normative (distinguishing between positive and negative behavior from parents) and performative (activated by doing) and rely on skills that can be taught and learned (Daly 2013, p. 162). In doing so, the role of parent as moral agent deciding what appropriate behavior is has been underplayed (Ramaekers and Suissa 2011), and parenting as a decontextualized exercise infused by middle-class values has instead been promoted. In addition, others have shown how mothers who do not conform to the standards of mothering set down by middle-class institutions and ideologies have been seen as “deviant and lacking” (O’Brien 2007).

As Williams (2005) notes, these programs also rely on a “deficit model” where parents are seen as failing to provide sufficient time, attention, and support to their children. The “uniquely personal, intimate and embodied” relationship between children and parents (Jupp and Gallagher 2013, p. 155) has become a new sphere of public intervention. Gambles (2013, p. 189) refers to MacLeod (2004), then director of the Family and Parenting Institute, who recognized that “parents appear to worry much more than before about how to be a parent.” This resonates with

findings from our family learning project. Many participants reported lacking confidence in their parenting abilities. For example, Maggie, a former social worker, explains:

I am highly qualified but there's no qualification for being a parent so as a parent you often feel, 'I'm doing the wrong thing' or 'should I have done that' or 'am I doing it right' or 'what should I do?' So I think it's very easy to lose confidence in your abilities. . . (Maggie)

Some mothers had been enrolled in parenting classes through the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities program, but others commented on how they felt other types of family learning classes provided them with information and skills to improve their parenting. Many mothers echoed the discourse of professionalization of parenting and viewed their parenting skills as something that could be improved through intervention:

Actually first time mothers, they don't know how to teach children, how to play with the children, we don't know. So this [family learning] is very helpful to mums. (Madhavi)

However, parenting classes were often perceived as empowering by research participants. By providing a yardstick of what is correct and appropriate parenting behavior, the "Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities" class, for example, gave this participant confidence in dealing with her children, including when her parenting style was at odds with that of her partner:

My husband thinks: 'they are only children'. That's all. When they are naughty, his reaction is: 'they are only children'. Sometimes, I used to feel: 'am I nasty and cruel?' But after going to the course, now I learnt that you have to discipline your children, not by shouting, not by hitting, but by being firm. (Bharti)

Thus, by providing clear normative expectations, these courses helped eliminate doubts mothers might have about parenting and teaching techniques and gave them the tools and knowledge to feel that they were doing "a good job":

Before I was really scared of how to play with children, how to teach them. But now I'm very confident: I can teach my children and I can say to them, this is wrong, you don't do it like that. (Madhavi)

While participants reported increased confidence in dealing with their children's behavior, the class also encouraged bonding:

I've become a friend of my child because you know when you are teaching something and you are asking her . . . So we've become like friends . . . It becomes like you are much nearer to your child, what they like, what they dislike, you can understand that. (Mita)

In this respect, family learning can be seen as marking mothers as "in need of help" by providing resources, information, and networks enabling them to conform to perceived mothering norms and expectations (Buckingham et al. 2006).



But simultaneously it is perceived as empowering them in their transition to motherhood (O'Connor and Madge 2005). However, "good" motherhood is also perceived to encompass the ability to provide support with schooling – both at school and within the home – and here a clear normative gender dimension emerges.

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## 5 Gendering Parent-School Interactions

An increasingly neoliberal social policy agenda has led to a reformulation of education whereby parents and teachers are seen as partners in educating children (see McNamarara et al. 2000). The home-school relationship has thus come into the spotlight, and a more dynamic and interactive link is now expected, with family learning being one way of encouraging this. This chimes with policy interventions focusing on intergenerational social mobility where parents are envisaged as key actors in shaping children's current and potential social inclusion/exclusion (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2014). As part of its wider social inclusion agenda, recent UK governments have been interested in creating a culture of learning between parents and children (Feinstein et al. 2008; Wainwright and Marandet 2010). While investing in children's futures, this approach has increasingly regulated parents/mothers to ensure that they take responsibility for their families and produce responsible future citizens (Lister 2006).

Although parenting policies have been noted for using gender neutral language, with both parents characterized as potentially taking part in employment and child-rearing/caring (Gambles 2013), the reality of parents' engagement in schools is often dominated and indeed motivated by traditional gender roles. Indeed, gender neutrality can be seen as a strategy for displacing ambiguities and uncertainties about gender by assigning them to personal preference. As Gambles (2013) notes, while gender neutrality has dominated policy language, gender specificity, with mothers' role viewed as prioritizing the daily care of children while fathers ensure economic security, has remained a strong discourse in popular culture. Though it is worth noting that the option of fulltime child-rearing is only perceived as appropriate in families where at least one adult is in employment.

The increased expectations of parents' involvement in schools and their children's education still largely trade on traditional gendered constructions of "good" parenting and clear gendered roles. As O'Brien (2007) shows in her study based in Ireland, mothers are often largely bound to moral norms and internalized gender ideologies which characterize their "care as love." Thus mothers' participation in their children's education is seen as "love labor," a view that perpetuates mothers' moral imperative to engage with schools.

As already highlighted, mothers make up the bulk of family learning participants, and thus, in a similar vein, our research shows that family learning participation is often motivated by a desire to be a "good" mother:

We are good mothers, we are doing all these things [courses] for our kids ... I am doing whatever will benefit them. (Ghazala)



The impetus to be able to help their children was a chief motivation for taking up family learning classes, as this participant articulated:

If I learn then I can teach my child as well and when he goes to school, he might show what he learnt at home. So it's the main thing for a mother that she can teach something to her child. (Shabnam)

In addition, we found that these internalized gendered roles are often reinforced by schools, as this research participant explains:

Every time you go to school, the teacher says 'help your child' but they don't tell you how to help. (Focus Group, Acton)

Engagement in family learning thus often draws on these internalized norms and desire to conform to certain gendered identities which normalize mothers' day-to-day "donkeywork" (O'Brien 2007) with homework support and good parenting seen as their responsibility, as articulated here by one participant:

I don't expect the schools to teach my daughter everything; I think that I have to take some responsibility for it. (Maggie)

As O'Brien (2007) explains, while societal norms and ideologies shape the emotional care work performed by mothers, the demands of the educational system also largely contribute to reinforcing these norms while benefiting from women's unpaid labor. By drawing on mothers' desire and perceived responsibility to help their children with schoolwork, family learning, in turn, contributes to draw mothers into the school and promote an active model of good parenting. The intricacies of this process of drawing parents into school, the targeting of families and the balance between opportunities and surveillance, are crucial, and it is to this that we now turn through our family learning example.

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## 6 Targeting Families Through Schools

In recent years, targeted policy interventions in so-called problem areas have been used to meet government social and economic objectives (Raco 2009; Jones and Evans 2008). Family learning can be interpreted as one such targeted, place-specific policy, based in areas of highest deprivation and neglect, with these prioritized by family learning providers: "we make sure we run courses in these areas and around these areas" (Provider 7). This area-based criterion is advanced to ensure parents from "problem" postcodes are directed and encouraged onto courses.

In the academic literature, family learning has been interpreted in differing ways. Prins et al. (2009) express its empowering impacts, most notably in encouraging women in poverty to receive social support, which then in turn enhances their psychosocial well-being. More critical evaluations by Pitt (2002), Sparks (2001),

Tett (2001), and Smythe and Isserlis (2004) relay the more coercive and regulatory dimensions of family learning for questioning the role and place of parents in contemporary society. Both these readings are important and valid and are supported by our own research. However, as we have argued in Wainwright and Marandet (2013), these two evaluations could be better understood in relation to one another. Here we recap on these arguments, focusing on the power dynamics implicit in family learning policy and practice and how power is configured in a “supportive” and enriching way. This, we argue, trades on friendly personal relations to encourage mothers to participate and thus get involved with their child(ren)’s schools, consider their own education, and aspire toward paid employment.

Family learning is generally run in schools and nurseries which often need to “bid” to receive funding to run programs. This bidding process, as one family learning provider explained, highlights the requirement of “targeting”:

there is an in-depth bidding process which insist that schools identify who they’re targeting, why they’re targeting that group, how they will monitor that group, how the family learning will be integrated into the whole concept of school improvement, community cohesion, working with the community basically. (Provider 2)

It is clear from this that certain “types” of parents have been prioritized for inclusion and are variously defined by family learning providers as including “when the adult and/or the child has special needs, or it may be that the school has identified that the child needs to do something different with the parent,” those parents with “English as a second language” (Provider 3), where “the family is a large family and the child or the parent don’t get that much time on their own together” (Provider 7), and where literacy, numeracy, and general qualification levels of parents are low. This, in turn, has strong inferences of class, race and ethnicity, and migrant history, marking some parents as “other” to the expected norm. How these parents are actually targeted and encouraged to participate – through children and schools – warrants attention and brings this “othering” process and the dynamics of inspection to the fore.

Classroom and community teachers are the key actors in this targeting, responsible for identifying and persuading parents to join family learning classes. In the first instance, this identification is premised on an inspecting gaze, cast over the bodies and minds of pupils. Schools are widely understood as contemporary disciplinary sites for pupils, whether through, for example, internal exclusion (Barker et al. 2010) or in the dining room (Pike 2008); regulation and control are achieved through both actual and perceived surveillance. Schools have increasingly scrutinized pupils at the micro-level as they observe them against norms of ability, attainment, and behavior and then locate them within a network of educational reporting. It is from this observation and attendant analytical space that judgments on parents can be produced, as explained in relation to the role of the classroom teacher in advancing family learning:

In the schools...the teachers would usually put forward names of the students where they think that the family, or the parent or the carer would benefit, and perhaps specifically encourage or specifically target those parents. (Provider 3)

As Foucault (1977, p. 184) alerts us, examination “establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates and judges them.” But as the above quote indicates, this examination moves from child to parent; it becomes a means of categorizing parents, “othering” them and marking them as lacking, through constructing knowledge on family life. The targeting of “poorer” mothers – in terms of socioeconomic status and parenting – in this way is aimed at then transforming family life and their parenting skills (Penn 2007; Lloyd 2008).

This builds on earlier research by Crozier (1998) who argues that “school-home” partnerships serve as a means of monitoring parents, a process that has intensified in recent years with an increasingly neoliberalized education system. This she attentively demonstrates by drawing on Foucault’s earlier writings on “disciplinary power” which works to ensure parents learn to be “good” parents. With family learning, initial detached observations would be followed up with letters about family learning for selected children to take home for the attention of their parents. This initial introduction casts family learning as a means of supporting children in their learning, rather than emphasizing parents’ own skills level and qualifications:

The schools use the children sometimes for them to say ‘oh mummy, the teacher really wants you to come for this talk and it will help me in school’. They do try and push the children’s benefits more than perhaps the adult sometimes although it is made very clear to them that they will be improving their skills as well. I think generally parents think they’re doing something for their children. (Provider 1)

The explicit aim with this approach is to “hook” parents through their desire to become “better” parents. This often then leads to other parent-focused outcomes:

We sort of put it as it’s the opportunity to find out more about what your child does, to find out ways that you can help your child, to have the opportunity to work with your child and also to learn at your own level and find out about going on into education, what qualifications you could get, because we signpost onto the adult education centres. (Provider 7)

As self-identification with the (fictional) figure of “mother” and the role and responsibilities of “mothering” is central to how many women make sense of their lives, the aspiration to enhance the support given to their children is a common point of departure for those participating in family learning (Wainwright and Marandet 2011).

A mesh of inspection and judgment is cast over children and parents through the space of the school, as classroom and community teachers work together to enlist participants for family learning. However, the initial inspection of parents through their children and their subsequent targeting by school with letters is only successful when followed up with friendly and supportive conversation, as this provider explains:

They say to me: ‘if you hadn’t chased me on the playground, I would never have done that, I would have seen the letter and just not responded to it’. (Provider 7)

Despite this targeting, the friendly, nonjudgmental, and supportive ethos of family learning classes is often a positive opportunity for mothers who would otherwise

have felt too uncomfortable joining in. In addition, this encounter is delicately staged:

And also without giving them the message that ‘we want you to come on this because obviously think you’re a bad parent’. Because that’s the message they can get from people like us who they perceive as you know, in authority. (Provider 8)

In addition to the process of carefully targeting participants, the family learning programs are themselves carefully crafted to provide a social space where support is offered by tutors and extended between participants. The importance of this socializing aspect for (potential) participants is readily recognized by family learning providers.

Robinson’s (2000) reworkings of Foucauldian ideas are particularly pertinent for understanding the “supportive” power used to mobilize family learning and other forms of parental involvement in schools. Thinking through these ideas and the dynamics of a supportive power that trades on friendship, family learning is effective because, very often, it carefully “targets” participating parents through their children and through school/nursery spaces. The family learning programs themselves then operate as a supportive social space aimed at facilitating social networks, friendship, and personal development. It is a socio-spatial working of power and power relations that emanate from school but work to link home and school and teacher, parent, and child together. With a focus on the Swedish context, Dahlstedt (2009) uses the term “parental governmentality” to understand better the efforts to encourage partnership working between schools and immigrant parents. Framed by a “bottom-up” public policy agenda, this partnership working is aimed at supporting citizen participation and individual responsibility through the microcosm of school. However, in spite of rhetoric of mutuality, Dahlstedt shows how the terms of the partnership are dictated by one of the partners, the school staff, in shaping the role and involvement of parents in school life and children’s learning.

Returning to our example, family learning enables passing acknowledgments to be turned into sustained friendships. This was considered especially important by those who had recently moved to the UK or into a new area:

For us, we are from different countries; we have come to this country without a social circle. (Hounslow, focus group)

Meeting and socializing with “people in the same boat” (Provider 12) provides a vital tie for mothers and acts as a cohesive force in family learning classes; learning becomes almost secondary to the new bonds forged between mothers and the process of socialization that family learning triggers. Family learning becomes a space for integration and belonging to a range of different identities and geographies (Wainwright and Marandet 2011). In this way, it can be seen as using “technologies of citizenship” (Cruikshank 1999) in an attempt to turn an identified target group into a “community.” Such subjects, it is hoped, are then more likely to display the appropriate ethical practices characterizing “good parenthood” as defined by contemporary social policies and which rests on personal and familial responsibility.

## 7 Caring, Learning, and Laboring

The adult worker model constructs paid employment as both a citizen's moral obligation and a path to social inclusion. More women are now expected to (re) enter paid employment after childbirth, with an expectation that they should be working for pay as well as caring (Wainwright et al. 2011). The current imperative is that women strive to be "good" mothers *and* "good" workers (Vincent et al. 2010) with the good mother constructed as one who undertakes paid employment (Dyer et al. 2011). This was highlighted in our research in relation to views on the purposes of participation in family learning:

It's having an impact on family life, supporting people into employment, allowing carers to then be able to support the people they care for, either their children or others like that to make sure they have a better chance as they go through education . . . confidence, motivation, you know, all of those sorts of things. (Provider 10)

Many women thus find themselves at the conjunction of several potentially contradictory discourses, having to comply with an ideology of intensive mothering (O'Brien 2007) which includes close engagement with schools, as well as economic participation. Contextualizing family learning in this way exposes its location at the nexus of production and social reproduction, a location that is not without its problems and contradictions for the mothers involved. Family learning thus allows us to see how schools have a role in not only shaping future citizen-workers (King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003) but also in reworking parents' identities in order to promote their alignment to an ideal of labor market participation.

Education has moved up the political agenda in the Global North as a way of maximizing economic competitiveness and increasing social cohesion (Jenson and Saint-Martin 2006), and this includes targeting parents as well as children in order to upskill populations and respond to global economic restructuring (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2014). However, expectations regarding parenting involvement and economic participation can contradict each other (Jupp and Gallagher 2013). As O'Brien notes (2007, p. 173), the assumption by schools and the state of mothers' role in supporting children at and engaging with schools render their work invisible and its implications (less time for paid work, social interaction, personal time, etc.) are taken for granted. This can be construed as the oppressive side to mothers' education support work (O'Brien 2007). In addition, the high standards of care and engagement expected from mothers fail those who do not have the resources to successfully support their children. As O'Brien (2007, p. 174) discusses, it is the poor, working class, lone parent, and mothers from minority ethnic backgrounds who endure emotional as well as material and cultural inequalities, in doing educational care work, and thus are constructed as lacking.

The impetus for parents, particularly mothers, increasingly to engage with schools also offers an angle through which to analyze how neoliberal states have sought to recast social issues as individualized problems of care and self-care. As Raco (2009) notes, educational initiatives, such as family learning, have been rolled

out in a neoliberal policy climate that espouses an ethos of responsibility and aspiration. With governments' role to create opportunities, the onus is placed firmly on the individual to "take them up, to aspire to greater things, to develop their own potential, to strive for economic and other benefits for themselves while contributing to the good of society and the economy" (Leathwood and O'Connell 2003, p. 599). Crucially, this very individualist neoliberal discourse extends outward for mothers to include responsibility for their families, notably their children; social and economic responsibilities converge round a particular familial duty.

The professionalization of parenting has worked to situate and localize responsibility for children's behavior, educational performance, and the potential of social mobility within families (Esping-Andersen 2002). Parents, through their private efforts, resources, and choices, are seen as responsible and accountable for the participation and performance of their children in education (O'Brien 2007). This focus on parenting and family, it can be argued, distracts from other inequalities and leads to a lack of attention on the context of parents' circumstances. As Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2012) argue, this reflects wider neoliberal state changes whereby policy focus is no longer society and structural disparities, but is instead aimed at changing the individual; it is individuals, constructed as (future) active citizen-workers, that must improve and aspire to "better" things.

Neoliberal governance entails a shifting of "responsibility for social risks such as illness, unemployment, poverty, etc., and for life in society into the domain for which the individual is responsible" (Lemke 2001, p. 201), with a discourse of active and engaged citizenship emerging (Raco 2009). This transforms it into a problem of self-care and ethical self-governance. Family learning can be seen in this way as a technology of governmentality aimed at encouraging parents' participation in a program to benefit their own and their children's learning while steering them toward further learning opportunities and (re)employment for those not already in paid employment.

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## 8 Conclusion

The focus of this volume is on children's learning and laboring, and what we argue in this chapter is that this cannot be understood in isolation but needs to be placed within contemporary conceptualizations of family and linked to the learning and laboring of parents, specifically that of mothers. Attending to the geographies of children's formal and compulsory education requires a focus on the relationships between families, parents, and schools and their increasingly formalized and regulated links. Placing children within the familial context is necessary for a wider appreciation of current discourses of learning and laboring.

With a focus on family learning, this paper has been informed by a clear policy direction that has been embraced by governments in recent years and that has moved family from the margins of social policy into a central position (Daly 2010), a process that has taken place not just in the UK but across Western welfare states. As Matzke and Ostner (2010) have argued, what we have seen is a paradigm shift in

relation to the family; the family as an institution has been replaced with family as a group of individual and potential market participants. Roll-out neoliberalism thus sees parents taking a more active role in schools and assuming greater responsibility for improving the education of their children. Through working on parents and refocusing family life, neoliberal policies shape the context in which future citizens develop and are raised (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2014). Social policy has increasingly worked to construct active parenting, with parents as coproducers of children as educated and economically aspirational citizens. Children's educational achievements and experiences are framed by familial and parental aspirations.

With this context and in a broader attempt to further explore the expanding area of family geographies, it is not enough for geographers to "circle round families" (Harker and Martin 2012); there is an urgent need to grasp how policy shapes and crafts what family is and should be. The example of family learning is merely one initiative and our research here relates to one specific geographical area of the UK which, as highlighted, has its own peculiar demographics and transient population. It is important to highlight that neoliberal policies of laboring and learning interact with local class, gender, and migrant cultures of mothering and parenting in different ways (as noted by Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2014) in relation to class and Gambles (2013) in relation to migrants) and shape their outcomes. Our cohort of research participants held differing cultural understandings of the education, parenting, and the role of families, and the targeting and currency of family learning in our case-study areas reflect localized versions of neoliberal imperatives shaped at the national level. Moreover, we are wary that the focus has been on the "nuclear" family, an indication of the presumptions of the family learning initiative itself which reinforces traditional and powerful ideas of what family is and which have been perpetuated here by our research participants. Families, what goes on within families, and the role of family members now matter to the state in new and renewed ways, most vividly in relation to children's learning and laboring, with family and parents being the motor of current and future economic prosperity at familial, local, and national levels.

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# Informal Education, Its Drivers and Geographies: Necessity and Curiosity in Africa and the West

# 4

Thomas Aneurin Smith and Richard Phillips

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## Abstract

This chapter explores informal education in the contemporary world, examining its forms, content, status, significance, and, in most detail, its drivers. To do so, it addresses the following questions: What is informal education? What motivates informal learning and teaching? Two key drivers are identified: necessity and curiosity. This raises further questions about how these drivers vary across the world: the geographies of necessity-driven and curiosity-driven learning, respectively. These geographies are examined through a global survey, which includes detail from two, apparently contrasting locations: Tanzania, where one might expect necessity to dominate informal learning, and the UK, where one might expect learners to be motivated more by curiosity. This chapter then goes on to interrogate this polarized geography, finding that it presents too simplistic a

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picture and that the differences between informal learning in these settings are not so stark. Curiosity-driven informal learning is not confined to the West nor necessity-driven learning to less wealthy parts of the world. Indeed, the dichotomy between necessity and curiosity does not stand up to scrutiny, since curiosity has practical dimensions, and practice can benefit from curiosity. Learners in different parts of the world have more in common than is first apparent, even though the differences between their educational experiences and learning environments remain very real.

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**Keywords**

Africa • Children • Curiosity • Formal education • Informal education • Informal learning • Motivation • Necessity • Non-formal education • School • Social learning • Tanzania • UK • Young People

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## 1 Introduction

The importance of informal education – learning outside the classroom and beyond the curriculum – is now widely, if somewhat belatedly, recognized. But compared to formal education, it is not well understood. This is partly because informal education is much more varied than its formal counterpart. Primary formal education has been enshrined as a universal human right, recognized through declarations of human rights and the rights of children and implemented through global efforts to teach essentially the same basic forms of literacy and numeracy, regardless of location, albeit with different resources and outcomes. Informal education, in contrast, is less amenable to standardization, and since it reflects what children and young people want to know, and in some cases what their family and community members and other adults are prepared to help them learn, it is much more varied. But how does informal education vary? What are its global and regional geographies?

To begin to answer these questions, this chapter might begin with *perhaps* the greatest cleavage in global geographies of childhood: that dividing children in the West, who tend to be privileged both materially and in terms of educational provision, and their counterparts in the poorer regions of the world, notably sub-Saharan Africa. The word “perhaps” is stressed in this sentence because understandings of informal education, preliminary as they are, are colored by some untested assumptions and expectations about how learners and learning environments may vary across the world. This chapter begins by identifying a pair of stereotypes, which describe polar extremes in global geographies of informal education and which subsequently are interrogated. These two stereotypes – in the form of two imaginary figures – provide a means of interrogating and ultimately unsettling expectations about the different forms of informal education that might be expected to prevail in different parts of the world. Though the chapter will ultimately seek to unpick them, these stereotypes provide useful points of departure, through which to launch a discussion of informal education and its global geographies.

So let us take, as a point of departure, an imaginary child in the UK and another in Tanzania and speculate on the drivers and content of their informal learning. We might speculate that the British child – let us call him Emil – would go to a relatively well-resourced school, which would prepare him well for the society in which he would be expected to function. In his spare time, he might then be free to follow his curiosity, continuing his learning simply out of the desire to know more and different things. Meanwhile, in Tanzania, a boy of the same age – let us call him Julius – would also go to school, albeit one with much larger classes and fewer facilities. He might study as hard as or harder than Emil, but the things he learns might prepare him less well for the life he is likely to lead and the work he is likely to do. Consequently, his informal learning is likely to have other drivers. He might be less driven by curiosity – the simple desire to know – and more by the necessity to gain skills and knowledge for his life, perhaps on the land or in informal urban settlements within Tanzania or beyond. This necessity might be one he senses or judges himself, or it might be decided for him by family or community members, who may make decisions for him and teach him. This is obviously a very simple scenario, which leaves aside, for the moment, differences between boys and girls, social inequalities within both the UK and Tanzania, and similarities between young people in each of these countries. Still, simplistic as this picture may be, it does describe an intuitively plausible schema and one which might fulfill common stereotypes of these childhoods, which portrays informal education in the West as curiosity driven and that in the majority world as the product of necessity. This chapter seeks to interrogate this picture of informal learning and the contrast it presents between different parts of the world. In so doing, it explores the significance of curiosity as a driver of informal learning, asking whether this is a Western privilege or, as some commentators (Gade 2011; Zuss 2012) have asserted, a cultural trait, or, alternatively, whether this is something broader; this chapter will suggest the latter. The answer to this question will speak to a broader agenda, framed by Cindi Katz (2004), which asks what if anything children in ostensibly very different parts of the world may have in common and how their lives may be connected. To briefly anticipate the argument, at this point, this chapter will seek to unpick the stereotypical contrast between informal learning in the West and less wealthy parts of the world, contesting the dichotomous picture of curiosity- and necessity-driven learning more generally and arguing – with important qualifications – that curiosity and necessity cannot be entirely disentangled from each other and that both are present as drivers of informal learning in different parts of the world.

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## 2 What Is Informal Education?

To begin to understand how curiosity and necessity might drive informal learning, it is first necessary to introduce informal education more generally, and in relation to its formal counterpart, and to explain how researchers have approached this subject. It is worth noting at the outset that geographers and other educational researchers came relatively late to this subject, focusing primarily upon formal education until the

1970s (Colley et al. 2002). Then, a shift occurred, and the term “informal education” crept into common currency, which directed attention to learning that takes place outside the classroom (La Belle 1982), benefiting children’s broader development and future opportunities.

Informal education has frequently been positioned as the antithesis of its formal counterpart. This is not quite accurate, as is explained below, but it provides a useful point of departure for this chapter, allowing the identification of three general claims about informal education, which it will ultimately be necessary to qualify and refine.

First, if formal education is the expression of enlightenment thinking (Beckett and Hager 2002), particularly the assumption of the importance of mind and theoretical learning over the material world of practice (Ansell 2002), then informal education instead represents education in practice, often through bodily performance and the learning of skills. Informal education may take on the form of acquiring practical skills, through observation and doing in the world, rather than necessarily spoken and written forms of more abstracted knowledge (Smith 2013, 2014). As such, informal knowledge may be more readily expressed as embodied performances or be represented as a skill rather than spoken or written information. Forms of informal learning exist in diverse human societies, for example, Australian Aboriginal informal education is understood as being more cooperative, spontaneous, and skill based than current formal systems (Boulton-Lewis et al. 2000). Informal education and learning therefore has a lineage far longer than formal education; arguably it has occurred throughout all of human history and therefore might be understood as a panhuman cultural practice (Paradise and Rogoff 2009), and it may also be evident in other species.

Second, unlike formal education, informal education is not tied to a particular place or institution nor is it institutionalized through set curricula or accreditation (Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004). In other words, it is less generic and more geographically differentiated. Formal education has become increasingly compulsory. It is now often seen as a human right, with primary education embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention of the Rights of the Child. It is also embraced by governments in many parts of the world as a driver of development (Al-Samarri and Reilly 2008). In other words, in many parts of the world, it is a right that young people cannot refuse. As formal education also tends to be instigated by the state, it is institutionalized through being placed in particular sites, including in schools, colleges, and universities, and through established curricula, which set out an agenda over specific timeframes and require the presence of a teacher to organize purposeful educational activities and to direct learners through the established educational framework (Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004; Eraut 2000). As such, an individual’s progression through a formal education system is often chronologically graded and hierarchically structured (La Belle 1982), such that it follows a classic enlightenment-inspired upward trajectory of progression. To provide legitimacy and transferability across contexts, formal education provides certification or qualifications based on measurable outcomes (Eraut 2000), and it is the imperative to gain and deliver these qualifications which makes formal education intentional from both the learners’ and the teachers’ perspective. As qualifications

are bestowed on the individual, formal education is typically concerned with the individuals' development, rather than that of groups or communities. Because informal education is more likely to occur in the places where education, learning, knowledges, and skills are put into practice, it is much more situated, both immediately in place and more broadly in social, cultural, and economic contexts (Colley et al. 2002; Paradise and Rogoff 2009). It therefore occurs in daily life experiences, whether in the human worlds of work, leisure, family, and peers or exposure to the environment, which might therefore be counterposed to the decontextualized learning in formal education. Informal education does not have measurable, set outcomes, and therefore, it may not be intentional, planned, or structured on the part of the learner or teacher nor does it necessarily have to be focused on the individual (Colley et al. 2002), such that it can occur in group and collective contexts. Informal education is often then positioned as a distinct paradigm of education, more holistic and organic, more common and relevant to daily life, and more practically and collectively orientated (Beckett and Hager 2002).

In the context of the Global South and indigenous groups, this kind of informal education is typically aligned with local, "indigenous" accumulated knowledges that are different from more formalized systems. These local knowledges tend to draw on tacit skills or embodied performances which are embedded in local environments and are therefore practical in nature and learned through observation, experimentation, and "doing" in practice (Briggs et al. 2007; Katz 1989). Examples include local practices of farming or pastoralism, which are learned through informal apprenticeships with parents, older siblings, or extended family members (Katz 2004), and may include detailed knowledge of local soils (Sillitoe 1998) and vegetation types (Briggs et al. 1999). These skills can be embedded and rehearsed in children's play in which young people mimic adult activities of daily life (Katz 1991). Local knowledge systems may also be abstract in nature, drawing on the spirit world or other religious elements which, although abstracted from "practical" earthly realities, are equally embedded in place. Australian aboriginal epistemologies are typically – if not always accurately – characterized through claims about interconnectedness and holism between people, spirit domains, and the environment, but these are rooted in place, giving values to natural elements (such as water) which are specific to them in time and space (Gibbs 2010). Such knowledges may be passed on through oral transmission, relying on local people who themselves have learned of these through such channels in their own childhood. These knowledges are locally specific and embedded, requiring local tuition through informal networks which encourages practical, abstract, and spatially embedded learning.

Third, in contrast with its formal counterpart, informal education is less closely identified with the reproduction of broader societal norms and expectations regarding prescribed forms of knowledge and behavior, and instead informal learning may be more closely linked to belonging to a particular, more localized, community (Paradise and Rogoff 2009). Formal education is not only synonymous with the formal transfer of knowledge and gaining of qualifications, but it also serves to transfer wider societal values and appropriate behaviors, preparing young people for adult responsibilities. Some therefore see formal education as conservative, committed to instilling

well-established societal values (Collins and Coleman 2008), and pressing young people into conforming to societal expectations which have been written into national formal education programs (Holloway and Valentine 2003; Holloway et al. 2010). Conversely, informal education may be less conservative and more flexible, serving learners better. As Paradise and Rogoff (2009) discuss, informal learning can instill a sense of belonging to a community or family through direct participation in, and real contributions to, community-level social and economic reproduction, whereas formal learning is typically removed from the immediate context of socially relevant action. This sense of “belonging” is part of the motivation to learn and promotes social and emotional involvement through learning.

This understanding of informal education, as the opposite of its formal counterpart, is also reflected in its status and in the ways in which this varies geographically and socially. In almost all societies, formal education and qualifications may be viewed as the gateway into formal and secure employment (Colley et al. 2002; Jeffrey 2010a). As a result, school-based, formal learning and the gaining of associated qualifications are likely to be accorded higher status than informal learning, particularly by parents (Smith 2013). Combating this trend, attempts have been made to validate informal learning and increase its visibility and status. The European Union has been active in such efforts since the early 2000s (European Commission 2001; see also Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004). However, pressures toward the formalization of education continue to mount. Changing social relations in some contexts, for example, more families with both partners working or where young people may become the head of a household due to the impact of HIV/AIDS, may lead to increasing pressure on states to provide more of what was once informal aspects of social reproduction (Ansell 2008; Holloway et al. 2010), which may further push informal education into the realms of formality. The status of informal education also varies geographically. Typically, young people in more urban, globally connected places have greater access to formal educational provision (Jeffrey et al. 2004; Smith 2013). As a result, informal learning may be more important, and therefore of higher use-value status, than formal education in more rural, less globally connected settings (Katz 2004; Smith 2013). Conversely, outside these centers, and particularly in homes, informal settlements, small businesses, and farms, informal education retains currency and respect (Punch 2004; Smith 2013).

Though informal education is commonly understood as the antithesis of formal education, the differences are not in practice as clear or categorical as this, and it can be more accurate to describe a spectrum of informal and formal education (Colley et al. 2002). Informal education is not entirely free of the societal ordering and control so easily identified in formal settings. Informal learning – such as that within the home, among peers, out-of-school clubs, and outdoor settings – is also governed by social norms and structured by gender and generational relations (Dyson 2008; Hyams 2000). Wenger (1998) argues that the most significant aspect of informal education is learning to belong to a community of practice, which is dependent on the practices, norms, and values of that community: characteristics commonly associated with formal education. Similarly, formal education can display some characteristics that are conventionally understood as the hallmarks of its informal



counterpart. For example, school grounds include “hidden spaces” where adults are absent and where learning continues (Holloway et al. 2010) and schools also teach extracurricular content and values (Boulton-Lewis et al. 2000). Arguably, formal and informal education should be seen as ideal types at opposing ends of a continuum, unlikely to occur in any pure form (Stern and Sommerlad 1999). This means recognizing degrees of formality and informality in all forms of learning. Some have adopted alternative terminology to redress this dichotomy between ideal types, employing the term “nonformal” learning to signify activities which are somewhat formal in that they are organized and systematic, but take place outside of formal institutions (Eraut 2000; La Belle 1982). Billett (2001) goes so far as to entirely dismiss the dichotomy between formal and informal learning, but others find the distinction between formal and informal education productive, if it is recognized as a spectrum rather than a hard and fast distinction (Colley et al. 2002).

Implicit within distinctions between formal and informal education are different drivers of learning: the things that motivate children and young people to learn and members of their families and communities to teach them, outside the classroom. Whereas formal education is typically top-down, if often actively sought out and valued by learners and their families, informal education is bottom-up, opted into through a desire to learn and to gain skills and knowledge (Paradise and Rogoff 2009). Two distinct drivers – forms of motivation for informal (and sometimes formal) learning – are curiosity and necessity. These terms demand some introduction. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines curiosity as “a strong desire to know or learn something” (Pearsall 2002, p. 351). Similarly, geographer Daniel Gade defines – and affirms – curiosity as “the pursuit of knowledge” (Gade 2011: xiv). Necessity, on the other hand, is defined in the context of education as the expression of the need to gain crucial skills for future livelihoods (Smith 2013). These terms and the relationships between them will be interrogated in more detail, later in this chapter, but first it is necessary to return to distinctions between formal and informal learning, which have been outlined here, qualifying the distinctions that have been drawn between them.

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### 3 Necessity-Driven Informal Education

The differentiated geographies of informal learning and teaching can be explained, in part, through differences in the drivers of learning, which include necessity and curiosity. These are examined in this and the next section, respectively. Children and young people in different parts of the world have different needs for informal education – these needs being defined through a mixture of their own perceptions and interests, and the judgments and influences of their family and community members – who will themselves also have needs for, and perceptions of, different kinds of informal education. For example, some young people may have a greater need to learn how to work with animals, whereas others may find more use in knowing how to communicate with others verbally. This section surveys some of the different uses of informal learning, commenting on their geographies.

One use of informal education has been to provide basic education, where formal education may not be doing so or may simply not exist. Anthropological studies have demonstrated that sophisticated learning did and still does take place in communities who lack formal education provision (Colley et al. 2002), although even where formal education is available most young children prior to school age are engaged primarily in modes of informal learning (La Belle 1982). Such education is and has been used to pass on valuable skills to young people, including practical skills for livelihoods, as well as language and communication learning (Boulton-Lewis et al. 2000). In the contemporary context, some of these practical skills are commonly still recognized as best learned through informal means, including languages. Other practical uses of informal education, typically where instruction is provided primarily by adults, include education aimed at present or future work for young people, or to enhance their leisure time, which might include learning skills for sports, outdoor pursuits, or artistic capabilities. In many contexts, the spaces of informal learning are linked to the type of education undertaken and the skills to be learned. For example, in Hausa society in Nigeria, children are sent to undertake *talla* (street trading) as their parents recognize that valuable skills of trading, mathematical calculations, and dealing with people are learned in this setting (Schildkrout 1978/2002). In rural Chewa society in Zambia, social responsibility is given equal place alongside cognitive alacrity in local understandings of intelligence (or *nzelu*) and is understood as essential for successful development toward adult life (Serpell 1993). This social responsibility is learned through the daily encounters of children within the rural Zambian village setting among parents, peers, and other adults, rather than in spaces of formal education such as schools. However, informal education has also been put to use (often, again by adults) to enhance formal learning, for example, young people's informal encounters with various natural environments can be used to enhance their knowledge of biological ecosystems, biodiversity, and sustainable management (Lucarelli 2001; Stanley 2011). Children's detailed knowledges of local vegetation taxonomies may also be essential for their own and their families sustenance. In Katz's (1989) study among the Howa in Sudan, children as young as 10 had extensive knowledge of edible vegetation, taking responsibility for providing for themselves and their families, and may consequently have even more knowledge of these plants than some adults precisely because gathering edible plants is understood locally as children's work.

Not all informal education is "used" in such a directed, purposeful way. Play, as one of the key modes of informal education, seems to defy the intentionality of a great deal of adult-led informal education, precisely because it is young people themselves who often direct play. Young people spend a great deal of their time and energy engaging in play, which allows them to explore the potential of a diverse range of environments (Skelton 2009). Play allows young people to explore social relations with each other, to envisage and act out both current identities as children and as potential adults, and to give particular meanings to, and mentally map, places (Dyson 2008; Stanley 2011; Thompson and Philo 2004). Play is also a form of informal education about the body and its potentials. Whether in adult-constructed play spaces which encourage young people to explore their own physicality, such as

playgrounds, or in less-formalized play spaces, such as natural environments, where young people roam more freely, young people can experiment with what their bodies can achieve (Skelton 2009). In play, young people engage in bodily performances (moving, dancing, gesturing, fighting) and explore the possibilities of landscapes and elements within them (Stanley 2011). These forms of informal learning through play may be described as driven by necessity, as children need to explore and develop their physical and social skills in order to participate in the society as children and eventually as adults.

Informal education is also used to define and reproduce young people's being and becoming place in society, as well as their own developing subjectivities. Whether one comprehends socialization and individual identity building in a positive light, involving the exploration of the self- and individual empowerment or, in a more critical way, involving the enforcing of societal norms and the disciplining of young identities and bodies, depends very much on context but also one's personal conceptual outlook. Informal education can be used to enable a young person's membership of a social group (La Belle 1982), but more broadly informal education around behavior, communication, socialization, and work may seek to ensure that young people are able to, and eventually do, conform to the norms of the society or social community of which they are a part. From a more critical perspective, informal education may therefore be used, by adults, to sustain social power hierarchies, traditions, customs, political and religious affiliation, or particular gender norms (Smith 2013, 2014). Arguably, informal education is used by adults as a form of social conditioning, which, rather than seeking to empower young people, disciplines them into social conformity. Here, it is adults who primarily drive informal learning out of their perception of the necessity for young people to eventually conform to the norms of their society; however, young people too might also feel the necessity to "fit in" with prevailing social norms.

Yet others see the socialization uses of informal education in a more positive light, understanding informal learning as an important contributor to an individual's identity and capacity to engage proactively in society. Informal learning can allow young people to meaningfully participate in the real social and cultural life of their communities, and they are consequently motivated by performing economic and social activities which are valued by that community (Paradise and Rogoff 2009). Through practically engaging with more authentic (rather than theoretical or conceptual) challenges, young people may build their own self-confidence and sense of self-worth. Working with peers and in groups through informal education can allow young people to learn about social groups and how they function, as well as learning through the observation and assessment of the meaningful actions of others (Stanley 2011). Informal education, typically focused more immediately on the present than the future, may allow young people to be more attuned to what they are like in the present (Smith 2014). Formal education arguably tends to focus on young people's becoming agency, what they will be like in the future as adults (Uprichard 2008), which may displace young people's need to act meaningfully in the present, whereas informal education may seek to make them more engaged with what they can achieve now. For Wenger (1998) informal education is about the transforming of identities and identity

possibilities rather than simply developing skills and knowledge. However, Wenger also sees the socialization process as principally positive, conceptualizing education as the parallel and entangled mutual reproduction of individual and community identities. Informal education enables individual's to achieve relevant, direct, and meaningful forms of participation in their communities, rather than encountering reified knowledge which puts an intermediary stage between practice and learners. For Wenger, informal education is about imaginatively experimenting with identity and participating in a meaningful way with a community, rather than the reproduction of societal norms through social disciplining. From this standpoint, the apparent "uses" of informal education are more likely to be part of emergent opportunities to learn, rather than those which are planned and intentional.

The uses of informal education, though varied, can motivate young people to learn, and they can also motivate others to teach them. In other words, informal education – including learning and teaching too – can be motivated by experiences and perceptions of necessity or, more positively, the perception of opportunity. Young people may have highly pragmatic and practical reasons for engaging with informal education regardless of their value for personal and social development and the pursuit of curiosity. In contexts where formal education may have limited relevance to likely future livelihoods and employment (Jeffrey 2010b; Punch 2004) or in contexts where particular groups, based on wealth, ethnicity, location, or gender, may have denied or have very limited access to formal education, young people may be motivated to seek out and engage with informal, vocational learning (Jeffrey et al. 2004), out of their perception of the necessity to learn and when presented with the opportunity to do so. In contexts where formal education is entirely lacking, difficult to access, of poor quality, or is not seen as useful for future ambitions, young people may approach informal education for pragmatic reasons, as a matter of necessity. Young people are often very aware of their present and future responsibilities, as well as the tension between the promise of what formal education credentials may offer, and the necessity to engage in informal learning to gain crucial skills for future livelihoods (Smith 2013). This motivation may be very familiar across Africa, for example, in Tanzania, where formal book learning in schools is both limited in provision and lacks practical applicability to future work such as that in agriculture, pastoralism, or informal urban work (Smith 2014), but it is also highly relevant for many young people in the UK and elsewhere in the West. Although some may see the formalization of informal learning in the UK as detrimental to the value of informal education (Colley et al. 2002), the formalization of the value of informally learned skills (e.g., apprentice learning and vocational training) may motivate young people to follow more informal types of education in pursuit of future employment and may increase the value of associate professions.

Young people may feel driven to informal learning by necessity or, more positively, drawn to it by opportunity. In other words, they may sense the possibility of individual empowerment. Precisely how "empowerment" is defined is too long a discussion for this chapter, but it might be understood as an individual's ability to express and realize their agency in the world in a meaningful way. If formal education settings and institutions, such as schools, act to reinforce the power

dynamics between adults and young people (Hyams 2000), then young people may seek out informal educational experiences as a means through which to better assert their agency (Thomson and Philo 2004). By actively manipulating environments, for example, in the context of managing natural environments, young people may develop more of a sense of their own personal competence and problem-solving abilities, rather than relying on adults to instruct and make decisions (Stanley 2011). For some young people, it is precisely the opportunity to “get away” from adults and teachers; to have free action in the world, which motivates them to pursue informal education; and to learn independently (Boulton-Lewis et al. 2000). Equally, if in formal educational settings, the place of knowledge production is removed from its practical application (Ansell 2002; Smith 2014), then young people may become frustrated by their inability to put knowledge into practice. They may then seek out informal educational opportunities precisely because there is the possibility for putting knowledge to practical use and to exert their own material authority (Smith 2013). However, some informal settings, such as family homes, may equally reinforce adult-child hierarchies (Smith 2013). Some young people may instead seek to express their agency through informal spaces within schools (Collins and Coleman 2008; Smith 2013). The opportunity to express their agency and the possibilities for individual empowerment may be seen as a necessity by young people themselves, driven by their will to assert their autonomous agency in the world.

Learning can also be motivated in other less practical ways. These include a purer desire for knowledge, which is commonly framed in terms of curiosity. The next section focuses, more specifically, upon curiosity-driven informal learning.

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## 4 Curiosity-Driven Informal Education

The name Emil, chosen by the authors of this chapter for the European child, whose informal learning might be expected to be driven by curiosity rather than necessity, was not entirely random. In *Émile: Or, Concerning Education*, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1762, quoted by Phillips 2014, p. 500) identified curiosity as an “incentive” for learning, arguing that it can inspire a child to explore and inquire, widening his or her horizons. Émile is inspired to learn through ordinary things, which make him wonder, ask questions, and then seek answers.

Advocating curiosity as a spark for systematic, if not entirely formal or conventional learning, Rousseau acknowledged that curiosity should not be identified exclusively with informal education. This approach has since been explored in the context of formal education through creative teaching practices (Lee 2007), leading to pedagogical techniques including problem-based learning or PBL. PBL, which is most commonly used among older learners such as university students, provokes learning through exposure to objects or experiences, which prompt questions and fuel the desire for knowledge (Bradbeer et al. 2004; Pawson et al. 2006). Most closely associated with medical training, PBL is also advanced in other disciplines and traditions, including geographical fieldwork, which breaks away from the routine of “the more everyday classroom” (Nicholson 2008, p. 29). With origins in outdoor

education (Marsden 2000) and local surveys (Jones and Nelson 2008; Layton and White 1948), this tradition has recently been renewed through experimental fieldwork (Bonnett 2012; Baillie-Smith 2012). But, in its simplest form, and that described by Rousseau, curiosity-driven learning begins with experience. Seeing or touching something as simple as a stone, a young person may become curious, framing questions about the world, then going about refining and attempting to answer or solving them. If curiosity can motivate informal (as well as formal) learning among young people (and adults too), this makes it important to understand curiosity in more detail, to identify some of the forms that curiosity can take, and the kinds of learning they inspire. Ultimately, it will be necessary to examine the curiosity-driven learner – embodied in *Émile* – and to ask whether this hypothetical figure is as universal as he first appears or more tied to his gender, class, or geographical setting. But, for the moment, the more pressing problem is to elaborate on the meanings and forms of curiosity and to explore their differentiated geographies.

One form of curiosity, which is geographical both as a spark for and setting of curiosity-driven informal learning, is concerned with the environment itself: ranging from the stone in *Émile*'s hand to the landscape in which he finds it. For example, in a range of different outdoor and more natural environmental settings, young people may be motivated to engage in learning because of their unfamiliarity with the context, promoting their interest in exploring novel situations. Evidence suggests too that if settings are novel to young people, then they are more likely to demonstrate learning from engagement with that setting, in part because it encourages adaptation and adjustment to the context (Hofstein and Rosenfel 1996), but also because it is likely to capture young people's interest. Exactly what "interest" constitutes is difficult to define, although it is clear that novelty and newness of an environment or social situation is closely linked to promoting interest and curiosity (Boulton-Lewis et al. 2000). Young people are also highly attuned to the possibilities of a particular setting, and as such one of their primary motivations to engage in informal learning may be to explore the positive possibilities that a particular place offers, to test out what they already know in new settings (Stanley 2011). Young learners may therefore pursue informal education out of curiosity and a desire for experimentation, embedded within practical activity (Phillips 2010) and encouraged by the novel value of particular places and contexts.

The desire for knowledge – the essence of most definitions of curiosity – can take different forms, reflecting different forms of knowledge. On the one hand, one may want to know about the world, for example, about the geological and geomorphological processes that formed a stone or a landscape. On the other, one may pursue knowledge about a stone or a landscape for less obvious reasons. Curiosity is closely linked to ambition, since the acquisition of knowledge (forms of social and cultural capital) can enable individuals to take their part in society, and since new forms of knowledge can also be instrumental in unsettling and challenging the status quo, such knowledge can allow for the disruption of current social and scientific world views (Benedict 2001). More tangibly, curiosity can enable young people to explore and perhaps to change their own social identities and positions. Informal educational settings, including those focused around practical tasks which might be relevant for



future employment, are spaces in which young people may experiment with different possible adult identities. This can sometimes be observed as “playing” at different adult roles (Katz 2004; Dyson 2008, 2010), but it is in informal settings which allow young people to do this and thus may motivate them to pursue informal education as a way of escaping the norms and expectations of being a “student” in a school. Institutions and the practices within them not only contain particular subjects but actively produce them (Pile and Thrift 1995), and young people may value informal educational opportunities precisely because they allow experimentation with identity beyond those produced on and for them by schools (Holloway et al. 2000). Indeed, young people can perform quite different and distinct identities in accordance with place (Van Blerk 2005), and as such they can actively seek out informal educational experiences in order to create space for identity experiment. Part of this motivation to pursue identity experimentation might also be closely linked with seeking out opportunities for greater socialization, to form relationships and cooperate with other young people in ways that transcend those imposed through more formal settings. Informal education does not have to be considered then in purely practical terms, as a considerable part of it is conducted through informal talk, conversation, and listening to and with other people (Boulton-Lewis et al. 2000).

And while it may be possible to link curiosity to personal gain, this is not always the case, because the desire for knowledge can also be open ended, an end in itself, albeit one that may bring unintended advantages to the curious individual or the society that accommodates their curiosity (Phillips 2010). In other words, the desire for knowledge, which defines curiosity, may not be consciously purposive. This is illustrated through forms of play that can be understood as curiosity-driven informal learning. While it is possible for adults to interpret this form of play as socially, practically, and symbolically meaningful, as previously described, all of these are predominantly adult constructs which seek to make sense of what children seem to spend a lot of time doing (Thompson and Philo 2004), commonly categorized as play. What adults constitute as play, and what values and motivations they associate with it (socialization, bodily performance, reproduction of identity, an expression of curiosity in the world), may for young people represent a quite different activity, perhaps hanging out, chatting, sitting, or using space in ways that it is not designed for (Thompson and Philo 2004). Indeed, while adults might typically construct differences between formal education/work and play, young people may not always see quite the same distinction. Young people have been shown to imaginatively find space and time for play in between and with their work, either their employment or at school (Katz 2004; Punch 2000, 2002). Similarly, what might constitute play spaces and nonplay spaces by adults may be subverted by young people (Skelton 2009). While it is possible for adults to interpret young people’s play as informal education, endowed with social meaning and learning opportunities, young people may or may not see it as such or may have quite different motivations and values associated with informal play than those put upon it by adults. Curiosity-driven learning may therefore, for young people, not have the same purpose as adults might ascribe to it from their observations of children nor might it have an obvious purpose at all in the adult sense.

## 5 Learning Spaces and Global Geographies of Informal Education

Though the figures with which this chapter began – Emil and Julius – present a simplistic picture of the different forms that informal learning take in the contemporary world, they nevertheless reach toward an argument that, if suitably qualified, is more sustainable. In short, informal education takes different forms, responding to different drivers and supported by different resources in different parts of the world. In this section, this argument is developed further by shifting the focus from drivers of informal learning to the spaces in which it takes place. Doing so, this chapter now considers how certain spaces for informal learning are concentrated in some parts of the world (e.g., museums and internet access in wealthier parts of the world) and others elsewhere (fields and open spaces in more rural and sometimes less wealthy or developed regions).

### 5.1 Space for Curiosity-Driven Learning? The UK

Different places have different capacities for different forms of informal education. In some parts of the world, and particularly in wealthier countries such as the UK, young people have more freedom from practical constraints – metaphorical space in which to pursue interests that are not driven by necessity – and they may also have access to the means through which to pursue informal learning. In other words, they have more material and metaphorical “space for curiosity” (Phillips 2014).

Young people in contexts such as the UK have access to particular spaces in which they can learn from peers and through engaging with other environments, including designated play spaces (playgrounds, gardens) but also less formalized spaces where they may be able to roam more freely (streets, playgrounds, woodlands, fields), through all of which they may learn particular social or practical skills through pursuing their own curiosity (Stanley 2011). Playgrounds have received a considerable amount of critical attention as sites of informal learning (Ferré et al. 2006; Mergen 2003; Skelton 2009). While children can explore their own physicality and the potentials of their bodies in playgrounds, these spaces are equally adult designed and adult controlled (Skelton 2009). Although in the past young people have had more freedom to engage in informal learning in less-controlled urban and rural spaces throughout the UK and the more wealthy countries of the world, several studies perceive these freedoms to be reducing and for young people’s spatial engagement to become increasingly narrow, therefore limiting the potential for informal learning in such spaces (Karsten 2005; Thompson and Philo 2004). To speak of “space for curiosity” is to raise questions about whether particular spaces prompt or constrain curiosity or whether they simply accommodate people who are fundamentally able to be curious anywhere. These questions, which have been debated elsewhere (Phillips et al. 2015), return to fundamental debates about the causes of curiosity. Rousseau’s attention to outdoor education resonates with philosophical claims that curiosity is not simply willed from within but sparked from



without – by experiences that prompt questions. “How is it,” asks Mark Zuss, “that, like small flames, questions arise from the filaments of our senses?” (Zuss 2012, p. 122). Through Merleau-Ponty, he traces questions to sensory experience – the “immersion of bodies in the world” (Zuss 2012, p. 128). From this perspective, geographies matter, sparking curiosity and stimulating the would-be curious subject.

Other spaces of informal education include the internet and other ICTs which allow young people to engage in diverse cyberspaces of informal education (Skelton 2009). These include spaces for socialization, learning through press and media, through gaming and play, and through experiences which adults might see as less desirable or even inappropriate for children (Hofsten and Rosenfeld 1996). While there is evidence to suggest that some children prefer exploring cyberspace (Jones et al. 2003), material spaces including those conventionally seen as natural or wild retain their appeal and offer distinctive experiences and possibilities (Munoz 2009). Of course, opportunities to play around with ICTs are unevenly distributed across the world, both between and within countries, with greatest access to high-speed Internet confined to the more wealthy, globally connected parts of the world, most pronounced in Western countries and the most economically advanced parts of Asia. This uneven geography of opportunity inevitably has knock-on effects, constraining and enabling different forms of informal learning. This point is developed further with reference to the UK, entertaining the suggestion that curiosity-driven informal learning in wealthier countries such as the UK is supported, much more richly than in some other parts of the world, through learning resources such as easily available ICTs, “infotainments” and “edutainments” (if such ungainly terms can be excused!).

Now, it is also important to acknowledge variability in terms of the existence of and extent of access to learning resources. A systematic and complete comparison of the uneven global geography of resources for informal education is beyond the scope of this chapter, of course, but it is nevertheless possible to illustrate how some forms of curiosity-driven learning may be more available to children and young people in the UK than to their counterparts overseas, particularly in the majority world. Informal learning is not only accommodated but actively encouraged and inspired, across a series of “spaces for curiosity” (Phillips 2014), which have been designed, built, and maintained, particularly in countries with the public and private means and also the will to do so. The most obvious example of this is access to ICTs, which of course is concentrated in wealthier parts of the world, but other resources for informal learning echo this pattern, and it is to another set of examples that this chapter now turns to illustrate this point: museums and play spaces. Thus, for example, a new generation of children’s museums in the UK, inspired by initiatives in the USA and innovative in their own right, have been conceived as “centers of curiosity and imagination” (Pearce 1998, p. 1) and as incubators of informal learning. Led by the Exploratorium – a revolutionary museum of the arts and sciences in San Francisco – children’s museums in cities from Boston to Bethnal Green (in London) spell out their aims to support the “adventure” of learning and discovery (Shapin 2010; [www.exploratorium.edu](http://www.exploratorium.edu) 10/5/2011) and “encourage imagination, curiosity, investigation, innovation, and play” (<http://www.bostonkids.org/about/history.html>). Museums are just one example of the many resources for and

investments in curiosity, which are accessible to the general public and which are found across the UK. Other examples include public libraries, which increasingly provide access to ICTs as well as conventional printed resources, and play spaces, the designs of which sometimes consider curiosity and the things it can drive, such as creativity, sociability, and innovation. These include schemes designed to increase access to outdoor spaces for play and learning, with the aim of encouraging children and young people to be more curious (Louv 2006) and to lead more active lives (Mackett 2004; Munoz 2009).

Alongside these observations about the uneven geographies of resources for informal learning, it must also be acknowledged that claims have been made about the demand for these resources, which have in turn been linked to assertions about uneven cultures of curiosity across the world. On top of this simple explanation for why necessity and curiosity might have differing influences over informal education in different parts of the world, some commentators have speculated that curiosity has a cultural geography too: in short, they assert that some parts of the world and some microgeographies are more curiosity positive than others (Phillips 2014). Examples of curiosity-positive spaces include cultural settings where curiosity is tolerated or encouraged and places that spark curiosity or create safe space for expressions of curiosity, for example, through the bounded community garden in Liverpool, where children were encouraged to be curious about natural and human objects, within a project designed to encourage curiosity as a “way to well-being” (Phillips et al. 2015). Certainly, curiosity and the learning it inspires are not universally welcomed or tolerated. Curious individuals have a propensity to ask awkward questions, test boundaries, show ambition, and generally challenge orthodoxies. Some commentators have argued that while curious people and practices everywhere can raise hackles and get into trouble, they are tolerated and even celebrated in some parts of the world more than others. Science writer Sander Bais (2010) acknowledges that curiosity and the enquiries it provokes can unsettle relationships and hierarchies. Curious young people challenge parents and teachers; intellectuals challenge religious and secular authorities; scientists challenge each other; and, perhaps most importantly, curious people challenge and interrogate their own ideas and assumptions. This is why curiosity is widely and accurately regarded as a threat to the established order of things and why curious individuals are variously seen as “upstarts” who challenge for positions of power (Benedict 2001) or subversives (Sennett 2008, p. 114) who show “a lack of respect for the traditional hierarchies” (Foucault 1988, p. 328). Not surprisingly, this subversive curiosity is not universally welcomed or tolerated. Daniel Gade claims that curiosity is more at home in the West and in particular modern Western societies, particularly the USA and Germany. He generalizes that “some cultures and subcultures have encouraged curiosity in their members; others have not” (Gade 2011, p. 51). He speculates (without evidence) that “poor rural societies often lack the conditions to nourish curious people to reach their full potential” (Gade 2011, p. 51) and asserts that the “Islamic tradition does not allow one to ask questions” (Gade 2011, p. 17) and that Arabic peoples remain in a “medieval grip” (Gade 2011, p. 16), which constrains their curiosity. Similarly, philosopher Mark Zuss (2012, p. vii) argues that “an alert, attentive mind is

celebrated” with particular enthusiasm in “contemporary consumer and industrial countries” and in “the modernist West” and, presumably, with less enthusiasm elsewhere. Assertions such as these are not supported by evidence, so they would not merit acknowledgement here, except that they appear to reproduce a wider stereotype about the informal learning that takes place in different parts of the world and the cultural as well as social and economic dimensions of this backdrop. Since this underpins the stereotypical figures with which this chapter began – the contrast between the curiosity-driven informal learning of Emil and the necessity-driven learning of Julius – it will be necessary to revisit and critique these, which this chapter does in the conclusion, which draws together the observations made thus far about informal learning in different parts of the world, moving beyond the initial simple picture which was portrayed and seeking to put a more nuanced picture in its place. Then, this chapter critiques the dichotomy between necessity and curiosity and therefore between different forms of informal learner – ultimately, different young people – in different parts of the world.

## 5.2 Space for Necessity-Driven Learning? Tanzania

This chapter has suggested that experiences of learning in Tanzania, and therefore of Julius, are characterized by stark differences between formal and informal education, characterized, respectively, by book learning and practical education, in which the latter is driven largely by what families and communities feel their children and young people need to know. The earlier discussion of informal learning in Tanzania identified the necessity for informal learning there, attributing this to the limited provision formal education, driving people to alternatives, and the practical need to know things not taught in school, even where such schooling exists, although later in this section we discuss evidence that informal education can be sidelined by the expansion of formal schooling in Tanzania and similar contexts in the Global South. Now, the focus shifts from these drivers of informal education, toward the spaces in which this takes place, though the two themes are indeed difficult to separate.

For many children and young people in Tanzania, and elsewhere in other African countries, informal learning is either a preparation for work or an outcome of work. Some work with adults and peers from whom they learn through observation, imitation, and trial and error, in spaces that might include the home, agricultural fields, pastoralism, family businesses, supermarkets, and streets (Katz 2004; Smith 2013; Van Blerk 2005). In these settings, informal education takes place through structured and often hierarchical social and familial relationships and interactions (La Belle 1982; Smith 2013). Informal education, driven by work, shifts our attention to learning that takes place out of necessity. This chapter has suggested that this may be most apparent in parts of the world where children and young people enter the work place earlier and where informal education is particularly crucial in facilitating this and supporting their livelihoods and employability. In Tanzania, for example, informal education is important to young people, the majority of whom

contribute to family livelihoods and work in areas that do not require formal qualifications (Smith 2013).

The significance of informal education in Tanzania is enhanced by the widespread feeling that formal education lacks relevance to many local people's livelihood realities (Smith 2013). Contemporary Tanzanian primary and secondary schools are performance-orientated and highly didactic in their modes of teaching delivery such that rote, formalized learning in classrooms is the norm, with few resources to support teaching and learning due to national resource constraints (Barrett 2007). These characteristics betray some of the education system's colonial origins and ongoing western influences, which render it selective, elitist, and academic (Crossley and Tikly 2004). La Belle (1982) argues that the postcolonial development of education systems has expanded the gulf between formal and informal education. As schools become increasingly tied to the state as the primary institution for cultural transmission, so local forms of learning become further disenfranchised. This is particularly important in contexts like Tanzania where the population is ethnically diverse, and as a result there may be diverse forms of local informal education. Akpan (2011) extends this argument to suggest that contemporary attention to "indigenous" or "local" knowledge in the worlds of academia, corporations, and global institutions has continued to reinscribe and embed differences between formal and informal learning. They do so, Akpan argues, through sustaining binaries between local and global knowledges by assuming they are natural and mutually exclusive domains and by reinforcing the belief that "local" knowledges are only relevant in their specific place-based context. While others have challenged this position through exploring the dynamic and relational character of local and global knowledges (Briggs 2005; Smith 2011), the positioning of differences between local and global still plays an important role in reinforcing the binary between informal and formal learning. Broadly speaking, in the Tanzanian context and throughout Africa, the differences between formal education systems and informal local learning remain considerable, and as such the formal school curriculum may appear irrelevant to young people's current and future livelihoods, particularly in rural areas (Stambach 2000).

Informal education in Tanzania is often illustrated by forms of informal learning that equip young people with practical forms of environmental knowledge. This environmental education takes place informally within communities. Through their participation in family livelihoods, particularly in rural areas, young people engage in farming, pastoralism, fishing, wood collecting and cutting, and a range of other practices which require environmental skills and knowledge (Smith 2014). This is what Lancey (2012) calls the "chore curriculum," a term which differentiates between what children are expected to do, often assisting in domestic and corporate production in tasks contingent on age and gender, and what is optional for them to do, contingent on their interests and aptitudes. Evidence suggests that informal environmental learning brings valuable dimensions, which its formal counterparts miss or, at best, complement, often because more formal education tends to focus on conceptual or abstracted ideas associated with the environment (water cycles, ecosystems) which both adults and young people do not necessarily see as

practically applicable to working in the environment in their day-to-day lives (Smith 2013, 2014). Adults, often those in rural communities, who have had little experience of formalized environmental education, tend to base their ideas about local environmental management on what they have learned through practice and may dismiss environmental learning at school as not practically useful. Young people in the same communities, who have had a stronger element of formal education, can have ideas about environmental conservation, management, and more broadly how the environment works, which are more “theoretically” or “conceptually” informed; however, many young people still engage in informal learning from adults and their peers out of necessity to pursue future livelihoods in agriculture regardless of their formal education (Smith 2013). Critics have argued that where people come to rely too heavily on formal education, at the expense of its informal counterparts, they become distanced from local realities, including the local social complexities of environmental management (Abebe 2008; Stambach 2000). In other words, informal learning in this sphere still plays an important part in individual and also collective livelihood, and formal learning may not necessarily always compliment informal knowledge and practice. Some evidence suggests that the expansion of formal schooling in Tanzania may sideline forms of local informal learning (Smith 2014), as has also been the case in India (Jeffrey et al. 2004) and in Ethiopia, where time devoted to school activities limits children’s time for “collective forms of apprenticeship” which prepare them for future livelihoods (Abebe 2008). If locally rooted informal education still does prepare young people for their most likely future livelihoods, then it’s displacement by formal learning may be concerning. Equally, some aspects of formal learning, such as mathematical skills, may compliment informal skills, which might again question the absolute distinction between informal and formal knowledge systems. However, as only 16% of 18–19-year-olds in Tanzania are still in school (NBS Tanzania 2006), for the majority informal education is likely to be more relevant to their future livelihoods and more readily accessible than formal education and qualifications, as has been illustrated in other contexts including South America (Punch 2004). It might therefore be assumed that Julius, particularly if he lives in a rural area of Tanzania, is likely to be driven to learning skills informally out of necessity to sustain his own and his family’s livelihood. Even though he may attend school, formal knowledge learned there may not seem relevant to this work. For him, the spatial separation between formal learning in school and informal learning in his family home and fields may be much starker than for young people in more wealthy countries.

And yet, it would be simplistic and wrong to portray informal education as driven purely by necessity. Young people in Tanzania also express curiosity and translate this to learning. Studies have found evidence of growing interest and curiosity in the local environment and its management among young people in Tanzania (Smith 2014). In part as result of engaging in more practically focused environmental education projects run by Tanzanian and international NGOs, young people had begun to question some of the practices of their parents, such as wood cutting and charcoal making, and had thought about the future of their local environment under current human use (Smith 2013).

The Tanzanian case suggests that at least in some parts of the world, there remain stark contrasts between formal and informal education, with young people and adults often prioritizing informal education out of necessity, whether this necessity is defined by a lack of access to formal education or a need to learn things that are needed for work and life. Yet studies have illustrated that environmental NGO activities, falling somewhere between formal and informal education, did spark young people's interest and curiosity in learning, and participation may have been driven by their curiosity into other ways of thinking about the environment (Smith 2013, 2014). Furthermore, it will be necessary to revisit the simple, dichotomous picture of informal education being driven by either necessity or curiosity. Through a critique of this dichotomy, this chapter will finally go on to explore the possibility that informal education in Tanzania, and indeed the UK, can be driven by both necessity and curiosity, simultaneously.

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## 6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined informal education through a series of contexts, which present different pictures of informal and formal learning and the relationships between them. It has argued that the geography of informal education is not reducible to a curious West, set against less wealthy parts of the world in which people are too busy to be curious, but also that there is an element of this. This is illustrated by the contrast between Tanzania and the UK. In the former, experiences of learning are characterized by stark differences between formal and informal education, in which the latter is driven largely by what families and communities feel their children need to know. In the UK, in contrast, the division between these two educational spheres is less distinct, and informal learning is devoted less to the acquisition of practical skills and more toward curiosity-driven learning by self-motivated learners, supported in many cases by resources and institutions such as reading material, ICTs, and museums. And yet, the contrasts between informal learning in these countries, and the world regions from which they are drawn, are not always as deep or substantial as they first appear. In both settings, the boundaries between formal and informal learning are less pronounced and categorical than they are often portrayed, and in both settings, necessity and curiosity each play a part in driving informal learning.

First, across a range of contexts, the boundaries between formal and informal learning are not always pronounced or categorical. To return to the examples discussed in this chapter, informal education in Tanzania spans the spectrum from formal to informal learning, and though there are differences in form and emphasis across this spectrum, there are also continuities. And curiosity-driven learning can also be formal or informal, as Rousseau anticipated in the figure of *Émile*, and translated through a range of educational initiatives from PBL in formal education to learning schemes in museums.

Second, necessity and curiosity each play a part in driving informal learning, across a range of settings from Tanzania to the UK. Rousseau's *Émile*, the archetypal

curiosity-driven learner, is ostensibly universal. Similarly, more recent theories of child development present curiosity as a universal human condition, most pronounced in particular stages of childhood. This universal picture has been criticized as culturally and historically specific. Philosopher Mark Zuss argues that “curiosity is never an essence, mental state, or identifiable concept” (Zuss 2012, p. 91) and suggests that Piagetian developmental psychology naturalized and universalized specifically bourgeois understandings of childhood and curiosity (Zuss 2012, p. 79). And of course, *Émile* is not entirely universal: he is specifically male, European child; his curiosity is equally particular. Fellow philosopher Ilhan Inan argues that the archetypal “curious child,” which has such currency in the West, does not embody a universal curiosity. Rather, he should be seen as a symbol or metaphor for the kind of curiosity that adults seek to cultivate. Following these points through, it should be possible to understand curiosity in ways that do not depend upon the material privileges – the resources for informal learning – that Piaget took for granted and are equally liberated from a focus upon particular forms of curiosity. The kind of curiosity discussed above, in relation to the UK, was oriented around information and conceptual rather than practical forms of knowledge. This kind of curiosity takes center stage in Gade’s geography of curiosity and in his assertion that curiosity is not simply better resourced but more at home in the West. Both Inan and Gade acknowledge that this “conceptual” curiosity has more practical counterparts, and both privilege the former, almost ignoring the latter, which Inan (2012, p. 125) refers to as “instinctive” or “behavioral” and Gade (2011, p. 75) as “prudential.” After briefly acknowledging the latter, Gade then goes on to contradict himself by generalizing that “curiosity denotes an interest in phenomena for their own sake” (Gade 2011, p. 49) and that curious people have an “antipathy for utilitarianism” (Gade 2011, p. 75). Others, however, have embraced the diversity as well as the practical dimensions of curiosity. Richard Sennett elaborates on practical forms of curiosity in work and social life, recognizing cycles of curiosity-driven problem finding and problem solving in crafts and industries (2008) and empathetic curiosity in communication, cooperation, and political action (2012). This resonates, in a different setting, with Cindi Katz’s finding that Sudanese herd boys experience spatial autonomy in the course of their work, which feeds their curiosity to explore the environment and develop knowledge about their surroundings (Katz 1986).

The implications of this more nuanced picture of the geographies of necessity and curiosity for a discussion of the geographies of informal learning are as follows: distinctions between curiosity-driven informal learning in the West and necessity-driven informal learning in Africa and elsewhere break down, to be replaced by distinctions between different forms of curiosity-driven learning in both spheres and assertions about the categorical differences between curiosity and necessity, as drivers of informal learning in both spheres, break down, to be replaced by the acknowledgment that curiosity can have practical dimensions and that necessity does not preclude curiosity. This means that while informal learning is geographically differentiated, this geography is neither as stark nor as simple as suggested by the figures of *Emil* and *Julius*. The reality, which is more nuanced, is one in which young learners in the UK have many things in common with their counterparts in



countries such as Tanzania and in which learning is driven in each case by forms of curiosity and necessity. That being said, curiosity is not universal, and it assumes different forms, both conceptual and practical, between and within countries such as these. Moreover, learning resources are equally differentiated, providing different opportunities for expressing and pursuing curiosity-driven learning. Equally, necessity is not confined to less wealthy parts of the world, as informal learning in countries from Tanzania to the UK is driven by forms of necessity, which have their own geographies too. Some sources of necessity for informal learning, such as limited provisions for formal learning, are more concentrated in poorer countries such as Tanzania. Other sources of necessity, such as the need to know how to do things that may be useful in a future workplace, are present in most places, albeit in different forms. For example, a child in Tanzania may need a skill in order to work on a farm or survive in an informal economy, whereas his or her counterpart in the UK may have a greater need for some form of literacy with ICTs or customer service. This means that children and young people around the world may have more in common than may first be apparent, in terms of their informal learning, but, at the same time, the drivers, forms, status, and significance of this form of education remain different in important ways. This brings a new dimension to Cindi Katz's powerful argument that, differences notwithstanding, there is a global dimension to childhood and to learning, grounded in similarities and connections between children and young people in very different settings.

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## Abstract

This chapter presents a more nuanced approach to children’s work than what appears in the dominant discourse of abolishing “child labor.” In many societies, children’s work is seen as a component of attentive child-rearing, conveying benefits for the children with respect both to their immediate well-being and to their future prospects. Work has immediate economic benefits for children and their families, which are especially important in situations of poverty and which are not always confined to the short term. Work can also confer social, psychological, and cognitive benefits that contribute in the longer term to child development and to incorporation into the child’s community. Moreover, particularly in situations of poverty, schooling frequently fails to overcome disadvantages of

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background or to guarantee future security for children. For many children, a combination of work and school provides the best chance of development to their fullest potential.

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**Keywords**

Education • Limits of schooling • Schoolwork • Work and school compatible • Child labor • Benefits of children's work

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## 1 Introduction

Global policy on children's work and education is dominated by two assumptions: that school is the best way to secure a future for all children and that work generally hinders schooling and is therefore to be avoided during childhood. The latter assumption is applied particularly to economic work, which in high-income societies is assumed to be the responsibility of adults and not of children. When accepted as general norms, these assumptions can mislead.

This chapter points to ways in which work can contribute to child well-being and development; when this is the case, children's work should be encouraged rather than avoided. The potential benefits of work challenge both assumptions underlying global policy. While formal schooling – including secondary schooling – is undoubtedly the dominant source of learning and skills for the vast majority of young people in the modern world, this is not the only form of education that children need, nor necessarily the best form for all children in all situations. Second, while excessive or harmful work can certainly hinder schooling, work and school are not always – or even generally – incompatible. A more positive assessment of the potential of work leads to a more nuanced view of both school and work.

Statistics issued by the International Labour Office (ILO) list sub-Saharan Africa as the region with the highest rate of children in “child labor” (Diallo et al. 2013, p. 10, Table 9), placing data from Africa at the center of discussion (although the consistency of the data on which the statistics are based is questionable, as is the definition of the term “child labor” that they use). Data from Africa, the author's principal region of interest, therefore dominate in the references for this chapter; the issues raised extend beyond Africa and apply in varying degrees in all continents.

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## 2 Contrasting Perceptions

In most African societies, as in many societies elsewhere in the world, it is considered an essential feature of good-quality child-rearing to require children to work in ways that contribute to household and community livelihood. In this perspective, a child who does not work is a lazy and irresponsible child, with diminished chances for future success. Children are consequently expected to

undertake a variety of the tasks appropriate to their age and competence. On the children's side, as social beings, they grow up instinctively imitating and participating in the social activities around them, including work in their families and communities. Exclusion from such activities creates stress, which can have adverse psychological and social consequences.

In Europe and North America, and in wealthier groups elsewhere, romantic ideas of childhood as a time for play and learning, and free of responsibility, are sometimes giving way to pressure on children to work in order to ensure their futures. Their work is, however, perceived as very different from adult work: while adults are expected to engage in productive work, the work demanded of children is strenuous learning. Productive work by children is perceived to be short term and exploitative – child labor. This dichotomy in the functions of work of children and of adults is facilitated by societal structures that keep children's activities institutionally apart from those of adults: children spend much of their lives in school and are not allowed to participate in workplace activities, where adults spend much of their lives.

In societies with high-average incomes and developed infrastructure and technologies, children and youth spend a large amount of their time in formal schooling, where they are expected to acquire the knowledge necessary to compete in, and contribute to, their society. In wealthy families, children's productive work has little value compared to the knowledge they can acquire. Since technical development and wealth are widely associated with general superiority, the kind of childhood that the wealthy can afford is readily perceived as an ideal for all. This perception, apparently supported by statistical correlations between schooling and subsequent individual and national incomes, leads to the dominant view that school, and formal secondary school in particular, is the best environment for children and young people to develop skills needed for work and life as adults (see, e.g., UNESCO 2012, p. 4). School is therefore seen as the best way to develop individuals and societies and to break down poverty. In contrast, productive work by children is perceived as inhibiting schooling and hindering development and therefore should be abolished.

This chapter challenges the dominant negative perceptions of productive work by children and offers some support to the more positive view prevalent in the majority world. It points to ways in which work can be valuable to children's development and well-being. There is now a wide acceptance that productive work is an economic necessity for some children, but this chapter further argues that work can have formative value beyond economic transactions. Once the value of children's work is recognized, its relationship to formal schooling needs to be more carefully assessed than the dominant child labor discourse allows. Moreover, children in poor communities do not generally receive the same benefits from school that are received by children from more advantaged backgrounds. In particular, where children can benefit significantly from work and where the benefits of formal schooling are limited, children's interests require that school and work become fully compatible with each other.

### 3 Benefits of Labor

#### 3.1 The Term “Child Labor”

The term “child labor” has a variety of usages and meanings, which frequently cause confusion (see Ennew et al. 2005). Particularly in the USA, the term “child labor” has long referred to a particular subset of children’s work, namely, work that is harmful to children because it is abusive, exploitative, hazardous, or in other ways detrimental to their development and well-being (for a recent example of this usage, see Weston 2005, xv). Such a definition corresponds with the kind of harmful work that is condemned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC (1989) Article 32, 1) and the ILO Convention 182 (1999) on the “Worst Forms of Child Labour.” “Child labor” in this sense does not refer to the specific age of the child, nor to whether the work is in paid employment or is unpaid within the family. And in this sense of harmful work, “child labor” is contrasted with children’s or adolescents’ participation in work that does not adversely affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling and which can be something positive in their lives.

There is also, however, a very different sense in which the term “child labor” is widely used, namely, to cover any work that contravenes national or international labor standards, typically ILO Convention 138 (1973) on a “Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Work,” and national legislation based on this Convention, whether or not the work in question is shown to be in some way harmful to children. While certain kinds of work and work situations are harmful to children, the age of entry into unstipulated employment and work correlates poorly with whether the work is detrimental or beneficial to children, and a general minimum age has been academically challenged as a criterion for intervention on behalf of children (Bourdillon et al. 2011, pp. 213–214; Edmonds and Shrestha 2012). Briefly, much harmful work lies outside the limits of employment and work as defined by this Convention and of any minimum age; consequently this kind of standard fails to protect children from harmful work. On the other hand, not all economic work below the minimum legal age is harmful – indeed some is beneficial – and enforcement of minimum age standards has been shown at least sometimes to work against children’s best interests (for examples, see Bourdillon et al. 2011, pp. 1–5, 180–193, and for a statistical example, see Bharadwaj et al. 2013).

These two distinct usages of the term “child labor” – harmful work and “under-age” work – are often conflated, creating confusion. While people claim that policy and intervention is concerned with harmful work, age and employment are much easier to assess than benefit or harm; consequently, a legal definition based on age and economic activity is often adopted for statistical and policy purposes, resulting in policies that are poorly focused on protecting children from harm and are sometimes damaging to children’s well-being.

Examples of such confusion abound among international organizations. For example, on its website (<http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/lang-en/index.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014), ILO-IPEC (International Programme for the Elimination of Child

Labour) defines “child labor” in terms of various kinds of harm, without reference to age and employment; the same page creates confusion, however, with a link to a guide to labor inspectors, which states the ILO policy that the Minimum Age Convention, which prohibits work on the basis of age and not of harm, is “the fundamental international standard on child labor” (International Labour Office 2003, p. 8). Frequently, studies that initially define and describe “child labor” in terms of harmful work subsequently proceed to adopt a “legal definition” based on age and employment for collecting and analyzing data, blurring the distinction and frequent differences between harmful work and illegal work (examples are Understanding Children’s Work Programme 2008, 2009, 2011).

Much of children’s work can potentially be both harmful and beneficial, depending on circumstances and conditions, rendering inadequate the simplistic and commonly attempted classification into harmful “child labor” and benign “child work.” For a child in a very poor family and poor environment with few job possibilities, the improved nutrition that results from work may outweigh a small loss of time and energy for school. For a child with realistic hopes of a professional career and living in a family with adequate resources, any interference with school could be damaging. Even hazardous work may have compensating psychological, social, or economic benefits, depending on the situation of the children concerned (Woodhead 2004, p. 324). Rather than classifying work into harmful and benign, it is therefore more useful and academically sound to assess the harm and benefits that may lie in specific work situations. There exist indeed extreme forms of child labor that contain no benefit for the children involved and are rightly the target for urgent abolition. This is not, however, typical of the vast majority of children’s work, which is the concern of this chapter; the discussion here considers work that confers some benefits on the children and adolescents undertaking it, whether or not it is legal and whether or not it may also convey risk of harm. The term “labor” is used in headings to draw attention to the fact that the discussion includes work that may be illegal and work that may carry some risks.

## 3.2 Economic Benefits of Labor

That children’s work may have short- and even long-term economic benefits for children of poor families is now widely recognized. In situations where children have inadequate adult support, because of death or disease or an economic situation in which adults cannot earn adequately, children have to contribute to their livelihood. Even persons strongly opposed to children working for money concede that in situations of severe privation, the children and their families have no alternative.

Sometimes work provides basic food for working children and their families, an essential benefit when physical and cognitive growth are threatened by undernutrition. The work of older children in the family can contribute to nutrition, health, and education of their younger siblings – especially evident when a household is headed by a child on the death or absence of parents. When families suffer shocks that



seriously affect or threaten their livelihood, children are affected and often have a significant role to play in the family's recovery.

Several studies have shown working children in poor communities to be better nourished than their nonworking peers (Cigno and Rosati 2005, p. 86; Understanding Children's Work Programme 2008, p. 32, 2009, p. 38). In Nepal, some runaway street children were found to be stronger in indices of growth and nourishment than the children left behind in impoverished homes in rural areas (Baker et al. 1996, pp. 177–178). Such correlations could be due to increased incomes and opportunities leading to better nutrition, or to better nourished children being more likely to work (whether by their own choice or under compulsion), or in some cases working children receiving a disproportionate share of household resources. Although the relative frequency of these explanations has not been adequately researched, improved diet from improved income is plausible in most cases. One study showed girls dismissed from garment factories in Bangladesh to suffer subsequent deterioration in diet and use of health services (Bourdillon et al. 2011, p. 185).

Better nutrition leads to better health; some work provides exercise in conditions conducive to health, and work can sometimes provide better access to health services. While work can in appropriate circumstances benefit health, no general conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between child work and health (for a recent discussion, see Parker et al. 2010). Many jobs that children do and the surrounding working conditions can damage health in a variety of ways, both in the short and the long term. The point to notice here is that work can contribute to children's health as well as detract from it.

While income or production from children's work may be a necessity in situations of absolute poverty, when children inform us that poverty drives them to work, they are often talking about relative poverty rather than absolute necessity, and their need to work is to improve the quality of their lives and their status rather than for bare necessities. They compare their lives not only to those of others in their communities but also to what they know about the wider world, perhaps through first- or secondhand experience or perhaps through access to media. They perceive not being allowed to work as condemning them to poverty (e.g., Howard 2012; Thorsen 2014). As young people often work their way through college in the USA, in Africa it is common for children to earn for the expenses of their formal schooling. Assumptions that work deprives children of education and condemns them to a cycle of poverty are therefore often not valid.

Work, whether for wages or for subsistence production, can bring to young people a degree of autonomy, which can be important in oppressive situations. Some young people leave home for work to become independent of abusive or neglectful situations, as well as in an attempt to escape poverty at home (Ofosu-Kusi and Mizen 2012). Working girls often acquire a degree of autonomy and are sometimes better able to resist family pressures for early marriage and to delay childbearing (e.g., Amin et al. 1998, p. 197). Orphans may use the contributions of work to negotiate for a better position in the families of supporting kin (Nyambedha and Aagaard-Hansen 2003). In resource-poor communities, children from poor families may receive sustenance and even schooling by moving temporarily to

families short of labor; a study in Ethiopia shows such cooperative arrangements between families to benefit poor children, notwithstanding condemnation of the institution by child-right activists (Kassa and Abebe 2016). Even well-off children often enjoy the autonomy gained from a small income.

Such economic benefits of work are evident and can be very important for children in situations of poverty. When these benefits are ignored in a ban on child labor, the result may be a loss of access to a better-paid work or a reduction in wages for children's work. Consequences are increased poverty for the family and sometimes, perversely, increased hours of more exploitative and illegal work for children (Bharadwaj et al. 2013).

Work cannot, however, be understood simply in economic or transactional terms; it is a fundamental social activity, and even economic benefits are often intertwined with social relations in families and communities. The economic benefits of children's work should not divert attention from the variety of other benefits that work can bring to the well-being of children. Often economic benefits are secondary or peripheral to reasons why children work. Where economic resources are not scarce, such as among relatively well-off families in the USA, we find youths taking on part-time jobs (even sometimes before the legal minimum age) with little concern for income (Besen-Cassino 2014).

### 3.3 Social and Cognitive Benefits of Labor

One reason that working children give for wanting to work is to help with future employment. Workplace experience can help young people to acquire social skills and appropriate workplace relations and sometimes establish contacts that will improve future livelihood opportunities. Developing workplace skills appears especially important when young people have little confidence that school will lead to well-paid jobs in their environment. Young people might choose work that carries some hazards if they believe this work is likely to help them with future employment or income. The work they undertake sometimes shows a progression when they use earlier work experience in simple jobs to obtain more rewarding work as they mature.

Some work promotes specific skills, typified in formal and informal apprenticeships. Apart from learning skills necessary for certain kinds of production, apprentices learn how to run a business and often become included in networks necessary to practice their trade later. Apprenticeships can be extremely exploitative, sometimes demanding demeaning work for little training and little pay (see, e.g., Morice 1982); this and a prejudice in favor of formal education lead to a frequent assumption that apprenticeships should be replaced by vocational schools. Nevertheless, in certain situations learning on the job can be more effective for future incomes than are formal training institutions, which are expensive to establish and maintain and rarely provide involvement in the business aspects of a profession (Krafft 2013). There is growing acceptance that such on-the-job training can be promoted and strengthened as a key way to develop vocational skills among older children

(see, e.g., International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour 2013, p. 53); the principle can also be applied to younger children. Even street work can be educative: although young people working on city streets often lose on skills acquired in classrooms and a secure home, they sometimes take professional pride in their work and have been observed to learn social, mathematical, and linguistic skills in such work that contribute to livelihood and in some cases may be more conducive to upward social mobility than formal classroom learning (Aufseeser 2012, p. 261; Nunes et al. 1993; Baker 1998).

Behind these reasons for working is the characteristic of work as a fundamental human activity. It is necessary for the livelihood of most people, but often more important is the way work establishes a person's place and status in society, providing an identity and often establishing social inclusion and exclusion, so the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, article 23,1) grants everyone the right to work. Since humans have evolved as social creatures dependent on those around them, they instinctively participate in social activities both to receive the security of group membership and to contribute to their groups. So children instinctively participate in the work activities of those around them, playfully at first and helpfully as they acquire competence. As they learn from elders and peers to undertake tasks on which others can depend, they acquire a sense of responsibility for others. At the same time, they earn the respect of those who can depend on them, together with status and identity in their community.

In agricultural societies over the world, children participate in agricultural activities. The problem for controlling adults is often not so much to avoid exploitation of children's work but to ensure that they are allowed to participate in a constructive way. For example, while an older child proudly participates with adults, younger children might have special implements appropriate to their size and strength and supervision to ensure that they do not damage crops; the youngsters may stop and play when they get bored or be given other tasks that are helpful without being demanding (see, e.g., Polak 2012, #952). When agriculture becomes primarily commercial, the work of children sometimes expands to more than what they would like to do, especially as they grow in strength and competence, but this does not necessarily make the work harmful by destroying the social character of their work or children's ability to combine work with play and entertainment (see, e.g., Katz 2012). A blanket ban on children working in commercial agriculture does not appear to be justified; indeed, if children are not allowed to work on family plantations serving export markets (such as West African cocoa), they are excluded from family activities and denied the opportunity to learn to manage the crops.

Through participation in social activities, including work, children acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to live in the society (for a fuller exposition and references, see Bourdillon et al. 2011, pp. 88–107). Skills of childcare and home management are learned through practical domestic work throughout the world, as much as small-scale agriculture is learned through working on fields and with animals. In urban communities in Africa, petty trade is a dominant social activity, and children start to participate in this kind of work at a young age, for the purposes of social participation with peers and wider society as much as for the money that it

brings. Again, we find children starting playfully by trading very small items and growing in trading competence as they mature. In societies where the dominant kind of work is in employment, children seek jobs during school vacations or out-of-school hours.

Activities for livelihood frequently blend with rituals and myths and the ideals of the society, to the extent that by participation in these activities children also learn the culture of their community: how to relate to others, appropriate forms of behavior, and values upon which social life depends. They learn to behave in ways that allow others to depend on them – how to take on social responsibilities. Such inclusion allows for a smooth transition into adulthood, with few of the problems so common among adolescents in societies that exclude them from adult activities.

Nearly 40 years ago, Enid Schildkrout (2002) pointed out the economic importance of children's roles in house trading by secluded women in Kano, Nigeria. All children become highly involved in the cash economy from an early age and are expected to become gradually more responsible in assuming socially significant tasks that are complimentary to tasks performed by adults. Growing up does not involve a transition from an unproductive childhood to productive adulthood: girls and boys contribute to their families and to their own futures from an early age. Schildkrout pointed out that schooling to some extent disrupted the economic system in which children played such an important part.

A recent long-term study in Ethiopia showed how children's work, whether unpaid work in the family or paid work for others, is still embedded in family and community social relations. Children took for granted that they should work for their families, even while the burden of absorbing economic shocks to families often fell on their shoulders (Pankhurst et al. 2015). Even at a young age, earning money can be as much a way for developing responsibility to the family and rights in family resources, as in the work in family fields and enterprises.

There is a further way in which work can contribute to education. Young people may wish to broaden their experience by moving temporarily away from their home, perhaps to experience city life or even to cross national frontiers. Earning through work makes such travel possible for children in communities with few resources, although it is linked in the minds of many Westerners to exploitative "trafficking." In some societies, leaving home for a while, at some risk to themselves, to seek gainful employment is considered a significant step for adolescents to mature into adults (e.g., Dougnon 2012).

### 3.4 Benefits of Labor for Well-Being

Working children have sometimes surprised researchers by saying that they liked to work and would still work even if their families had no need of their income (Bourdillon et al. 2011, p. 36). One reason for this is that children often enjoy their work, which provides opportunity for socializing with friends and peers.

For many children in less affluent families, it provides an escape from homes that offer little opportunity for entertainment.

The social and developmental benefits outlined above point to more fundamental reasons why children so often choose to work. When children exercise autonomy through work, it gives them a feeling of some control over their lives, which contributes to subjective well-being. Many studies speak of children taking pride in their work. Ethiopian working children spoke about being praised for their work and blessings from caregivers or God or both (Pankhurst et al. 2015, p. 56). These observations point to important positive dimensions of well-being, which are hard to measure and often neglected. This neglect is particularly evident in research relating to the global south, where discourse emphasizes negative dimensions that need corrective intervention, such as poverty (Saith and Wazir 2010).

Work can be particularly important for well-being in the face of hardship. When a family with few resources is disrupted by some economic shock, such as illness or death or loss of livestock or crop failure, children are affected by the adversity. Involvement in overcoming the shock can reduce children's experience of trauma. In a culture in which family ties are strong and highly valued, if children have a chance to contribute to overcoming the adversity, this can improve self-confidence and resilience and can take priority over personal benefits (Boyden 2009). In such contexts, work can play an important role in strengthening family ties for the security of all members.

Beverley Grier (2005, pp. 69–109) argued that historically in Zimbabwe employment provided boys and girls with opportunities to escape from an oppressive patriarchal system at home. More generally, work can provide relief from a variety of tensions at home and at school. Working children frequently explain how work gives direction to their lives when they encounter problems at school and fail in classroom skills. Even in affluent societies, part-time work in a conducive environment can provide relief from tensions at home and school (Call and Mortimer 2001).

The formative nature of work requires that it is useful and valued as work. When work does not contribute directly to the family of the child, payment for children's work expresses appreciation for the contributions of young people; it also helps to teach the value of money and how to handle it as well as being a component in learning appropriate social relations. Perhaps motivated by the fear of the stigma of employing child labor, some people fail to pay children for the work they do and try to justify this by labeling their work as "help" or "internship." This is more exploitative than paying wages, it belittles children's contributions, and it diminishes the value of work as a component in child development – especially in developing self-esteem and confidence.

All the benefits of work mentioned here assume that the work does not exceed what the child can handle physically without harm, nor what the child can competently do. That work does convey benefits means that simply to exclude work – even economic work – from children's lives cannot be accepted as a "safe" way of avoiding risks of exploitation or harm. Excluding children from work carries the risk of losing important possibilities for development. This in turn means that there

are risks in simply prohibiting work in favor of school: a critical assessment of outcomes in children's lives from both school and work is necessary to ensure that policy promotes rather than restricts the well-being and the future lives of children.

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## 4 Work, School, and Education

Based on research in Zambia, Robert Serpell (2011) showed that, in the societies studied, the development of communication and social relationships in children is valued more than the motor and cognitive skills that dominate Western concerns in child development. He further pointed out that a sense of social responsibility is combined with cognitive alacrity in judgments of children's intelligence. He argued that such pro-social goals, which receive little attention in school systems established under colonialism, should not be dismissed as an outdated rural perspective; they have a constructive place in contemporary society.

The term "education" is often identified with formal schooling, particularly in North America. Article 29 of the UNCRC states, however, that education should be directed at the "development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" in preparation for a responsible life. Although such development mostly takes place in formal institutions (i.e., school at a variety of levels), school is not the only place, nor always the best place for this growth. Some schools have a wide range of extracurricular activities, intended to meet some or all of these areas of child development. Schools available for the poor often have limited resources and are able to provide little more than classroom skills – and frequently even these are poorly learned due to poor quality of schooling and inadequate background resources. Formal school systems in Africa, as in many parts of the world, were developed under colonialism in the model of education in the countries of colonial powers and usually paid inadequate attention to the needs of social development appropriate to the societies in which pupils lived. When schools offer little beyond limited classroom skills, pupils must find their full education outside school.

Indeed, elsewhere, the UNCRC speaks of children's right to moral, spiritual, and social development (Articles 17, 23, 27, 32), which can be included in a notion of education that is broader than schooling. The previous section has shown how work can contribute to moral, spiritual, and social development and can be educational in this sense. In practice, however, implementation of the UNCRC has largely focused on features that resonate with Western ideas of childhood such as rights to nutrition and physical necessities, to formal schooling, and to protection from exploitation and specific forms of abuse; such focus attempts to remake the lives of African children to approximate to Western forms.

For statistical purposes, data on schooling is relatively easy to collect, to the effect that school enrollment frequently becomes a proxy for education. While such a proxy is a useful guide to such things as the compliance of nations to improving on children's right to education, it remains a proxy. For the purposes of policy, formal institutions receive emphasis since they are easier to regulate, and to assess as

indicators of national commitment, than are informal processes of education. Focus on enrollment with inadequate attention to outcomes in children's lives can be misleading. The next sections of this chapter point to dangers of a simple identification of education with formal schools as they currently operate, particularly in the Global South.

## 4.1 The Limits of Schooling

It is widely assumed that school education provides a means to overcome both poverty and inequality: it is assumed that if all children go to school, they all have a chance to improve their prospects and break out of poverty (e.g., UNESCO 2012, p. 4). In this view, school is among the most powerful investments for development, potentially affording extensive economic, social, and health benefits. In a variety of situations, we find statistical correlations between years of schooling and subsequent incomes at both individual and national levels (Heymann and McNeill 2013, pp. 47–50). School education enables many children to seek better-paid employment and so move themselves and their families out of poverty. Even when schooling cannot guarantee future employment, it provides a hope for something better and so contributes to child well-being. Accordingly, the spread of school education has been, and continues to be, a focus of attention both in defense of children's rights and in the development of societies. The vast majority of children worldwide now receive at least some primary schooling. Even poor families now see school as the best hope for their children and sacrifice much to give their children the best available schooling.

Nearly 20 years ago, Paul Glewwe (1996) warned that estimates of the economic benefits of school are often overstated because they do not adequately take into account school quality, the aptitude of pupils, and the local economic situation of children. Although at the macro-level years of schooling correlate with increased income later in life, we cannot conclude that specific children will benefit in this way from further years in school. Children from helpful backgrounds, high in socioeconomic status, learn well at good schools, stay long in the educational system, and end up with good jobs; children from poor backgrounds, on the other hand, learn less at poorer schools and have little prospects of good jobs even if they complete to the end of secondary school. As schooling spreads widely in a population, it loses value for ensuring well-paid employment for each individual. Far from guaranteeing remunerative future employment, some studies on youth unemployment show youth who have completed their schooling remaining longer out of work than those who had dropped out of school early: in much of the Global South, absolute numbers of young people completing secondary and tertiary education increase faster than opportunities for employment, which sometimes even contract, creating social problems for educated youth (e.g., Understanding Children's Work Programme 2011; see also White 2011; Jeffrey 2009).

Research on outcomes in numeracy and literacy shows that the strongest predictor of acquisition of these skills is the socioeconomic status of parents, and that



although the gap does diminish in some cases, school attendance and enrollment do not generally overcome early disadvantage due to home background (see contributions of Boyden and Bourdillon 2014). Indeed, by emphasizing the value of schooling and associated patterns of behavior, school can denigrate those with aptitudes elsewhere, thus reproducing and reinforcing inequalities rather than reducing them (Morrow 2013). At the same time, livelihood skills such as agriculture and crafts and care of the environment may be lost (e.g., Katz 2004, pp. 116–117).

Formal schooling might be more useful when curricula are better designed to meet the needs of specific pupils. This has been attempted in a variety of ways. One way is to provide vocational training for those without academic ability. Institutions to provide such training require resources for equipment and materials and need to be flexibly sensitive to changing job markets and opportunities. They do not necessarily result in better incomes for pupils: a study in Egypt showed that those who had been to vocational schools at the secondary level ended up with incomes no better than those who had dropped out of school altogether and that learning on the job was a more reliable way of improving later incomes (Krafft 2013). Further, such programs face the risk of excluding less-advantaged children from a trajectory that might lead to better-paid white-collar work.

Another way of trying to make schools more relevant to children from backgrounds of poverty is to gear the teaching and the curriculum to take account of their experiences and to have their locations and hours of attendance such that they ease children's efforts in the often difficult combination of school with the work they have to undertake. Several such programs have operated with some success (Bourdillon et al. 2011, pp. 128–129), but they are small in scale compared to large-scale state systems of formal schooling, which remain the dominant model of formal education, and in under-resourced areas remain strongly focused on classroom learning.

In the 1980s, programs of “education with production” brought productive work into the process of education both as training and as contribution to the costs of educational institutions. They reflected socialist ideals of the dignity of all labor and that education should train children to become productive members of society. These programs floundered in the face of rigid traditional educational systems and became unfashionable by the 1990s partly because of a decline of socialist values and partly on account of being tainted with encouraging “child labor.” Some parents in Zimbabwe still preferred these schools on the grounds that they not only taught children the usual classroom skills but also provided a way into a reliable livelihood in a tenuous economic situation (see McLaughlin et al. 2002).

The limitations of formal systems of schooling explain why children in poor communities sometimes regard it as risky to rely on school to ensure their futures and look for employable skills in experience outside school. Their judgment at least sometimes is supported by evidence that shows work experience in certain situations to be more effective than further schooling in increasing subsequent incomes (Bourdillon et al. 2011, pp. 85–86).



## 4.2 School as Work

A feature of childhood in high-income countries is that the principal occupation of growing children has changed from services and productive work to schoolwork. This change is beneficial to individual children, who have the opportunity to acquire empowering knowledge and to learn skills necessary for employment and life in the modern world. Because of these benefits, schooling is generally considered a right of every child. For society, the benefits include a more skilled and productive workforce: schoolwork becomes obligatory on every child for the benefit of the society (Qvortrup 2001), a variation on the concept of forced and unpaid labor (Close 2014).

Like any work, schoolwork can become hard and stressful. A study of Japanese school pupils in the 1990s showed that the pressure on them to do well separated them from families and allowed no leisure; children were found to have a growing incidence of illnesses that in other societies are associated with stress among adults (Field 1995; see more recently on South Korea Koo 2014). In India, extreme stress and anxiety concerning examination performance are common and sometimes lead to suicide (Oudenhoven and Wazir 2006, p. 47). Even when the conditions are not so extreme, formal schooling can demand so much time and energy of children as to leave little opportunity for other activities, and a system of constant testing can create stress and damage the learning process (Harber 2004, pp. 111–123, chapter 8). Schoolwork under the wrong conditions can be more disruptive of children's development than are many economic activities that young people undertake.

There can be further hazards in schooling. A study of schools in Ghana, Malawi, and Zimbabwe revealed a range of school-based violence, including bullying, heavy corporal punishment, and sexual abuse (Leach et al. 2003, ix). Throughout the world, large numbers of children report being bullied at school – over 30% in many European countries (Pinheiro 2006, pp. 122–125). Several people from Nairobi slums cited fear of assault at school or on the way to or from school as a reason for dropping out (Mudege et al. 2008; more generally, Jejeebhoy and Bott 2003, p. 15).

Work has benefits as well as drawbacks, and school has drawbacks as well as benefits. Is there any way of combining the benefits of both?

## 4.3 Are Work and School Compatible?

Much of the concern about child labor arises from the belief that work interferes with schooling and that work is incompatible with school education. In practice, the vast majority of working children also attend school. They see both work and school as valuable.

There remains a concern that work takes time and effort away from school and reduces its effectiveness. This concern appears to be supported by statistical inverse correlations between work on the one hand and school attendance and performance on the other. There is need for caution on such survey analysis, especially when it

fails to attend to the hours and conditions of work and the availability and quality of schooling (for a fuller discussion and references, see Bourdillon et al. 2011, pp. 108–132). Evidence suggests that up to 10 h of work a week (whether economic or any other work) does not impinge negatively on school performance: indeed in certain situations, such limited work appears to enhance school performance (Stack and McKechnie 2002, p. 99; Post and Pong 2009, p. 112). Full-time work, on the other hand, is not normally compatible with effective schooling: it interferes with school performance and sometimes keeps children away from school altogether. A precise definition of full-time work is not possible, but 30 h a week can be taken as a rough guide. The effects of work between these extremes vary and depend, among other things, on the type and context of work, the quality of schooling, the situation of the child, and the capacity of the child for school and for work.

When correlations are established between poor performance or attendance at school and children's work, this does not necessarily indicate that work affects school: at least sometimes causality works the other way. Many qualitative studies show young people leaving school because they fail to learn, whether this is due to poor teaching, bad relations at school, or the child's lack of ability in schoolwork (which may be innate or circumstantial). Other children are out of school because they cannot afford the expenses of schooling or schools are inaccessible. When children are out of school for whatever reason, they usually start working. Some studies show that children who are not doing well at school sometimes look for ways of learning life skills outside the school context and find more encouraging and positive experiences in part-time, or even full-time, work (Call and Mortimer 2001; Mortimer 2003; Bourdillon et al. 2011, p. 121).

Several studies of children's time use have suggested that time for work is taken from leisure or passive activities rather than from time spent on schoolwork (Bourdillon et al. 2011, p. 122). When measures to reduce poverty result in higher school attendance, this is not always accompanied by a reduction of children's work, and where such reductions do take place, they do not mirror increases in school participation (De Hoop and Rosati 2013).

Some studies have pointed out that compatibility of work and school can be hindered by the rigidity of the school system (Orkin 2011; Admassie 2003). Where children need or wish to work, they can be helped by school hours that allow time before or after school, by flexibility that takes into account seasonal needs for agricultural work, or by teachers that make allowances for the needs of particular pupils.

So research does not support the assumption that work and school are necessarily in direct opposition to each other. Nevertheless, especially in poor communities, the work that children have to do can be heavy. While young people feel and accept responsibility to their families in times of difficulty, it is usually left to them how to combine work and school, and work can hinder the progress of pupils from poor families through school by reducing time for study and forcing them to miss classes or at least making them excessively tired for effective learning. Without prohibiting children's work altogether, there is scope for parents and guardians to ease the burden on children and for school systems to make allowances for children's need

to work and times when seasonal work is demanded (see Admassie 2003; Tafere and Pankhurst *in press*).

The effects of work on school depend on a number of variables, including the nature of the work, the hours demanded, the relations with employers and fellow workers, the aptitude of the child, the quality of schooling, and the flexibility of the school system (for a summary of research findings, see Bourdillon et al. 2011, pp. 108–132). The effects of excessive work apply to unpaid work in the home as much as to paid or productive work: one study in Egypt argued that it is precisely a domestic work in the home that reduces girls' attendance and performance at school (Assaad and Levison 2010). And children in South Africa have complained of work in their homes getting in the way of their school work (see Clacherty 2002, pp. 33–34).

Far from keeping children from school, in many cases, it is their paid work that makes schooling possible, providing for school expenses and sometimes for adequate nutrition, without which cognitive development is hindered. Sometimes work provides for school expenses while at the same time hindering time and energy for schoolwork (e.g., Bourdillon 2000).

Article 28 of the UNCRC asserts the right of children to be educated, referring primarily to schooling at various levels, and Article 32 asserts their right to be protected from any work that interferes with their education. Some work, both at home and in employment, can take so much time and energy as to interfere with schooling, particularly when work is full-time rather than part-time, and such work impinges on children's rights. On the other hand, work can also enhance education in its fullest sense by providing enriching experience. Since much learning takes place in work, work can be an important component of education. To prohibit such work also impinges on children's human rights. The UNCRC can be interpreted as denigrating work in favor of an idealized notion of schooling. Perhaps children should also be protected from harmful schooling, which may interfere with other important educative activities, such as work.

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## 5 Conclusion

The structure of modern Western societies creates an artificial dichotomy between adults and children. They are spatially separated for much of their time, which reinforces ideas of different appropriate kinds of work. The division between adults and children is reinforced by a variety of laws that specify physical ages for a variety of activities: driving a vehicle, voting, entering the military, drinking alcohol, entering employment, and leaving school. While these do not take into account the particular needs and competencies of individuals, they do on the whole provide a degree of social order that compensates for the loss of certain freedoms.

With respect to work, there is a further division between unpaid schoolwork and household work on the one hand and economic work on the other. The former is considered appropriate for children, and the latter is considered so abhorrent as to stigmatize the products of children's work. This division is based on stereotypical

extremes of exploitative employment and light household chores, rather than on empirical evidence about the various outcomes that can derive from children's work in different situations.

In Africa, as in many societies elsewhere, these divisions are not straightforward. Adults and children are together on family farms and in family enterprises in markets and towns as well as in the home. The participation of children in such family enterprises is a natural part of growing up and learning how to live in their social context. Even work for payment can be a family affair, when children accompany parents (especially their mothers working on plantations) to play nearby and sometimes to help, especially when payment is on a piecework basis. There is no reason to suggest that the children would be better off if they were not allowed to help when they are present, still less if they were left at home to their own devices when they are not occupied in school.

The application of standards based on the values of Western societies can disrupt this process of learning and growing up. It can also lead to anomalies. Children care for family livestock around the tea plantations in Rwanda and can often be seen cutting fodder with machetes. But they must not be seen in the more benign task of plucking leaves from the tea bushes for fear that Rwandan tea will be stigmatized in the USA as contaminated by child labor.

This chapter has pointed to a variety of benefits that children can derive from working. It has also pointed out that school does not fulfill all the developmental needs of all children. For many children in many situations, a full education directed at developing children to their fullest potential can comprise a combination of appropriate school and appropriate work. The precise place of each in child development depends on the specific situations of the children, taking account of their needs and aptitudes, and the opportunities available to them.

For work to play its part in child development, it must not exceed what the child is physically capable of doing without harm, and it must lie within the realm of the child's general competence, covered where necessary by appropriate training. It must not impede the child's schooling. Equally, the school system must allow children opportunity for activities like work, by allowing time before or after school or adapting the school vacations to seasonal demands for children's labor. To allow children to work when it is in their interests to do so is not a concession; it is respect for their rights.

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# Achieving Gender Parity in Education: Achievements and Limitations of Millennium Development Goal 3

# 6

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## Abstract

For a number of reasons, girls' educational enrolment has historically fallen short of boys' enrolment in many countries worldwide and particularly in poorer communities. In the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG3), the international community resolved to address this lack of parity. They did so for a host of reasons, some associated with a desire to promote gender equality, but also because girls' education is believed to have wider social benefits. Moreover, it fits with the neoliberal worldview promoted by international institutions and rich-world governments over the past three decades.

This chapter begins with an outline of historical patterns of gender inequality in school enrolment globally and the purported explanations for such patterns. It goes on to consider Millennium Development Goal 3, the reasons why the "gender gap" attracted the attention of policy makers in the 1990s and the consequent expansion of girls' enrolment in school. The limitations of parity

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of enrolment are then considered – firstly in terms of persistent obstacles to girls’ academic success in some education systems and secondly in relation to the failure of girls’ education to bring about social and economic transformation that might significantly reduce gender inequality and improve women’s life chances. Finally, this chapter sets out three alternative ways of accounting for the relationship between schooling and its impacts on girls and young women. These focus on the mechanisms of power through which schools affect girls’ lives, the ways in which schooling functions to reproduce relations of both gender and capitalism, and the ways in which education’s impacts are produced both contextually and relationally. All three accounts all pay close attention to what happens in schools, how schools relate to their wider contexts, and the impacts on individual girls and wider gender relations.

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**Keywords**

Education • Gender • Girls • Millennium Development Goals • Neoliberalism • Schooling

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## 1 Introduction

For children’s geographies, education is an immensely important sphere of life that dominates the experiences of children around the world. Globally, most children attend school, at least for a few years, and for many it occupies a very substantial portion of most days of their lives for a substantial period of time. Yet most research on the geographies of education has focused on the experiences of children in the global north (see, for instance, Holloway et al. 2010). Schooling also merits attention because it represents a huge financial investment on the part of families and nations and is one of the few means by which governments – and increasingly international institutions and donor agencies – seek to purposefully intervene to alter societies and transform individual lives. As international investment in education has increased, it has become more homogeneous globally, shaped by donors and international institutions that govern through increasingly ubiquitous targets and measures of enrolment and attainment (Ansell 2015). It is also increasingly delivered by transnational corporations that design curricula, publish text books, administer examinations, and operate schools (Ball 2012). Yet relatively few geographers have explored how global processes operating through education systems are governing childhoods and reshaping societies around the world.

Over the past two decades, in particular, schooling has come to be viewed as a way of changing society by transforming gender relations. Increasing girls’ access to education has been promoted as a means of empowering them, enabling them to access economic opportunities, reshaping economic power relations, and thereby achieving a wide range of beneficial effects on their households, communities, and societies (Jones and Chant 2009; MacDonald 2016). This idea is conceptualized in, and has been driven through, the third Millennium Development Goal, which focuses on achieving parity of school enrolment between girls and boys. However,

as geographers have noted across a range of global contexts, schooling does not always lead to the outcomes that international organizations, governments, parents, or young people themselves anticipate (Ansell 2004; Camfield and Tafere 2011; Jeffrey 2010; Punch and Sugden 2013).

This chapter begins with an outline of historical patterns of gender inequality in school enrolment globally and the purported explanations for such patterns. It goes on to consider Millennium Development Goal 3, the reasons why the “gender gap” attracted the attention of policy makers in the 1990s and the consequent expansion of girls’ enrolment in school. The limitations of parity of enrolment are then considered – firstly in terms of persistent obstacles to girls’ academic success in some education systems and secondly in relation to the failure of girls’ education to bring about social and economic transformation that might significantly reduce gender inequality and improve women’s life chances. Finally, this chapter sets out three alternative ways of accounting for the relationship between schooling and its impacts on girls and young women.

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## 2 Gender Disparity in Schooling: Patterns and Causes

Historically, in many countries worldwide, girls’ educational enrolment and attainment have lagged behind those of boys. In Southern Asia in 1990, for instance, only 74 girls attended primary school for every 100 boys (UN 2015). In sub-Saharan Africa in 1999, the figure was 85 girls for every 100 boys (World Bank 2012). This has been particularly true in certain societies and especially among more deprived communities and those in remote rural areas (King and Winthrop 2015). The reasons put forward to explain this situation are multiple and vary from place to place. The assumptions, expectations, and aspirations of children, parents, and teachers are highly influential.

In accordance with socially constructed gender roles, girls are usually expected to become wives and mothers, performing reproductive work for their husbands’ families. Employment is expected to play a lesser role in their lives: they may spend fewer years in paid employment, and labor market opportunities are more limited and pay less. Not only are their future families expected to be less dependent on their incomes, but in patrilineal societies, unlike their brothers, they are not expected to provide for their parents in old age. Moreover, parents and teachers may assume, not only that education is unnecessary for girls but that they are less academically able and therefore not worth investing in (Ansell 2005).

The opportunity costs of girls’ schooling may be greater than for boys: girls often perform crucial and valued work in the home and caring for younger siblings. This burden of work can leave girls with little time to devote to homework and little energy when in school, which can affect their performance and sap their motivation to remain in school (Porter et al. 2011). The direct costs are often higher too: girls’ uniforms may be more expensive (boys may require only dark trousers and a white shirt that can be purchased second hand; girls’ uniforms are often specific to the

school), and parents may feel they have to pay more to ensure that girls can travel to school in safety or live in secure accommodation when at school.

Parents may fear for the safety and dignity of girls when outside their supervision. In some societies girls are not permitted to mix with boys after puberty, and travel to school and boarding are viewed as particular threats, limiting girls' prospects of studying where (good) schools are unavailable close to home (Porter et al. 2011). The fact that many schools lack toilet facilities is off-putting to girls themselves, particularly in situations where sanitary products are excessively expensive; hence, girls often attend less or drop out once they begin to menstruate (Jewitt and Ryley 2014). Girls may experience sexual abuse, harassment, and coercion in school environment from male pupils or teachers.

Schools may also fail to provide an environment that interests or motivates girls or accommodates their needs. Many drop out of school to marry or because they become pregnant. It is far from uncommon for such girls to be excluded from school as they are seen as providing a negative role model for other girls, encouraging premarital sex or early marriage. Even where they are officially permitted to remain in school, they may be unable to attend because they need to earn an income to support their child or they lack assistance with childcare.

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### 3 Millennium Development Goal 3: Striving for Parity

Since the 1990s, gender inequality in school enrolment has excited international concern and a range of interventions designed to address the perceived "gender gap." To understand the reasons for this concern and activity, it is necessary to be aware of four closely related trends that have strongly shaped education policies and practices in the global south over this period. These trends include the expanded role played by multilateral organizations, especially the World Bank; a growing belief in the centrality of education to poverty reduction and development; the growing influence of human capital theory and the demands of the "knowledge economy"; and (at least until very recently) a narrowing of the global education agenda, focusing on access to primary education and readily measurable outputs.

Efforts to seriously address the low rates of schooling among girls began in earnest in 1990, when representatives from 155 countries and 150 organizations attended the World Conference for Education for All (EFA) at Jomtien, Thailand. The four lead agencies involved (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank) each pursued somewhat different agendas (King 2007), and the targets, which included achieving universal primary education and gender parity by 2000, proved overambitious. However, the ground was set for a renewed commitment to these goals at the World Education Forum in 2000 and for the two Millennium Development Goals focused on education that were agreed the same year:

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education (Target: ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling)

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women (Target: eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015) (UN 2014)

Both sets of goals were drawn up by multinational agencies, with minimal involvement from southern governments (King 2007), and they undoubtedly refocused multilateral institutions, aid agencies, and national governments on extending girls' access to primary education. NGOs, too, have focused their attention on girls' education through programs such as Plan International's "Because I am a girl" (see MacDonald 2016). The international community has been motivated by four broadly related ideas: that education is an intrinsic social good that inevitably benefits those who obtain it (and particularly girls who are "empowered" through it), that education has strong economic and social benefits, that the education of girls is particularly beneficial socially and economically, and that girls have a special role to play in relation to "development." All four ideas are rooted in a broadly neoliberal perspective on the individual, society, and the global economy and when enacted through education policies extend the reach of neoliberalism into communities around the world.

The widespread assumption that education is an unequivocal intrinsic good has become so commonplace that those campaigning to advance girls' education seldom feel the need to proffer evidence in support of their stance. Schooling is tacitly understood to be a "liberating force" with transformative potential (Froerer 2011) that invariably empowers girls. This arguably dates back to the work of Dewey (1916) and other twentieth-century modernists. Cobbett (2014, p. 312) points to a common slippage in international policy discourse between "education" and "formal schooling" and between "formal schooling" and "girls empowerment."

Alongside the idea that education is good in its own right, international organizations have, since the 1990s, come to view education as central in a global strategy to fight poverty. This stance reflects shifts in both the global economy itself (the emergence of a "knowledge economy") and the way in which education is understood to operate (the increasing dominance of human capital theory). Essentially, with globalization, the significance of human capital increases. Knowledge-based activities often contribute more to growing economies than material production, and labor markets are increasingly flexible, unstable, and competitive. In such situations, education is increasingly considered crucial to gaining economic advantage (Ansell 2015).

The gap in school attendance between girls and boys internationally was never the greatest educational inequality. The World Bank (2012) suggests that gender accounts for at most 38% of inequality in school enrolment, while poverty often accounts for more than 50%, with rural or urban residence also playing a significant role. The difference in responses to gender inequality and responses to inequalities that relate to income, social class, or even urban/rural difference is very striking and undoubtedly attributable to the idea that the gender gap is particularly damaging, not to individual girls so much as to society as a whole. While the idea that schooling empowers individual girls is viewed as "common sense," the notion

that girls' education benefits society in general, both socially and economically, has become influential in policy circles, based upon the work of economists and human capital theorists in the 1990s. It is said to bring greater economic benefit than the education of boys. Educated women work in paid employment for longer than other women, increasing the tax base (Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos 1991); girls receive a higher wage premium than boys for each additional year of school (Schultz 1993a), partly because boys have access to highly paid, physically demanding work, irrespective of education (Deolalikar 1993); and while men respond to increased wages by working fewer hours, the opposite is true of women (Schultz 1993b). Girls' education is also perceived to contribute to reducing fertility (UNFPA 1990) and infant mortality (UNICEF 1999), improving family health, and increasing the likelihood of children attending school. It is these social benefits, conveyed by the proverb, "when you educate a man, you educate an individual; when you educate a woman, you educate a family," that have inspired most policy on girls' education. Because returns to girls' education accrue more to society than to the individual, and because private costs incurred for girls' education may be higher than for boys', there is often less incentive for parents to educate daughters (King and Hill 1993). It is argued that society should therefore be willing to spend more on encouraging girls into school and reducing the costs for parents.

This instrumental view of girls' education remains very prominent today. The UN Girls' Education Initiative's report for the Oslo Summit on Education and Development (King and Winthrop 2015), for instance, lists seven benefits of girls' education, which include expanding a country's leadership and entrepreneurial talent, faster economic growth, benefits for the health and education of their own children, and improved capacity of their families to withstand economic and environmental shocks. The seventh reason is the intrinsic value of education for girls themselves. This reflects a contemporary preoccupation with girls as agents of development.

A number of authors have referred to the "Girl Effect": an idea promulgated by a number of organizations involved in international development since the mid-2000s that constructs girls as "the powerful and privileged agents of social change, indeed even as the solutions to the global crisis and world poverty" (Shain 2013, p. 1). Girls are viewed as altruistic and endowed with a capacity to motivate others, in contrast with boys who are represented as irresponsible (Cobbett 2014). At its extreme, the "Third World girl-child" is "positioned as a conduit through which to create a future free of terrorism and corruption" (MacDonald 2016, p. 3). The language of "the girl-child" has been critiqued for its passive, essentialist, and homogenizing representation of girls (Cobbett 2014), reminiscent of colonial tropes of passive Third World women (MacDonald 2016). The representation of girls as heroines of society is one-dimensional and oversimplistic, but in its celebratory stance prevents more nuanced understanding of the diversity and complexity of girls' lives (Cobbett 2014). Indeed, the global trope obscures the local context and its influence (MacDonald 2016). Reinforcing ideas of girls' altruism and boys' irresponsibility is likely to add to the work expected of women and also locates

responsibility for change with individuals and their characteristics rather than broader structural factors.

The newfound focus on girls views them in fundamentally instrumental ways. In line with Molyneux's (2006) criticism of "gender mainstreaming" in development for casting women as "conduits of policy," current discourses "focus on how girls can aid development rather than vice versa" (Cobbett 2014, p. 310). Shain (2013) points to the "benevolent individualism" seen in girls as symptomatic of the way in which they are inserted into neoliberal narratives. Thus, while the Girl Effect discourse draws on colonial stereotypes, it "reworks these through the discourses of neoliberal development to construct girls as good investment potential" (Shain 2013, p. 1). Moreover, in an economic take on society, girls are framed as sites of investment. Investing in girls will enable them to realize their potentialities – to become better mothers and workers (MacDonald 2016). This focus on girls as instruments of economic growth and efficiency obscures structural relations of exploitation and privilege, casting responsibility onto them as individuals (Shain 2013).

Within this framing of girls, education serves a key function. Cobbett (2014) points to how frequently references to "the girl-child" slip into discussions of girls' education. Girls are represented in dichotomous terms: in order to avoid becoming the passive, oppressed, homogenized Third World woman whose potential has been wasted, girls must be saved through education, fulfilling their potential as emblems for a brighter future (MacDonald 2016). While girls' education is not framed as a social justice issue, girls outside formal education are depicted as victims (Cobbett 2014).

These discourses and depictions have inspired considerable activity toward increasing girls' enrolment in school. Progress toward gender parity is partly attributable to the (unintended) consequences of broader social and economic changes such as the availability of IT work in India as a result of outsourcing by global corporations that has increased the economic return to families investing in their daughters' education (World Bank 2012). However, deliberate interventions have also played a significant role. International institutions and donor agencies, committed to supporting attainment of the MDGs, have been directly involved in designing, financing, and implementing national policies and interventions (Tarabini 2010). These include policies that have targeted all children but which have had a disproportionate impact on the enrolment of girls, as well as policies that have addressed issues that have proven particular challenges for increasing girls' enrolment. Free primary education programs have been introduced across much of sub-Saharan Africa, many of them designed and funded at least in part by the World Bank. That in Malawi (where it was preceded by a scholarship scheme for girls) has helped reduce the gender gap (World Bank 2012). Scholarship programs for girls' secondary education have been used in South Asia. Bangladeshi girls, for instance, are able to attend secondary school provided they maintain a minimum attendance and performance levels and remain unmarried to the age of 18; these are deemed responsible for the dramatic increase in girls' school attendance in that country (King and Winthrop 2015). In Latin America, conditional cash transfers have

proven a successful means of increasing attendance among girls. These raise household income (one of the constraints on school enrolment) and usually require children to attend school in order for the transfer to be paid (King and Winthrop 2015). In other situations, building more schools has reduced the distance children have to travel, thereby reducing both financial costs and perceived dangers associated with girls' travel to school. King and Winthrop (2015) enumerate a series of other successful interventions that include the development of high-quality and gender-sensitive curricula and learning materials, girl-friendly infrastructure, good teachers using gender-sensitive pedagogy, measures to improve safety and prevent violence, and the development of leadership skills in girls. Schooling-focused interventions also include increasingly widespread policies that prohibit the exclusion of pregnant girls or their readmittance following childbirth or marriage (Runhare and Hwami 2014). Measures to ameliorate the external constraints include in-house water supply which reduces the opportunity cost of girls' schooling (World Bank 2012). Institutions acknowledge that the same approaches do not work in the same way in every society and that with "severely disadvantaged populations," issues need to be addressed in context-specific ways (World Bank 2012).

At face value, MDG3 has been very effective. While parity was not attained by 2005 as originally targeted, by 2015 across what the UN terms "developing regions," there were on average 98 girls for every 100 boys enrolled in both primary and secondary school and 101 women for every 100 men in tertiary education (UN 2015). This gives only an aggregate picture however, and some regions and countries still have significant gender gaps. While in Southern Asia, gender parity at primary level increased from 0.74 in 1990 to 1.03 in 2015 (UN 2015), in a few countries such as Tajikistan gender gaps have widened as a result of reduced social investment in education (Baschieri and Falkingham 2009). In other countries and particularly in rural places and among the poorest, gaps remain significant, with girls generally lagging boys.

The fact that parity has been reached globally, while in some places girls' enrolment in school significantly lags that of boys, is indicative of the striking fact that the average figures for secondary and tertiary education, and to a lesser extent primary, mask very substantial disparities that favor girls in some parts of the world. In fact, by 2012 65% of countries in developing regions had significantly more women than men enrolled in tertiary education, and there were more countries where secondary enrolment favored girls than countries where they were outnumbered by boys (UN 2015). More than half of the countries where boys outnumber girls in primary school are in sub-Saharan Africa (to a large extent due to the near-universal spread of primary education in other regions). Only in Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Asia are girls generally at a disadvantage relative to boys in secondary school enrolment, while disparities favoring men in tertiary education are most pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia (UN 2015). Despite the many campaigns in support of educating girls, lack of parity is now only a "problem" in a relatively small number of countries.



## 4 The Limitations of Enrolment Parity: Understanding the Impacts of Girls' Schooling

While initiatives geared to meeting MDG3 have sharply increased girls' enrolment in schools globally, reductions in the gender gap have not been matched by equivalent improvements in girls' educational attainment, significantly empowered individual girls, or brought the promised social and economic transformation.

During the current decade, there has been a growing realization that school enrolment (as promoted through the Millennium Development Goals) does not always equate to "education." UNESCO (2012) estimates that while only 57 million children are out-of-school, 250 million remain unable to read and write by the time they should reach grade 4. Of 650 million primary school age children worldwide, 120 million do not reach grade 4, and a further 130 million remain in school but fail to acquire basic skills (UNESCO, 2012). This data, combined with research that shows economic growth correlates more strongly with achievement in standardized tests than with years of schooling (Tikly and Barrett, 2011), has led to renewed attention to children's performance in school.

Girls attending school are somewhat less likely to attain qualifications, a situation for which a number of explanations have been proffered. These relate both to their experience of school and constraints and expectations imposed from outside. There are barriers to girls' participation on an equal basis with boys: the attitudes of parents, teachers, and other students who may assume that girls are less able or have less need for qualifications than boys; school practices which do not allow or encourage girls to participate in all aspects of the curriculum (e.g., requiring them to learn "domestic science" instead of physics); or expectations that girls should undertake chores such as sweeping or collecting water that remove them from lessons or reduce the time available for study. There are also less tangible features of school systems that shape girls' engagement with education. Dunne (2007) explores how schools regulate gender/sexual identities through the informal practices of the hidden curriculum, including gender segregation of duties and classroom space. In school textbooks girls and women are often underrepresented or only depicted in sex-stereotyped roles.

Yet in practice, despite these processes, gender differences in learning appear to be very small and dwarfed by differences relating to poverty and place. There is often some discrepancy in the academic performance of girls and boys across different subjects. Kimosop et al. (2015), for instance, compared the performance of 630,625 students in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education exam and found boys outperformed girls in three of the five subjects (mathematics, science, and social studies/religious education). In the internationally comparative PISA tests, girls fairly consistently outperform boys in literacy, boys somewhat less consistently outperform girls in mathematics, but gender differences are greatly outweighed by those between countries (World Bank 2012).

Even if girls are successful in school, this may not translate into tangible change beyond the classroom. Significantly, Oxford University's Young Lives



study (Pells 2011) has found that, while gender gaps in access have diminished, outcomes of education related to well-being continue to favor boys in India and to a lesser extent Ethiopia. Schooling may fail to prepare girls to perform their expected roles in society, to achieve individual material advancement and social mobility, or to contribute to wider social transformation.

Below are set out three distinct, though interrelated, accounts of the relation between schooling and its impacts on girls and young women. Whereas, as MacDonald (2016) points out, campaigns promoting girls' education tend to be sparse on details of what education looks like, these three accounts all pay detailed attention to what happens in schools, how schools relate to their wider contexts, and the impacts on individual girls and wider gender relations.

#### **4.1 Mechanisms of Power: How Education Impacts Girls' Lives**

If schooling is to have a significant impact on girls' lives beyond school (spatially and temporally), it needs to have an effect on at least one of the key activities of their daily lives. Women's lives in the global south are strongly shaped by their involvement in paid work, unpaid work, community organization (these three being described as the "triple burden" as the latter two elements generally fall more heavily on women than on men (Moser 1993)), and their personal relationships. In relation to these areas of life, women have what Molyneux (1985) describes as practical and strategic gender interests. The former are practical needs such as food, shelter, or transport, while the latter interests relate to broader power relations. Women's strategic interests might include having greater influence within the household, which in turn would enable them better to address their practical interests over time. For schooling to benefit girls, it needs to help them address both practical and strategic interests.

Schools potentially impact on these various areas of girls' and women's lives through at least five mechanisms. The first (and for some, the most significant) is by allocating individuals to positions in the labor market. In most societies, primary education is now insufficient to qualify a person for a formal sector job of any sort. Where formal sector employment opportunities are scarce (as they are in most parts of the global south), a secondary level qualification is necessary to gain entry to the labor market. In Zimbabwe and Lesotho, for instance, in order to gain formal sector employment, young women are expected to obtain the terminal secondary qualification (Ansell 2004). For young men, however, employment in relatively well-paid roles including security and manual work may be accessible without a formal certificate or with a lesser qualification taken earlier in the secondary school cycle (Ansell 2004). The end-of-secondary school qualification is only achieved by a small minority of young people. The effect of schooling is to select out those who are deemed best suited to employment. While this is indicated by the acquisition of a qualification, it may reflect inherent abilities or effort rather than skills and knowledge acquired through school (Dore 1976). Serpell (1993) describes the similar "narrowing pyramid" structure of education in Zambia as a product of an

“extractive definition of success”: the education system serves to extract a small elite for formal sector employment, leaving many failing students at each level. For the few young women who achieve these qualifications, the impact is often even more substantial than for their male peers. They are able to access a much greater income than young women who cannot access formal sector work. On this basis, they are able not only to address their practical needs, but as suggested below, they may be able to exercise greater influence within the household. Because the payoff to success in terminal examinations is so high, it is not uncommon for schools and students to focus their attention almost exclusively on this goal. Education that does not result in a qualification may be deemed worthless, a situation that has serious consequences for the self-esteem of those who leave school without (Ansell 2004).

The second way in which schooling can shape girls’ lives and influence gender relations is through the provision of practical skills and knowledge. The basic numeracy and literacy which many (though not, as noted above, all) children acquire in primary school undoubtedly equips many for aspects of their lives – notably in paid work (in activities such as trading) and in contributing to community organization (in some African countries, for instance, women act as treasurers and secretaries for community organizations, even where men are elected as chairs). Often, however, the knowledge and skills imparted in school have little relevance to women’s lives, particularly for the many who are unable to obtain formal sector work. This is particularly true of those in rural areas. Very little is offered in schools to enhance girls’ capacity to engage in forms of unpaid work, community organization, or personal relationships. Where such subject matter appears in curricula, if it is not examined and not perceived to contribute to the chances of obtaining a qualification, it is given little attention by either teachers or students. Even where relevant subjects are taught, they may not be taught in a way that pertains to girls’ lives and experience. Agriculture textbooks in Lesotho portray men in farming roles, even though most farming is undertaken by women, and teachers may even turn their backs on girls and talk directly to the boys (Ansell 1999). Thus, girls do not necessarily gain the knowledge and skills to address practical gender interests in relation to the sorts of work or activities they are likely to engage in.

A third significant aspect of schooling is the social relations of gender. Schools are communities tied together by social relationships and social practices which differ greatly from those pertaining outside school and in which power is embedded in different ways. As LeVine (1993, p. 196) observes, “School is a new universe that operates according to different rules.” In coeducational schools, girls and boys may spend much more time in each other’s company than would be possible in other situations. Schools in most societies are unusual in that they are not overtly gendered organizations. Although gender may be significant in the organization of schooling (girls and boys may, for instance, be expected to wear different uniforms, line up separately for assembly, even attend different schools), there is usually a symmetry to this. Moreover, in general girls and boys study the same curricula and take part in the same activities: a marked distinction from life for young people outside school where there is more likely a gendered division of labor, at least for

those that have reached adolescence. Thus, schools are suggestive of gender equality.

In practice, however, there are many ways in which both conventional and new forms of femininity and masculinity are expressed in the social relations of a school (Ansell 2002). While gender relations may be overtly symmetrical, schools have strong hierarchies among and between staff and students and strict social rules. Schools allocate students to positions in hierarchies: the positions of girls are often less subordinate to boys than those they occupy outside school. While power in school remains largely in male hands, girls are treated more like boys and, unlike in the household, are expected to work for their own benefit. However, power is not presented in school as something accessible to individuals, except on the basis of ascribed roles. Only in cases where rules are breached (for instance, teachers failing to teach) may those of subordinate status challenge the bearers of power. Moreover, exercise of power by students is generally in defense of the status quo.

The fourth way in which schooling impacts on girls' lives is through the construction, transfer, and transformation of knowledge. School engages students with knowledge in particular ways. Globally, and particularly in poorer communities in the global south, didactic teaching methods are common. Lengthy syllabuses, preoccupation with examinations, and the use of nonnative languages for teaching stifle debate of knowledge claims and discourage students from questioning received wisdom (Freire 1972; Giroux 1981). This, along with the presentation of knowledge as imported and androcentric, inhibits girls from challenging their subordination or creating new knowledges about women and their capabilities (Ansell 2002).

Research in Lesotho and Zimbabwe identified two distinctive normative discourses that young women engage with in secondary schools (Ansell 2002). "Culture" is represented as a body of patriarchal knowledge from the past – the way of life of one's ancestors – threatened by foreign ideas. Discourses of "equal rights," on the other hand, are understood to derive from other countries and to relate to modern lifestyles, but lend more support to girls who wish to breach conventions through which they are subordinated. Both discourses are valued and are continuously renegotiated in relation to each other in school, with consequences for how young women interpret their own lives and forge aspirations and expectations.

In these contexts, the minority of girls who are academically successful may find employment and are thereby better able to address their practical gender interests. They may also, if they are earning an income (and are therefore seen as making an "equal" contribution to a male partner), be able to use the "equal rights" discourse to argue that the reproductive work of the household should be shared. They have the economic power necessary to argue for a greater decision-making role in the household. The majority of girls, however, do not obtain employment. Nor do they acquire appropriate skills or knowledge to address practical gender interests in relation to informal sector work, agriculture, reproductive work, or community organization. Moreover, they are unable to draw upon empowering discourses through which they might challenge the subordinate roles ascribed to them (Ansell 2002).

There is a geographical dimension to these discourses. Urban lifestyles (those to which secondary education is anticipated to lead) are seen as governed by the “modern” discourse of equal rights, while rural life is understood to be the realm of “culture.” While girls in secondary school become accustomed to an expectation of an urban future in paid employment, in practice the majority do not attain the required educational qualifications. Whereas boys may survive in the city without such qualifications or formal sector employment, such options are less available or socially acceptable for girls. Once girls marry, in particular, if they do not have paid employment, they are expected to reside in rural communities, maintaining household access to rural resources including fields and raising children. These are activities and lifestyles that school does little to equip them for and they feel unable to draw on a discourse of “equal rights” in an environment that is understood to be ruled by “culture” (Ansell 2002).

One further implication of these observations is that the difference school qualifications make for a small minority is likely to significantly affect quantitative assessments of the impacts of education. A number of multivariate analyses have suggested that education has an impact on average earnings and also on women’s decision-making roles (e.g., Boateng et al. 2014; Omwami 2015). Yet averages can disguise substantial differences within a population, and where a small minority gains exceptional benefits, this can raise averages, while it reveals nothing about the status of the majority.

## **4.2 The Functions of Schooling: Reproducing Gender Relations and Capitalism**

While the above section focused primarily on the ways in which schooling impacts the lives of girls attending school, schooling can be understood to serve a wider function. Much of the above argument underscores the way in which schooling, rather than benefiting individuals, serves the needs of the economy. This is also, clearly, as was earlier pointed out, the intention of the global institutions promoting and investing in girls’ education. Schooling can be seen as a tool of social reproduction, a means through which an economy is sustained and transformed over time (Katz 2004). Schools provide labor with (in broad terms) the attributes that the labor market requires. As labor markets become more globalized, the characteristics of the required labor are changing. To a degree, there are more opportunities in the global “knowledge economy” for women than men and also in the more conventional but expanding export economies of the global south, for instance, in the manufacture of garments and electronic components. Southern nations are seldom seen as sources of the highest skilled knowledge workers however. In the global economy, they trade predominantly in providing workers with basic skills and a compliant disposition – in what Ruddick (2003) terms “the race to the bottom.” Moreover, while globally mobile employers absorb some workers for a period of time, they are unlikely to offer employment to the majority who have passed through a country’s education system, and employment is often insecure. Women

in Africa have long been referred to as a “reserve army of labor,” available when required but expected to survive on subsistence agriculture at other times (Mitchell et al. 2003). This situation is today being enacted at a more global level.

Schools arguably reproduce not only labor relations but also (and relatedly) gender relations. Where education supports the interests and learning styles of boys and enables boys to qualify for the most influential and lucrative positions in a patriarchal economy, it strongly reinforces existing gender relations. The ways in which gender relations are reproduced through the social relations of the school, through the negotiation of knowledge, and through embodied learning are discussed above. Moreover, even where both rates of school enrolment and attainment are higher among girls, this “gender gap” may both reflect and shape femininities and masculinities in ways that do not necessarily advantage girls (Morris 2012).

Gender relations may also be reproduced through young people’s choice of subjects in school and decisions concerning vocational education. These translate into employment options (subjects typically pursued by boys lead to different careers from those pursued by girls) and in turn into differential incomes that tend to favor men (World Bank 2012). Traditional gender roles and relations are thereby enforced. These differences in subject choice are not related to differences in ability; the World Bank attributes them to institutional factors (e.g., representations of male and female roles in text books), parental aspirations, and employment markets wherein some employment sectors more adequately facilitate women’s engagement through, for instance, paid maternity leave.

It is important to recognize that investment in education, even in girls’ education, can entrench existing inequalities between girls and boys, as well as between urban and rural areas, between majority and minority ethnic groups, and between rich and poor. This situation is unlikely to change without radical reform of education systems, as well as changes to contextual factors such as the operation of employment markets.

### **4.3 The Contextual and Relational Production of Education’s Impacts**

The impacts of education have tended to be conceptualized, particularly in human capital theory, in linear terms: an education system produces learning outcomes that in turn generate individual and social benefits. The assumption is that the education system can be altered to improve the learning outcomes and in turn generate greater benefit. There is some recognition that this takes place within different contexts, but the contexts are viewed as passive, rather than as constitutive of the experience of education, and of the ways in which learning and other outcomes are produced. Schools are not, however, black boxes. They are actively appropriated by situated individuals. It is necessary, therefore, to consider the nature of the education girls receive, their experiences of schooling, and the extent to which girls are able to make use of this. Contexts – social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental – shape the ways young people and their communities engage with schooling. They

constrain, afford possibilities, and incentivize. They shape girls' learning and the individual and social impacts of education.

To make sense of the impact of education on girls, it is necessary to understand the contextualized relationship between education, work, and social life (Jones and Chant 2009). How young women make use of schooling depends upon the operation of labor markets and patterns of gender socialization; in Ghana and Gambia, men tend to acquire more qualifications than women, more skills, and better-paying jobs (Jones and Chant 2009). Obtaining qualifications is usually the rationale for young people to engage with schooling (particularly at secondary level); in remote rural contexts, few are able to make use of educational qualifications (at least without engaging in migration). In rural Bolivia, for instance, formal primary education seldom enhances children's livelihood options (Punch 2004). Punch and Sugden (2013) found that the economic opportunities young people aspired to following schooling in a number of upland Asian contexts were elusive in the increasingly competitive neoliberal regional economy. Froerer (2011), researching within an Adivasi community in rural India, has shown how, without other forms of social, economic, and cultural capital, school certificates have no value as they cannot be translated into the outcomes that schools purport to deliver.

Importantly, education is not simply part of a linear school to work transition. It is not seen only in relation to employment, but there are other values and meanings accorded to education that shape the ways in which girls (and wider communities) engage with it. Indeed, several scholars have pointed to the limited value of the youth transitions concept in understanding the roles played by education; transitions are in practice multiple and often contradictory (Camfield and Tafere 2011).

Even in contexts in which it has limited use value, education commonly serves a symbolic function. It shapes what it means to be a young person and what is valued in life. As Morrow (2013) points out, children are increasingly valued as "educational projects and outcomes" rather than as contributors to the household economy. In communities worldwide, schooling is seen as core to definitions of good childhoods and successful youth transitions (Crivello 2011). It has moral value as "the right thing to do" (Woronov 2011). Education is associated with improvement and progress (Froerer 2011), and it is understood as a (potential) means of escaping household poverty and achieving social mobility (Boyden 2013). Educational aspirations are associated by children and their parents with "becoming somebody" in life (Crivello 2011; Froerer 2011).

False dichotomies are often drawn between schooling's individual effects and its wider social impacts. While there is some truth in Mullings' (2005) argument that education may benefit individual women but does little to transform structural inequalities, the two are interrelated. Education policy and practice are arguably driven by both, framed within a wider neoliberal framing of social change. Education focuses on individuals, imagining them as atomistic, able to take on new attributes through schooling to fit better into predefined labor markets. At the same time, the utility of girls' education is imagined in very instrumental ways, the focus being on their contribution to wider society (Cobbett 2014).

Distinguishing individual from social outcomes denies the relationality of young people's lives. Punch (2015) has highlighted the crucial role relationships play in shaping gendered decisions concerning school and work among Bolivian youth. Any social mobility brought about through education reflects both individual and shared aspirations, experiences, and choices and is embedded in family and local contexts as well as being governed by broader social and economic contingencies (Froerer 2011). To grasp the relationships between local norms and individual aspirations/experiences, it is necessary to consider the social, material, and political-economic factors that shape girls' educational trajectories, which are hidden in quantitative studies that both aggregate and individualize (Camfield 2011).

An example of how gendered meanings, experiences, and aspirations about education are relationally constructed is the role schooling now plays in shaping young people's marriage prospects in remote rural areas. Froerer (2011) describes how young men in one Adivasi village increasingly desire literate brides. For girls, social mobility is understood to be acquired through marriage rather than employment, education nonetheless playing an important role. However, the best level of education for a good marriage is deemed to be completion of Class 5. Five years of schooling are viewed as a worthwhile investment with a use value; secondary education by contrast is deemed expensive and time-consuming and geared to an end that is unachievable among those who lack the connections and economic resources to translate it into meaningful employment (Froerer 2011). This exemplifies how schooling shapes individual and collective aspirations and practices.

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## 5 Conclusions

Girls' education, at least in the form it takes across much of the world, is not an unqualified social good. Education produces social, economic, and cultural change, and evaluating such change is not always straightforward. Some forms of change arising from education appear to be negative, even in relation to the intended outcomes of education. These receive too little attention from policy makers or researchers. For individuals, for instance, there is often a problematic mismatch between the aspirations instilled through education and the outcomes. In Ethiopia, 99% of children surveyed for the Young Lives study believed schooling to be essential for their future lives, yet with a third of rural youth working less than 12 h a week, education is unable fulfil their aspirations (Camfield 2011). In Froerer's (2011) Indian study, some (though not all) girls believed in the transformative potential of schooling, as the teachers daily delivered an education-opportunity-mobility discourse, illustrated by references to occasional success stories (Froerer 2011). In Lesotho, Ansell (2004) found rural girls on leaving school and unable to find the employment they had expected felt disappointment and guilt at having wasted their parents' money. There is a risk that overvaluing formal qualifications and undervaluing activities such as agriculture may be internalized by children, leaving less successful children feeling they are "a waste" (Morrow 2013).



This phenomenon is so commonplace as to constitute a social impact and not simply an individual one. Furthermore, in rural areas, education may actually deskill young people for traditional livelihoods, while failing to provide access to modern ones (Camfield 2011). In upland regions of Vietnam, for instance, young people are diverting their learning away from natural resource-based livelihoods, causing a loss of ecological knowledge, again extending beyond individuals into wider communities (Punch and Sugden 2013).

While the expansion of girls' enrolment in education is impressive, it is unwise to celebrate this too enthusiastically. The international institutions are now turning their attention from enrolment to learning outcomes, but this too somewhat misses the point. Schooling impacts on girls' lives and continues (in changing ways) to affect their lives into adulthood. It affects individual girls, their relationships with others, and the gender relations that structure lives and relationships, extending beyond those attending school into their wider communities and beyond. Subrahmanian (2005) argues that in terms of UNICEF's rights discourse, achieving gender equality requires a right to education (access and participation), rights within education (gender-aware schools), and rights through education (meaningful outcomes that address wider processes of gender justice). While rights discourse is itself not unproblematic, this formulation succinctly points to the limitations of the increased access of girls to education that has been achieved as a result of MDG3 and the inadequacy of pursuing equality of access alone. It highlights that changes are required within education systems to ensure that they enable girls to achieve academic success, but perhaps more importantly to secure the type of education that will enable them to address both practical and strategic gender needs. Moreover, it suggests that changes need to go beyond education systems alone if girls' schooling is to transform girls' lives and wider gender relations in positive ways.

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## Abstract

Education has come to be synonymous with childhood. In policy and public discourse around the world, education is presented as a basic human right and the appropriate site for children's learning. The vision of universal basic education, long articulated within international and much national policy, is approaching reality. Despite persisting inequalities, the majority of children experience some level of formal education during their childhood. This chapter examines three significant and interrelated representations of education that are central to global discourse: education as a right, education as a means of empowering girls and women, and education as a pathway out of poverty. The chapter then examines the narrowing of knowledge that has occurred in the drive for measurable outcomes and comparable assessments of student achievement. The chapter finds that while substantial evidence points to the positive outcomes that

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education can achieve, claims that education will necessarily empower women and provide a pathway out of poverty for poor children are – at best – contestable. While global policy rhetoric around Education for All uses universalized and universalizing language, the context in which education occurs and the nature of education matter greatly to the outcomes achieved.

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**Keywords**

Education • Empowerment of girls • Human rights • Knowledge • Poverty • Right to education • Primary education • Education for All agenda • Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) • Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) • School

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## 1 Introduction

Education has come to be synonymous with childhood. In policy and public discourse around the world, education is presented as a basic human right and the appropriate site for children's learning. The vision of universal basic education, long articulated within international and much national policy, is approaching reality. At the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, the vast majority of children worldwide experienced school for at least some part of their childhood. UNESCO statistics indicate that 91% of primary school-age children were enrolled in school. While inequalities persist between countries, rural and urban areas, rich and poor, and boys and girls, primary education is almost universal, while secondary education is becoming more widespread. Overall, the success of the global agenda for education has been remarkable. In the early twenty-first century, the lives of the vast majority of the world's children are structured by formal education.

This chapter examines three significant and interrelated representations of education that are central to global discourse. First is the representation of education as a basic human right enshrined in a series of international human rights instruments. The idea of education as a human right has been important in shaping the Education for All agenda, which became influential from the last decade of the twentieth century, and is reflected in the second of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The second representation of education discussed here is that of girls' empowerment. Global discourse has embraced the idea that formal education will empower girls and women – an idea that is also reflected in the MDGs. Empowerment arguments are often intertwined with the representation of education as a human right. While there is substantial evidence to suggest that girls' education often produces a range of positive outcomes, it is far less clear that education results in empowerment. The third representation of education discussed is as a pathway from poverty. As with girls' education, there is evidence to suggest that education may result in higher incomes and greater opportunities for some individuals. Yet, there is also considerable evidence to suggest that the promise of education as a means of overcoming poverty is not always realized. A range of structural factors limit the extent to which education can lift individuals out of poverty.

Having explored three representations of education – as a right, as a means of empowering girls and women, and as a pathway out of poverty – the chapter turns to examine the narrowing of knowledge that has occurred in the drive for measurable outcomes and comparable assessments of student achievement.

Throughout this chapter, the term education is used to mean formal schooling. While education can (and arguably should) be understood as including far more than school, the right to education and education for all discourses associate education primarily (and often exclusively) with schooling. This chapter proceeds in four broad sections. The first examines the emergence and development of the idea of the right to education and the subsequent Education for All agenda. The second examines the linkages between education and the empowerment of women and girls, focusing particularly on the literature that critiques simple causal assumptions. The third section examines the extent to which education provides a pathway out of poverty, highlighting the significance of context and structural barriers that education alone is often unable to overcome. The fourth section examines the ways in which the forms of knowledge represented as valuable have narrowed, creating tensions with local forms of knowledge transmission and with the original ideas that underpinned the right to education.

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## 2 The Right to Education

In the early twenty-first century, education is widely pronounced a basic human right. Tomasevski (2001: 9) argues “the right to education is recognized, promoted and protected at all levels – from local to global – and it fully reflects the interplay between the dual processes of globalization and localization which are now taking place.” Framing education as a human right emphasizes the obligations of governments as primary duty bearers in providing free and compulsory basic education, with policy and resource implications for both developed and developing countries (Tomasevski 2001b: 8; Alston and Bhuta 2005). This framing is relatively recent, dating to the second half of the twentieth century; it reflects a history of competing ideational and theoretical perspectives (Kalantry et al. 2010).

The idea of education as a normative value emerged, rather tentatively, in the industrializing nations of Europe and North America. Campaigns to remove children from the workforce were supported by arguments that school is the appropriate place for children, where they can both learn and be kept safe from potential exploitation and abuse (Zelizer 1985: 55; Hawes 1991: 42). The idea of mass education was, however, controversial in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Mulley 2009). The transformation of education from an elite privilege to the entitlement of all challenged social hierarchies and extended the reach of the state into a domain that had been the preserve of (wealthy) parents and the church (Mulley 2009; Kalantry et al. 2010). Significantly, the Declaration of Geneva, the first international expression of children’s rights, adopted by the League of Nations in 1924, did not include the right to education. It did, however, recognize children’s economic rights, stating that “the child must be put in a position to earn a livelihood,

and must be protected against every form of exploitation.” This recognition of children’s right, not to be supported and protected from work, but to earn a livelihood, sat uneasily with the priorities of the newly formed International Labour Organization, which from its inception prioritized the abolition of child labor. Early debates among ILO members regarding child labor reveal efforts to align the minimum working age (identified as 14 years in early ILO conventions) with school-leaving age. This, however, was less a result of the belief that education is a right, but a concern that “idle children” posed a threat “not only to childhood but also to society” (Rodgers et al. 2009: 69). Moving children into the classroom, rather than threatening social hierarchies, slowly emerged as a means of controlling the working classes (Van Krieken 1992).

Not until the mid-twentieth century did education become closely aligned with human rights discourse. As will be discussed later in this chapter, however, competing theoretical perspectives continued to shape discourse around education. The bedrock of the international human rights framework, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), enshrines education as a fundamental human right. Article 26 of the Declaration states:

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

The right to education is reiterated in Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1966 as one of two binding covenants and entering force in 1976. Article 14 of ICESCR places a time-bound obligation on each nation ratifying the Covenant, stating:

Each State Party to the present Covenant which, at the time of becoming a Party, has not been able to secure in its metropolitan territory or other territories under its jurisdiction compulsory primary education, free of charge, undertakes, within two years, to work out and adopt a detailed plan of action for the progressive implementation, within a reasonable number of years, to be fixed in the plan, of the principle of compulsory education free of charge for all.

Kalantry et al. (2010: 262) observe that the inclusion of the right to education in ICESCR represented a growing consensus within international human rights law

that the aims and objectives of education should be to “enable the individual to freely develop her own personality and dignity, to participate in a free society, and to respect human rights.” Thus, while the right to education reflects socialist ideals of state provision, liberal ideals of the primacy of the individual are highly influential within international discourse (Kalantry et al. 2010). While the dominant narrative of the right to education is a universalizing one, the individualistic nature of that right does not necessarily sit comfortably with the highly communal values characterizing some (particularly non-Western) societies. Yet, as Donnelly (2003: 25) points out, human rights are “embedded in social context and have important social dimensions.” Rights may be individualized, but they are also social practice. Indeed, basic education is a right that can only be fulfilled through collective action (Donnelly 2003: 25). Moreover, the benefits promised by education accrue not only – or even primarily – to the individual but also to society as a public good.

While the right to education features in a number of international human rights treaties, the child is not always the focus. Perhaps most famously, Marshall (1950: 25–26) argued “[F]undamentally, it should be regarded, not as a right of the child to go to school, but as the right of the adult citizen to have been educated.” The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) represents an important corrective to the adult-centric view of human rights generally and the right to education specifically. Article 28 of the UNCRC calls on states parties to “recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity.” The child, not the adult she will become, is clearly the bearer of this right. This is a subtle but significant shift from the language of “everyone is entitled to an education” used in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ICESCR. Article 28 of the UNCRC goes on to require states to take specific actions designed to achieve the right to education:

- (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all.
- (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need.
- (c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means.
- (d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children.
- (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates.

While the UNCRC clearly shifts the focus to the child as the bearer of the right to education, it does not place time-bound obligations on states in the way that ICESCR does.

While the UNCRC has been critical in placing the right to education on the international agenda, regional human rights conventions also address education.



Predating the UNCRC, the European Convention on Human Rights, in Article 2 of its protocol, states “No person shall be denied the right to education.” Echoing similar principles in ICESCR, the European Convention goes on to assert “the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.” Thus, the obligations of the state, the right of the child to an education, and respect for the beliefs of the parent, while not necessarily complementary, are all embodied in the ECHR (Lonbay 1983). The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, adopted by the Organisation of African Unity in 1990, states “Every child shall have the right to an education” (Article 11.1). States are obliged to provide free and compulsory basic education and to progressively move toward free and accessible secondary education (Articles 3(a) and 3(b)). The Charter then goes on to detail the nature of education, drawing on liberal influences prioritizing the individual and traditional communal values. Article 11.2(a) draws heavily on ideas of individual development, as set out in ICESCR, stating that education should be directed to “the promotion and development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.” Article 11.2(c) calls for education to preserve and strengthen “positive African morals, traditional values and cultures,” while Article 11.2(f) calls for “the promotion and achievements of African Unity and Solidarity.” Thus, in common with ICESCR, the African Charter reflects diverse, potentially competing, theoretical underpinnings. Both the European Convention and the African Charter frame the right to education differently from the UNCRC. Nevertheless, the existence of the right in both international and regional human rights mechanisms has contributed to the universalist nature of the discourse around the right to education.

As education was represented as a fundamental human right within both international conventions and regional instruments, formal schooling was positioned in opposition to paid employment for children. Throughout the twentieth century, and particularly in the last decade of that century, child work or child labor was increasingly represented as a violation of human rights, particularly when it occurred at the expense of schooling. This polarization of children’s work and the right to education was supported by a number of studies undertaken in India in the 1990s (George 1990; Wiener 1991; Burra 1995). While some argued for children’s right to work (White 1994) – reminiscent of the 1924 Geneva Declaration – both the contemporary international human rights framework and regional instruments call for minimum age for employment legislation. Significantly, both the UNCRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child defer to the International Labour Organization as having responsibility for establishing minimum age. ILO Convention 138 on minimum age for entry to employment explicitly links the right to education with workforce participation. Article 2(3) requires that the minimum age for employment be no less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling. While the culturally specific representation of children’s work within the human rights framework has been critiqued (Liebel 2004; Abebe and Bessell 2011), education is represented as a right to which all children are entitled. Work is represented antithetical to the fulfilment of that right.

## 2.1 Education for All

Following immediately in the wake of the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the UNCRC, the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, added to the international momentum building around the idea of the right to education. The Jomtien conference was a direct response to the dramatic decline in school enrolment that had occurred during the 1980s (Buchert 1995). During the 1960s and 1970s, primary school enrolments had increased dramatically across the Global South, doubling in Asia and Latin America and tripling in Africa (Brock-Utne 2000: 3). During this period, as Jones (1990: 44) has observed, the "international community... had little difficulty in pronouncing anything short of universal literacy an assault on human rights," and universal primary schooling is the preferred vehicle for achieving the right to education. In many parts of the world, newly independent countries responded by investing heavily in education, both as an investment in human capital and as an expression of nationalist sentiment (Jayawardena 1986). From the late 1970s, education expenditure began to fall dramatically in countries subjected to structural adjustment programs and loans, designed to enable them to repay significant foreign debt. Stewart's (1995) analysis showed that real education spending per capita fell by over 60% in Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zambia following the imposition of structural adjustment policies. Combined with dramatic cuts across social sectors (Cornia et al. 1987), the impact on children's participation in education was devastating. The Jomtien conference was sponsored by the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNDP, with the aim of reversing declining enrolment and completion rates and poor learning outcomes in developing countries (Brock-Utne 2000: 4). While the Summit purported to be a "world conference," the target was clearly and exclusively countries of the Global South. Hoppers (1998: 177) has criticized the focus of the Summit as a missed opportunity to develop global discourse around education irrespective of affluence or disadvantage. Hoppers analysis suggests that while the rhetoric of the right to education has strong universalist overtures, it has most often been used to place pressure on governments within developing countries.

Buchert (1995: 537) describes the Summit as "marking the beginning of an expanded vision and renewed commitment by national governments and the international community to fulfilling the goal of Education for All." The slogan "Education for All" resonated strongly with "the right to education," giving international agencies, international nongovernment organizations, and donor agencies a clear policy framework. From 1990, education became a major focus of the international development agenda. That agenda received a substantial boost with the adoption of the second of the Millennium Development Goals, targeting the achievement of universal primary education by 2015.

The idea of "Education for All" has had global reach – in part due to its promise of a better future for those who receive a formal education. A universalized, and universalizing, view of education has been successfully promoted by major international agencies, including the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and the

OECD, along with myriad nongovernment and faith-based organizations. Boli et al. (1985: 147) have argued that “everywhere in the world the same interpretive scheme underlies the observed reality” of modern mass education. This is not to suggest that there are not marked differences in the detail of education or in the classroom experience, but to illuminate the similarity in institutional claims that underpin education globally. Boli et al. (1985: 147) argue that “Even in the most remote peasant villages, administrators, teachers, pupils and parents invoke these institutional rules and struggle to construct schools that conform to them.”

The claim that the right to education has universal appeal is supported by Tomasevski’s (2001) analysis of constitutional guarantees. She found that 76 countries provided constitutional guarantees of free and compulsory education for all. Spanning a diverse range of history, culture, religion, and economic status, the spread of countries with constitutional commitments to free and compulsory education suggests that the right to education is not bound by wealth or culture as many rights are often claimed to be (Donnelly 2003). Tomasevski (2001) notes that a further 29 countries (all low- or middle-income countries) commit through their constitutions to the progressive realization of the right to education (i.e., achievement of the right as soon as resources allow). The constitutions of 37 countries guarantee free and compulsory education to citizens or residents only. Thus, the majority of countries provide some level of constitutional guarantee to the right to education.

Within both national and international discourse, education is framed as a right that has important multiplier effects, contributing to the realization of other rights and freedoms (e.g., the right to employment, the right to freedom of speech, and the right to organize) (Kalantry et al. 2010: 260; Tomasevski 2006). Education is closely associated with the concept of empowerment (see Donnelly and Howard 1988), and particularly the empowerment of women and girls (see Kabeer 2005). The right to education is often presented a pathway out of poverty, as its fulfilment provides the foundation for economic growth and development (Kalantry et al. 2010). Thus, the right to education has come to be represented not only as a fundamental human right in itself but as a right that “enhances all rights and freedoms while its violation jeopardizes them all.” (Kalantry et al. 2010: 260).

While the rhetoric of the right to education promises much, the literature provides a more complex account of education within the lives of children and young people. While few scholars, and fewer policy-makers or activists, would discard entirely the value of education, a substantial critical literature has emerged around education. The remainder of this chapter reviews the literature around two claims closely associated with dominant contemporary discourses around the right to education and the “Education for All” agenda. First is the claim that education will result in the empowerment of girls and women; and second is the claim that education will provide a pathway out of poverty. The chapter then examines the ways in which the concept of knowledge has narrowed within current global education discourse. Throughout the discussion that follows, education is understood as formal schooling, in line with the global rhetoric around the right to education.

### 3 Education and the Empowerment of Girls

The contemporary international discourse around the right to education draws significantly on language of empowerment, as evidenced most powerfully by the Millennium Development Goals (Kabeer 2005). Some studies have found that education increases the likelihood of women entering formal sector employment (Malhotra, Grown and Pande (2005)) and increases their expected adult wages (Psacharopoulos 1994; Schultz 2002). Female education has also been found to decrease fertility (Klasen 1999; Subbarao and Raney 1995; Lloyd et al. 2000) and lower infant mortality rates (Hill and King 1995; Klasen 1999; Schultz 1993). While such studies demonstrate powerful positive effects of girls' education, those effects do not necessarily equate to empowerment. Indeed, the term "empowerment" is often not used in studies demonstrating outcomes of girls' education, but used by secondary sources seeking to establish the link between girls' education and empowerment. The argument put forward in this chapter does not dismiss the potential for education to contribute women's and girls' empowerment, but questions whether there is necessarily a causal relationship. In doing so, it draws on a number of studies which raise important questions about the relationship between education and empowerment, particularly the empowerment of girls and women. In reviewing the literature that critiques education, the definition of empowerment used is the process of change, whereby those who once had no power are able to make choices and to choose from real alternatives (Kabeer 2005).

#### 3.1 Historicizing Girls' Education

A review of the history of education, and particularly girls' education, illustrates powerfully that empowerment is a recent ideational and theoretical justification for educating girls. Historically, education played a powerful role, not in empowering the disempowered, but in reproducing patterns of social conformity, particularly among girls and women and the children of the poor. Boli et al. (1985: 149) characterize mass education as part of "a complex of other modern institutions that structure society as a rational project and extend its boundaries to include control of the individual's behaviour and worldview." The earliest debates about the nature of education were often explicitly exclusive of girls. This is clearly revealed in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile: Or Treatise on Education*, first published in 1762. Rousseau's (1979: 39) appeal that education should produce a "natural man," rather than enslave man to social institutions, is sometimes considered to be an early example of child-centered education. Yet, Rousseau's (1979) *Treatise* – a product of its time and prevailing values – demonstrates the ways in which education, even education explicitly framed as challenging conformity, is bound by prevailing norms, particularly gender norms. In *Emile*, conformity to rigid gender roles is not simply implicitly accepted, but explicitly promoted. It is no mistake that Rousseau's *Emile* is a boy. In advocating the natural childhood and education that boys should experience, Rousseau (1979) was clear that they should

be the preserve of boys. Rousseau's different visions for Emile and Sophy provide a powerful example of the ways in which education provides a path to conformity with expected adult roles. While Emile is to learn the values that will make him a strong and engaged citizen, Sophy is to learn the skills and attitudes that will make her a compliant wife and capable mother, whose role was to "give birth to the healthiest, strongest, and best proportioned men. . . ." Rousseau (1979: 398) argues that "girls should be attentive and industrious, but this is not enough by itself; they should early be accustomed to restraint. . . . They must be trained to bear the yoke from the first, so that they may not feel it, to master their own caprices and to submit themselves to the will of others."

While Rousseau's views of girls' education were challenged by feminists of his time, they reflect an enduring set of values that hold education to be the preserve of boys, viewing preparation for the roles of mother and wife as the only training necessary for girls. Among Rousseau's strongest contemporary critics was Mary Wollstonecraft, who presented a powerful counterview of girls' education in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (published in 1792). Interestingly, Rousseau and Wollstonecraft presented similar analyses: that the lack of education kept girls, and the women into which they would grow, compliant. While Rousseau found this in keeping with the natural order of things, Wollstonecraft argued for women's emancipation from subjugation through education. Interestingly, Wollstonecraft's ideas, penned two centuries ago, have a resonance in contemporary discourses around the empowering potential of education. The different forms of life preparation considered by Rousseau as appropriate for girls and boys provides a powerful example of the ways in which both education and the *denial* of education can be a means of reproducing social inequality and norms of conformity.

While conformity to gender roles has, throughout history, been central to ideas about the type of education that is appropriate for girls and boys, gender intersects powerfully with class to shape children's involvement in learning. Bird (1998: 118) has documented early debates in England, echoed elsewhere, about what kinds of education girls should receive, including fierce debates as to whether middle-class girls should study domestic subjects (essentially learning to be good wives and mothers), or should have access to the same curriculum and educational standards as their brothers. Such debates were far more muted in relation to working-class girls, whose education was shaped by their future domesticity and labor. Even when educational institutions provided broadly similar skills to girls of all classes, Bird (1998: 122) points out both the physical segregation – "ladies" in the afternoon, "females" in the evening – and the different framing of the curriculum – "high class" for "ladies" and "artisan" for "females." Education both reflected and reinforced the socially prescribed position of girls and women and represented the formalization of the kinds of skills girls may have learned informally from their mothers outside education institutions. In formalizing these skills, however, girls' education and current and future roles were narrowed to conform to ideals of the good wife and the good mother.

Ideas about the role of girls and women and the nature of girls' education were transported by colonial powers to their colonies and often put into practice by

missionaries (Ansell 2002a). While some early feminists in countries under colonial rule, such as Kartini in Dutch-ruled Indonesia, saw education as promising women's emancipation (Jayawardena 1986), the nature of girls' education was shaped by prevailing ideas, particularly ideas of colonizers, about appropriate roles for women. Emphasis was placed on preparing girls for their domestic roles and on providing skills in activities such as embroidery and dressmaking (Boserup 1970: 122). Pok-kwan Chiu (2008) argues that the education of "native girls" was central to the "dual mission of evangelizing and civilizing colonial subjects." The forms of education provided to "native girls" served to reinforce colonial gender stereotypes, equipping girls for their proper future role according to their class. Yet Pok-kwan Chiu (2008: 793) argues that education also created opportunities for girls and women to transgress existing gendered boundaries and "search for new identities crossing traditional divides of the patriarchal societies" of both the colonizer and their own societies. Pok-kwan Chiu's point is an important one, for while education has historically promoted conformity to specific sets of values, it also has liberating potential, creating spaces for both girls and boys to construct their own identities and pathways. As Kabeer (2005) demonstrates, rhetoric around education, historically and today, often contains elements of both conformity and opportunity or empowerment.

### 3.2 Girls' Education in the Global South

The ways in which girls were educated changed in the twentieth century, as girls and boys were educated in the same schools and more, if still limited, opportunities opened to girls and women – within and beyond the classroom. While conservative values about gender roles continued to dominate the nature of education for much of the twentieth century, by the late 1970s, rhetoric around the gender goals of education had transformed entirely. Influenced by second-wave feminism, policy rhetoric began to emphasize the liberating potential of education for girls, rather than promoting domesticity. Liberation was often associated with workforce participation, with education providing a route to paid employment (Razavi and Miller 1995). In the Global South, policy prescriptions increasingly emphasized the importance of educating girls. Throughout the International Decade for Women (1976–1985), girls' education was highlighted as a global priority (Razavi and Miller 1995). Early arguments were highly instrumentalist, drawing on emerging evidence that educated women are better able to contribute, through their productive labor, to the development project. Moreover, educated mothers were represented as better able to raise healthy, educated children (Summers 1994). Educating girls was not about empowerment or choice, but about enabling them to successfully perform gender-specific roles more efficiently.

By the late 1970s, rhetoric around the gender and education, particularly in the Global South, began to transform. Rather than promoting domesticity for girls, including those from poor backgrounds, feminist scholarship and policy rhetoric emphasized the empowering potential of education (Heyward 1999). Driven by

feminist theorists, activists, and bureaucrats, girls' education was identified as a means of overcoming deep discrimination against women and fostering gender equality (Tinker 1990). Early feminist efforts to empower girls and women through education were themselves transformed as the mainstream development agenda adopted the language of empowerment in relation to girls' education. The deeply political nature of girls' education was lost, as instrumentalist arguments returned to the fore, albeit alongside references to "empowerment" (see, as an example, World Bank 2011). Moeller (2014: 74) has argued that the prioritization by the World Bank and other neoliberal actors of girls' education and empowerment from the 1990s represents an attempt to place a "fresh liberal face on beleaguered neoliberal values," the legitimacy of which was brought into question after the "devastating decade in the 1980s." Thus, rather than promoting human rights per se, girls' right to education and the association with women's empowerment in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries represents an attempt to reconstitute and relegitimize neoliberalism (Moeller 2014: 75).

The inclusion of gender equality as a Millennium Development Goal, with the target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, was represented as signaling global commitment to gender equality both in and through education. Importantly, education for girls and women was framed as an intrinsic rather than instrumental goal (see Kabeer 2005) – that is, of merit in its own right, rather than bringing about some other benefit (such as educated women being more informed mothers). While noting the positive outcomes of education for girls and women, Kabeer (2005: 17) questions the extent to which school enrolment can significantly contribute to gender equality when education is embedded in patriarchal institutions. She observes that education may be seen as little more than increasing girls' chances of finding a suitable husband, something that girls themselves identify as a benefit of education in a Young Lives study in India (Morrow 2013). Ansell's (2002b) studies in Zimbabwe and Lesotho suggest that while both boys and girls considered "equality" in education to be important and a pathway to equal employment opportunities, they did not challenge the gendered division of labor within the household. Interestingly, Ansell (2002b: 186) notes that female secondary school students accepted their domestic roles, even when recognizing that the status quo was unequal and resulted in them being overworked. Thus, education, rather than empowering girls, may contribute to women's time burdens by adding the requirements of formal schooling, and later paid employment, without redistributing unpaid domestic work (Moser 1993).

### 3.3 Hidden Curricula of Gender Inequality?

Kabeer (2005: 17) observes that "the changes associated with education are likely to be conditioned by the context in which it is provided and the social relationships that it embodies and promotes." Here, she argues the "hidden curriculum" of school practice mirrors and legitimates wider social inequalities, with teachers'



attitudes, teaching examples, and textbooks all conveying gendered messages. In patriarchal societies, such messages reinforce “girls’ inferior status on a daily basis and provide them with a negative learning experience, thus creating a culture of low self-esteem and low aspirations” (Kabeer 2005: 17). Ansell (200b: 191) found that few female secondary school students in Zimbabwe and Lesotho could “imagine a situation in which they had equal influence with their husbands over the household,” suggesting that higher levels of education do not necessarily result in a transformation of gender relations and control over decision-making. Thus, while education can foster girls’ agency and open a wider array of life choices – each of which is associated with empowerment – it will not necessarily do so. Indeed, education *may* serve only to perpetuate existing gender-based bias and inequality.

Representations of men and women and boys and girls within textbooks provide one powerful means of uncovering the ways in which gender stereotypes are transmitted and reinforced through education. Significantly, narrow gender representations are to be found in textbooks in the Global North, as well as the South. Knudsen (2005: 72) describes Marthinsen’s gender analysis of Norwegian textbooks from 1946 to 1986. Marthinsen identified three common characteristics. First, women’s lives are “rendered invisible” within textbooks and curricula as apparently gender-neutral terms such as “people” and “universal rights” are used to describe the male experience. Second, women are presented in a relational sense – as wives, mothers, and daughters – rather than as individuals. Third, political history, presented as the history of the powerful, dominates over the history of the daily lives of people (female and male). Knudsen goes on to outline similar tendencies in the textbooks of Estonia and Russia, concluding that textbooks in most countries misrepresent women’s lives but also criticizing the binary representation of gender as based only on being biologically male or biologically female. (Utomo et al, 2009) study of gender representations in Indonesian textbooks found an overwhelming bias toward portraying men in public roles and women performing traditional, domestic roles.

As the foregoing discussion suggests, the explicit linkage of the right to education and the empowerment of women and girls is relatively recent. Historically, girls’ education was concerned first and foremost with the production of good wives and mothers. More recently – dating to the 1970s – the focus extended to the production of good workers able to contribute to the project of development. Education as a right that will empower girls and women emerged as a normative idea only in the late twentieth century – and with relatively little reflection on the history or nature of education itself. The recent claim that the right to education is an essential foundation for the achievement of all other rights and freedoms (Kalantry et al. 2010: 260), for women in particular (World Bank 2010, 2011), may need some qualification. A crucial issue is not simply whether children attend school, but the nature of the education they receive. If the promise that the right to education will lead to women’s empowerment is to be meaningful, the analytic gaze must extend far beyond enrolment.



## 4 Education as a Pathway Out of Poverty

If the association between girls' education and empowerment is a central tenet of international policy discourse, so too is the association between education, particularly girls' education, and poverty alleviation. Among key international agencies of quite different ideological perspectives – including UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank – education is represented as a pathway out of poverty both for individuals, potentially their families, and for nations. The dual benefit of girls' education – personal and national – is reflected in the following statement on the UNDP Gender and Poverty Reduction website (UNDP n.d.):

When women have equal access to education, and go on to participate fully in business and economic decision-making, they are a key driving force against poverty. Women with equal rights are better educated, healthier, and have greater access to land, jobs and financial resources. Their increased earning power in turn raises household incomes. By enhancing women's control over decision-making in the household, gender equality also translates into better prospects and greater well-being of children, reducing poverty of future generations.

The World Bank's 10-year education strategy (spanning the decade 2010–2020) identifies education as essential to improving the quality of individual's lives while contributing to economic prosperity, reducing poverty, fostering growth, and overcoming technological stagnation (World Bank 2010: 10). The Bank's strategy also draws on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UNCRC, demonstrating the multiple ideational and theoretical perspectives used to garner support for education as a universal development project. Explicitly identifying education as a pathway out of poverty, the strategy states that the World Bank "commits to supporting Learning for All as a key contribution to countries' long-term growth and poverty reduction" (World Bank 2010: 9). The strategy goes on to argue "[Y]outh who drop out of school early are vulnerable to unemployment, poverty, teen marriage and pregnancy, and delinquency." Thus, while education is represented as providing a pathway to a better life, the absence of education leads to a life marked by disadvantage, exclusion, and poverty. Numerous studies have demonstrated positive impacts of education on wages (Yang 1997; Jolliffe 1998; Fafchamps and Quisumbing 1999), knowledge, and access to technology (Jensen 2007). Such studies, usually based on large-scale statistical analysis, have been heavily drawn on by the World Bank in developing its approach toward education. While many of these studies are country specific, the context within which education takes place – and the complex and multiple factors that play out at local level to entrench poverty – is often missed. Studies more deeply grounded in local context often suggest a less optimistic interpretation of the transformative power of education.

One of the most powerful accounts of the limited potential of formal education to transform young peoples' lives is Paul Willis' ethnographic study in 1970s England, published in his volume *Learning to Labour* (1977). Willis uncovered the extent to which school culture and curriculum in England failed to connect with working-class boys. Willis' ethnography showed the ways in which boys and young

men resisted the values promoted through schooling, instead engaging in the reproduction of their own working-class status. Importantly, Willis' work indicated that while working-class "lads" resisted school, they pursued blue-collar employment in factories and other working-class jobs. Once achieved, however, such work became a "prison" of arduous and repetitive tasks. Willis (1977: 107) observed "ironically, as the shopfloor becomes a prison, education is seen retrospectively, and hopelessly, as the only escape." Willis' conclusion highlights the disconnect between "formal" learning and adult "labor" that characterizes the lives and educational experience of many children, both boys and girls. That disconnect is particularly acute for those who are unable to, or choose not to, follow a pathway to professional employment. The "lads" in Willis' study were unable to see a connection between the forms of learning and employment trajectories offered by schools, on the one hand, and their everyday lives and imagined futures, on the other. Consequently, they resisted schooling. Once in unskilled jobs, the pathway back to institutionalized learning, which might open greater options, was closed to many young men. Willis' study is located in the United Kingdom, where class boundaries are particularly strong but nevertheless raises broader questions about the extent to which schooling is meaningfully linked to children's current and future lives beyond that institution. It also raises questions about the extent to which education is able to open up choices for boys from disadvantaged backgrounds when their social realities limit severely the nature of those choices.

Three decades later, Craig Jeffrey's (2008) work with young unemployed men in north India identifies a different problem: that of young men who, having spent over two decades in formal education (from primary school through to university), are unable to find paid employment. Jeffrey (2008: 743) argues "there is an increasingly thin upper stratum of young people, mainly men, who acquire high-quality education in elite institutions and move smoothly into secure salaried employment." A far larger group has completed secondary education but fails to secure employment, particularly the forms of employment to which they aspire as secondary school graduates (Jeffrey 2008). The consequence, according to Jeffrey (2008: 743), is the "vast problem of educated unemployment among young people." Ansell's (2004: 189) study in Lesotho and Zimbabwe found that secondary school attendance has contributed significantly to an "alternate vision of adulthood in which paid employment is central." Not only is paid employment the goal to which many educated young people aspire, but also particular forms of employment are sought. In both Lesotho and Zimbabwe, Ansell (2004: 189) found that students, parents, teachers, and education officials alike considered the purpose of education to enable young people to gain employment in the formal sector. Chant and Jones' (2005: 193) study in Ghana and the Gambia found young people with some level of education aspired to white-collar employment or to establish their own formal sector businesses. Yet, education has done relatively little in advancing young people's employment or earning opportunities, and many secondary school graduates were skeptical about the correlation between education and income-earning opportunities (Chant and Jones 2005: 193, 196). With rising unemployment a feature of young people's lives in some parts of the Global South (and indeed the

Global North), employment aspirations are not always able to be met (Jeffrey 2008, 2010). In some instances, it would seem education transforms young people's hopes and aspirations but not the structural opportunities open to them (Ansell 2004). Unfulfilled aspirations are exacerbated within a dominant global discourse that equates paid work with citizenship and contribution and non-work with dependency (Mason, 2004: 47). While education may provide a pathway out of poverty for some young people, in some contexts, the studies discussed above suggest this is not always or necessarily the case.

Some studies have also highlighted the pressure on young people to ensure the investment in their education is recouped. In India, the *Young Lives* project has shown the pressure on boys and girls to perform at school, in part due to their strong sense of obligation to their parents (Morrow 2013, 266). Research in Indonesia has similarly shown the obligation children feel to their families and the deep relationships of reciprocity within which children's lives are embedded (see Bessell 2009). Morrow (2013, 266) observes the "moral economy of paying debts of gratitude to parents, of intricate connections between material and social values within the context of kinship, that fosters intergenerational mutuality," which sits uneasily with international discourses of individual achievement. Relations of reciprocity and interconnectedness also shape the paths open to children and young people, both during their education and beyond.

Education may provide one pathway out of poverty, and studies suggest this is the case in some circumstances; however, greater understanding is needed of the nature of those circumstances. Moreover, the right to education may do children and young people a disservice if the aspirations created are unable to be fulfilled. As discussed in the following section, in contexts where education focuses on preparing children for "modern" employment but such employment is unavailable, education *may* narrow the pathways via which children and young people can move away from poverty.

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## 5 The Narrowing of "Knowledge"?

Throughout the twentieth century, school was increasingly represented as the most (and often only) legitimate site for learning. Work, once a site through which children learned skills, was reframed as necessarily abusive and exploitative. This representation of children's work – or child labor – while contested (Abebe and Bessell 2011) has been widely accepted, with 167 countries now having signed ILO Convention 138. That convention sets a minimum age for work as the age for finishing compulsory schooling and in any case not less than 15 years. Thus, the right to education became synonymous with (post)modern childhood, while work became the antithesis: a fundamental violation of human rights (Weiner 1990). An alternative representation of work and knowledge transmission is offered by Katz (2004). In her longitudinal study of children in rural Sudan, Katz found that development not only changed and intensified children's work but also limited the forms of knowledge they acquire. She argues that there is a disjuncture between

the forms of knowledge and skills children learn in school in contemporary Sudan and the forms of knowledge and skills they will need as adults. Katz refers to “deskilling” whereby children learn – through formal education – skills, knowledge, and practices that are largely irrelevant to their current or future lives. Similarly, Caruso (2008) suggests that school curricula around the world – in the Global South and North – have become increasingly similar. He argues that the convergence of curricula masks the “inequalities of an unequal world economy,” resulting in schools in many countries of the Global South failing to correspond with the requirements of the economy (Caruso 2008: 829).

Helga Zeiher (2011) describes the process whereby children learn primarily through formal education as “scholarization.” For Zeiher, scholarization is the institutionalization of childhood that progressively occurred from the time of the industrial revolution but intensified in the 1960s as the economies of developed countries shifted from an industrial base to a knowledge and service base. The economic analyses of human capital during the 1960s also contributed to an emphasis on the importance of formal education. While theories of human capital encompassed far more than schooling, ideas about the importance of investment in the knowledge-building of individuals contributed to the increasing centrality of formal education to children’s lives (Becker 1964). The 1960s was also a period when education expanded considerably in newly independent nations of the Global South (Brock-Utne 2000). Zeiher (2011: 129) argues that a second intensification of scholarization occurred in the early twenty-first century in the context of “radical social and economic changes” and the perceived need for still higher levels of human capital. As Zeiher (2011: 129) has observed, children are drawn into educational institutions at increasingly younger ages, remain in the education system for longer periods over their childhoods, and have increasingly less time outside of school. These trends are observable in the Global South, as well as the North (White 2002, 2011). This narrowing of children’s experience of the world also narrows the kinds of knowledge they acquire and the ways in which that knowledge is transmitted. It also narrows the forms of knowledge that are considered valuable.

International discourse around the right to education and the Education for All agenda has focused particularly on increasing enrolments in basic education, as evidenced by the MDGs. There is, however, recognition of the importance of quality. The World Bank’s (2010) 10-year education strategy notes that more schooling does not always equate to more learning and highlights the need to improve and assure quality. The strategy refers to international standardized tests as one means of measuring and improving quality, student achievement, and educational outcomes. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), developed, governed, and coordinated by the OECD, has emerged as central to the global discourse of educational and student achievement. PISA is based on standardized tests in reading, mathematics, and science, administered to 15-year-olds. Raw scores are scaled to allow for cross-country comparison and the development of country rankings. A focus of PISA is the development of better social and labor market outcomes and “providing students with the opportunity to

reach high levels of performance at an early age. . .” (OECD 2014, 3). As countries increasingly compare PISA outcomes and compete to achieve high rankings, children’s educational achievement is recast not only as an indicator of their own life or labor market chances but as an indicator of their nation’s ability to compete in global markets. Almost half the countries participating in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) are not members of the OECD (the association of wealthy nations), with Vietnam and China (Shanghai and Hong Kong) ranking highly (The Economist 2013). Student assessment regimes such as PISA, with a strong focus on labor market outcomes and global competitiveness, reinforce the idea, discussed earlier, that education should lead to formal sector employment, even in contexts where few such opportunities exist. Such regimes narrow the forms of knowledge that are represented as valued and valuable. Moreover, they are anchored in particular ideas about the forms of knowledge and levels of achievement children should display at specific stages of their schooling.

Serpell’s (1993) study of the significance of schooling in rural Zambia demonstrates the significant differences in representations of child development within local traditions on the one hand and formal schooling on the other. According to Serpell, local traditions frame learning as resulting from the passing of accumulated wisdom from one generation to the next, while formal schooling emphasizes cognitive growth and development. The latter is seen to be scientifically measurable, universally applicable, and closely aligned with testing of student achievement. The former is more difficult to define and test and is highly context specific. Jirata with Beni (2013) highlights the disconnect between the nature and transmission of local knowledge and formal learning through education in Ethiopia. In particular, Jirata observes that the tradition of storytelling, essential to the reproduction of social and cultural knowledge, is seldom used in schools, despite the power of stories and children’s enthusiasm for learning through them. Learning in many traditional societies is, as Abebe and Kjørholt (2013: 17) point out, embedded in social positioning and deeply relational. In such societies, learning is not an individualized and competitive process, as typified by approaches such as PISA. Rather, it is based around communal and collective exchange and reciprocity, where the learning process is interdependent (Fatnowna and Pickett 2002). Thus, increasingly restrictive measures of educational outcomes sit rather uneasily with a range of learning traditions and narrow what is valued as knowledge.

The narrowing of knowledge also sits uneasily with early representations of education as a human right. While Article 26(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to education, Article 26(2) is more specific, stating:

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

This is ironic given that international organizations, particularly those operating within a neoliberal framework, embrace ideas of the right to education, education for all, and measuring student achievement with little consideration of the potential tensions. A focus on the nature and quality of education is in harmony with the framing of the right to education in the Universal Declaration. However, the shift from quality to achievement and outcomes, measured by testing, also moves a considerable distance from education as a fundamental human right.

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## 6 Concluding Comments

By the late twentieth century, education was framed as a basic human right to which all children are entitled. The right to education (defined as formal schooling) is increasingly being realized for most children in most countries, despite ongoing challenges in some parts of the world and for the poorest and most marginalized children. Education for All and education as a human right have become powerful slogans, often associated with equally powerful ideas of women's empowerment and pathways out of poverty. The assumption that fulfilment of the right to education will contribute to women's empowerment, which has dominated international policy since the late 1990s, cannot be accepted at face value. A review of the historic and contemporary literature suggests that while education may produce positive outcomes in terms of women's social and economic position (Kabeer 2005), the nature of education and the social context within which it occurs matter. If social systems are underpinned by patriarchal values, which are in turn reflected in the education system, the outcome may be far from empowerment. Similarly, the promise that education will provide a pathway out of poverty is contestable. Significantly, many children and their families trust in the promise and see education as a means toward well-paid professional employment in the formal sector. As the literature reviewed here suggests, however, a significant number of young people remain without the kinds of employment to which they aspire. While substantial evidence points to the positive outcomes that education can achieve, claims that education will necessarily empower women and provide a pathway out of poverty for poor children are – at best – contestable. The history of education and the critical studies reviewed here highlight the competing ideas and agendas that shape the ways in which the right to education is framed and translated into practice. They also highlight to an extent the gap between the promise of the right to education and the reality experienced by many children, particularly (but not only) in the Global South. That gap between promise and reality is unlikely to be bridged as education becomes increasingly linked to measurable outcomes such as testing student achievement. Indeed, the gap between the promise of the right to education and reality is likely to widen if the forms of knowledge deemed valuable continue to narrow.

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# Intersections of School, Work, and Learning: Children in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam

Virginia Morrow

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## Abstract

This chapter synthesizes recent research from Young Lives, a longitudinal study of children growing up in poverty in four countries, Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam. The chapter focuses on spatial and temporal aspects of learning and working. Using case studies from qualitative research as well as survey data, it describes first the extent and forms of work children undertake and how these change over time; second, how poverty influences children's work activities; and third, what skills children learn through work. The fourth section explores the intersections of school and work. The chapter also draws on research findings from other studies in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam and reflects on the commonalities and differences between the countries to attempt to deepen

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understandings of how social change and processes of modernization affect children's daily lives. The chapter argues three central premises: first, that in differing parts of the world, children are involved in work to a significant extent, depending on context; second, that this is changing rapidly as school systems expand, which means that children's time use is contested; and third, while work may conflict with school, it has some intrinsic value in terms of skill formation and may enable (some) children to go to school.

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**Keywords**

Children • Children's work activities • Gender, sibling composition, and birth order • School and work • School enrollment and work • Skill development • Work and poverty • Ethiopia • Paid work • Peru • UAP • Vietnam

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## 1 Introduction

As enrollment rates of children in primary school have increased globally, and school attendance has become the predominant desired activity for children, children's time spent working has arguably become more problematic in economic terms as it is seen as inhibiting children's human capital formation. There have been increasing calls for "child labor" to be "eliminated" for children to spend more time in school and for the school leaving age to be raised. However, social anthropologists have long recognized that children learn copious skills from a young age by accompanying mothers, fathers, and older siblings and participating in the work of household production systems. As Montgomery (2009) points out, children's work has often been understood merely as socialization and the process of becoming a competent adult in a particular society (see Paradise and Rogoff 2009, for an overview of socialization approaches to understanding cultural practices that support informal learning). The "new" social studies of childhood that developed during the 1980s emphasizing children's agency changed this view (see, e.g., Niewenhuis 1994, 1996). Subsequent research (mainly ethnographic and thus small scale) has emphasized the contributions that children make to household production, whether in the form of wage labor, to family subsistence farming, or domestic work. A recent seminal text highlights the importance of understanding children's work holistically, in context, and as a continuum – having benefits, as well as potential risks, for children (Bourdillon et al. 2010).

First, though, it is important to be clear about definitions. This chapter uses the term *children's work*, in line with definitions used by social geographers, sociologists, and social anthropologists, instead of the term "child labor," a term which, over the course of the twentieth century, came to refer to work that is harmful to children, mainly in line with definitions set by the International Labour Organization (ILO, the UN organization that sets legal standards to promote decent work, combining trade unions, employers, and governmental organizations (ILO, the UN organisation that sets legal standards to promote decent work, combining trade unions, employers, and government organizations (ILO 2004,

Bourdillon et al. 2010; Bourdillon et al. 2010). There is, however, a risk of romanticizing children's work, when any form of work can be exploitative and/or harmful, and this needs to be balanced by recognition of the contributions that children make to family livelihoods, whether via waged work or domestic work within their households (Montgomery 2009).

The chapter is based on a synthesis of papers from Young Lives, integrated with findings from other research. Young Lives is a 15-year study (2002–2017) investigating childhood poverty in Ethiopia, Peru, India (the former state of Andhra Pradesh, which bifurcated in 2014 to form Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, henceforth UAP, United Andhra Pradesh), and Vietnam. Young Lives collects longitudinal data from two cohorts of children in each country: 2,000 children born in 2000–2001 (the younger cohort) and 1,000 children born in 1994–1995 (the older cohort). Although the sample is not representative, it has a pro-poor focus in that poor rural and urban sites were intentionally over-sampled (see [www.younglives.org.uk](http://www.younglives.org.uk)). A survey is carried out every 3 years (2002, 2006, 2009, 2013) with the children and their caregivers and is complemented by qualitative research (2007, 2008, 2010, 2014) with a nested sample of children, their caregivers, and other key figures in the community (see Crivello et al. 2013; Crivello 2015; Morrow and Crivello 2015). Young Lives surveys ask children about attendance at school, time use, work, subjective well-being, etc., and the qualitative research also focuses on children's time use and well-being and experiences of school.

Young Lives research offers comparability across four countries at a time of rapid modernization. The longitudinal nature of Young Lives research also enables the avoidance of the “ethnographic present,” highlighting the temporal/dynamic and spatial aspects of children's work.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, general trends in children's work and types of activity they undertake are described, with a brief discussion of gender differences. The second section explores the intersections of work and poverty and explores what children's social responsibilities mean to them and their families. The third section looks at learning and skills development that takes place through work. The fourth section explores how children combine school and work, how working can conflict with schooling, and how, on the other hand, work can enable children to go to school.

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## **2 Extent and Forms of Work Children Undertake: Change Over Time**

### **2.1 Rates of School Enrollment and Work**

As is the case globally, rates of school enrollment (especially in primary school) have increased very markedly since 2000 in all four countries (Bourdillon and Boyden 2014). Parents and children have embraced globalized messages about the potential of formal schooling and qualifications to ensure better livelihoods (Boyden 2009; Morrow 2013a). Abate and Abebe (2013) note for Ethiopia that

**Table 1** 8-year-olds reporting working for pay over the last 12 months, 2002 and 2009 (%) (Source: Pells and Woodhead (2014))

	2002	2009
Ethiopia	8.0	0.3
Andhra Pradesh	6.2	3.0
Peru	23.2	8.8
Vietnam	11.4	0.0

Note: The wording of the question to children varied slightly in 2002 and 2009. In 2002, the question asked: “Have you done anything in the last 12 months to earn money for yourself and for your family?” In 2009, the wording was: “Now I want you to think about the past year. Did you do anything to help your family, or to get money or things for yourself?” A follow-up question then asked which of the stated activities were paid and which were unpaid

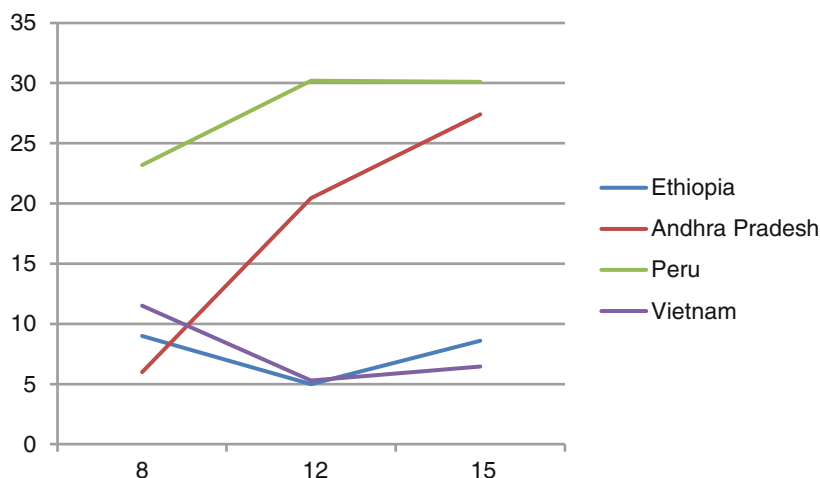
“despite the problems children face in attending school, nearly all . . . emphasised the future relevance of education, as this is seen to help them in obtaining formal employment” (p. 143). This is a key difference between the current situation facing children and that facing previous generations. Children have to manage the hopes invested in education as a route out of poverty, while maintaining their traditional working roles and contributions to the household (Morrow and Vennam 2012). School enrollment requires a shift in children’s time use, but in all four countries, evidence shows that attendance at school does not mean that children stop working altogether (Morrow et al. 2014b; Pells and Woodhead 2014).

The numbers of young children reporting **paid work** at the age of 8 were already relatively low in 2002, and the trend away from paid work has continued (see Table 1 below). For example, in Ethiopia, 8% of 8-year-olds reported undertaking paid activities in 2002. Approximately 7 years later, less than 1% of 8-year-olds were doing paid work (Woldehanna et al. 2011). Similarly, in UAP, participation in paid employment among 8-year-olds declined from 6.2% in 2002 to 3% in 2009. The decline was most marked for children from the Scheduled Tribes (from 17.9% to 3.8%), though there was a severe drought in 2002, which may have contributed to the high levels of child work at that time (Morrow et al. 2014; Galab et al. 2011).

Analysis of data from the older cohort illustrates trends in children undertaking paid work between 8 and 15 years old. Below shows that paid work increased in UAP at each age point and in Peru increased between the ages of 8 and 12 before leveling out. In Ethiopia, the percentage of children reporting paid work after age 8 declined (Figure 1).

In **Peru**, nearly three-quarters of all 8-year-olds were doing household chores in 2009, while in rural areas children were also engaged in activities such as agriculture and cattle raising (Cueto et al. 2011). Seven percent of children in the least poor wealth quintile were working on family farms or businesses, but this increased to 26% of children in the poorest quintile.

In **Vietnam**, in 2009, none of the 8-year-old children reported undertaking paid work, and fewer than 5% ( $n = 85$ ) of children reported working on family farms or herding sheep or cattle, more boys than girls. Among disadvantaged ethnic minority Cham H’Roi children in the Northern Uplands region, 13% were participating in



**Fig. 1** Children reporting working for pay over the last 12 months, at ages 8 (2002), 12 (2006), and 15 (2009) (%) (Pells and Woodhead (2014))

agricultural work for the household (Le et al. 2011). For the children who reported some work on their household farm, or herding for their households, the average time use was about 2.5 h per day. Among 15-year-olds in 2009, 6% of the 15-year-olds reported some paid work. This varied between regions, with more children working for pay in the Central Coast rural area and the Mekong Delta than other regions. For many of the children who do paid work, the working day was longer than 8 h. The average length of a working day for children in the Northern Uplands and the children from ethnic minorities was nearly 10 h (Le et al. 2011).

In summary, in all four countries, numbers of children working (paid and unpaid) increase with age and vary by gender and location. Work patterns vary according to children's location and economic status, meeting the demands of schooling. However, the overall trend over time is a marked decline in numbers of children working for pay at an early age. There are differences according to gender, explored in more detail in the next section.

## 2.2 What Kinds of Work Do Children Do?

The types of work children undertake are spatially determined. The majority of children reported involvement in household chores or work on family farms and within family businesses. In **Ethiopia**, in 2009, 90% of 8-year-olds undertook some kind of family-based work (Woldehanna et al. 2011). In rural areas, household chores took up the biggest proportion of children's time, followed by childcare activities and unpaid work for family, mostly farming and herding cattle. Oldest girls typically had a heavier burden of tasks than their brothers or younger sisters (Heissler and Porter 2013). Generally, boys spent more time on unpaid work on

family farms or businesses, and girls spent more time caring for others and on domestic tasks. Men and older boys undertook plowing with oxen, younger boys herd goats, and girls carried their younger siblings on their backs. Poluha (2004), in fieldwork in Addis Ababa (2000–2002), also found most children “in the poorest section” undertook some form of work, often working for cash within their homes.

Abebe (2007, 2008) explored children’s work in Gedeo, southern Ethiopia, a coffee-producing area (fieldwork conducted 2005 and 2006), and found that export-led crops like coffee had altered children’s work patterns. Children described:

different practical tasks which they performed, such as running errands, tending cattle, collecting and splitting fuel wood, harvesting grass, weeding, chopping *enset*, fetching water, milking, cooking, sweeping floors, washing, making and serving coffee, in addition to playing. (Abebe 2008, p. 20)

Abebe emphasizes that structural forces that disrupt livelihoods in Ethiopia, such as global food prices, affect children’s time use drastically. “Children’s work is structured and restructured as a result of the temporality of income secured from commercial crops. Children must adapt to the seasonal nature of their livelihoods by engaging in other income-generating activities when agricultural activities are restricted” (Abebe 2007, p. 85; see also chapters in Abebe and Kjørholt 2013; Poluha 2004). These patterns are likely to persist, as discussed below.

In UAP, Young Lives findings match those in earlier and ongoing research on children’s work in India (see seminal work by Nieuwenhuys 1994; see also Dyson 2014). Morrow and Vennam (2012) describe two rural communities in UAP and illustrate how the activities children undertake depended on stages of life cycle of crops and tasks are structured by gender.

In Peru, children’s work activities mirrored those of the adults around them. Cussianovich and Rojas (2014) found that “all young people in rural areas do agricultural activities for their families without receiving monetary payment. Boys and girls participate equally” (p. 167). In urban areas:

families also expect their children to be involved in unpaid family work, although not with the same intensity as in rural areas. Unlike in rural areas, only some young people are engaged in their parents’ economic activities, almost all of which are related to informal trade. (Cussianovich and Rojas 2014, p. 167; see also Invernizzi 2003)

In Vietnam, as noted, children from minority ethnic groups were more likely to be involved in farming and household labor. Qualitative research in Lào Cai province in 2008 (Truong 2010) explored how children describe adversity and found that among Kinh (ethnic majority), Hmong, and H’Roi (minority ethnic groups), “household chores and agricultural tasks are the most common forms of work for all ethnic groups” (p. 318). However, Truong (2008) describes different degrees of intensity, according to ethnicity:

For the minority, ‘to go to work’ (*di lam*) literally means doing agricultural tasks on a regular basis, whereas Kinh children describe their involvement in rice transplanting and



harvest as supplementary. Moreover, Hmong and H'Roi children always elaborate on the volume of work done, the quantity produced or money earned. (Truong 2008, p. 319)

A 14-year-old H'Roi girl explained:

The plot is for growing beans. During harvest, my mother and I worked for three days and brought home seven and a half sacks of beans. I delivered the beans to the factory. It was the first time I drove a motorbike and the bean sacks were so heavy it was hard to balance and drive. (Truong 2008, p. 319)

While a 14-year-old Hmong girl explained how:

Apart from working in our own fields my sisters and I joined [together] to grow maize in a plot of my uncle. Since his family settled downstream his land was left fallow here in the uphill. We collected a few hundred thousand *dong* from the sale of the harvest. We went to the market place and hung out. We gave the money to mother in the end. (Truong 2008, p. 319)

Truong (2010) notes that agricultural tasks also were differently valued:

[The] difference in children's views of work across ethnic groups is informed by the ecological and technological conditions in which they operate: cattle tending for the minority children entails long hours far from home, where as pig and poultry feeding fits in the households chores of the Kinh. Although the work can be just as hard as that of their ethnic minority peers, Kinh children tend to view their jobs as seasonal and subsidiary. In contrast, ethnic minority children see their work as a major resource that they bring to their family. (Truong 2010, p. 319)

Vu (2011) also describes children's work in Vietnam, focusing on Van Lam, a mountainous community in South Central Coast. Ethnic minority Cham H'Roi children work from an early age, often on family farms but also in wage labor chopping sugar cane (Vu 2011). For example, a 16-year-old girl described how she herded cattle, picked vegetables for the pigs, plowed the fields, cooked, bathed her younger sister, and did grocery shopping. She also looked after her grandmother who had broken a leg, taking her meals everyday and helping her wash. She left school in third grade when she was 10 years old and could no longer read or write. She said she had "returned all her knowledge back to her teachers already." Ethnic majority (Kinh) young people were less likely to describe leaving school early, but if they did, they found wage labor quite easily (Vu 2011; see also Rydstrom 1998; Rubenson 2005).

### 2.3 Gender, Sibling Composition, and Birth Order

As noted, children's work activities varied along gender lines to varying degrees. Tasks were allocated according to gender, as well as to birth order, age and perceived competence, and physical strength. For example, in **Ethiopia**, girls

described gradually becoming more competent at various specific cooking tasks (Chuta 2014; Chuta and Morrow 2014). Ali et al. (2013) describe how in Sheko (southern Ethiopia):

food culture and habits are based on gender and age differentiation. Many food production tasks are left to the mother and children (especially the girls) rather than to male adults. Women and children play paramount role in the production, collection, and preparation of food while the role of adult men is very limited with the exception of hunting bigger animals. (Ali et al. 2013, p. 198; see also Regassa and Kjærholt 2013)

Boys, especially in Ethiopia, expressed resentment if they had to take on what they see as female tasks like cooking and cleaning, in the absence of any females in the household (Boyden 2009; see also Abebe 2007, 2011).

Morrow et al. (2014) describe the case of a 12-year-old girl, who had started school when she was about 8, and she had also started work, picking coffee. She said: “I can do all types of household tasks. . . for example, I bake *injera* and fetch water . . . six months ago, I couldn’t bake *injera* and now I can” (Morrow et al. 2014, p. 146). Poluha (2004) describes many examples of girls’ responsibilities at home, compared with boys:

Girls were expected to spend their time after school at home and help run the house. Girls cooked, cleaned the house, washed dishes, made coffee, ran errands and did some of the shopping. The work could take them several hours. Boys on the other hand were expected to haul water and run errands. A few boys would sweep the floors, make coffee and clean the house. (p. 47)

In UAP, work roles were also highly gender specific – tasks done by boys and men tended to be more physically risky and difficult – for example, in paddy, operations include plowing, sowing, transplanting, weeding, spraying of fertilizers and pesticides, watering/irrigating, harvesting, bundling, thrashing, collecting grain, and marketing. Girls and women undertook transplanting, weeding, harvesting, and bundling (Morrow and Vennam 2012). The mother of a 13-year-old girl described how her daughter was able to take on certain tasks:

Now she can cook one kilo of rice, but doesn’t know how to cook two, three kilos of rice. She cooks well. If we tell her this many people and cook one kilo of rice, then she cooks, but if people are more, how can she cook then? She is still a small girl. (Morrow and Vennam 2010, p. 310)

Ames (2013b) explores gender differences in children’s roles in rural Peru and suggests that girls were not always disadvantaged. She found that boys were more likely than girls to have left school without completing secondary education. The boys had all been overage (i.e., a year or 2 behind the expected grade for their age). They had all been involved in agricultural work while at school, but they left school to migrate for work, to contribute to the household economy. This suggests that “pressing economic needs may impact more on boys, whose paid labour in agriculture may be required earlier” (Ames 2013b, p. 272).

This pattern is found in Ethiopia and Vietnam too. Age intersects with gender, in relation to who works and who stays at school, and gender gaps become more pronounced as children grow up. Pells and Woodhead (2014) suggest:

As children become older, the opportunity costs of schooling rise and changes in employment opportunities such as the opening up of factories, can contribute to children, particularly boys, leaving school in order to work to support their families. . . . poor boys [are] more likely than poor girls to have stopped school by the age of 15. This could be linked to higher wage-earning potential for boys and in the case of Vietnam, boys doing less well in exams. (Pells and Woodhead 2014, p. 57)

In Ethiopia, the most common reason for not attending school for girls was to look after siblings, and the second was that the direct costs of schooling were considered to be too high; a reason which was much more commonly given for girls than for boys. (Frost and Rolleston 2011; see also Abebe 2007, 2011, for a description of the gendered division of labour in Gedeo)

In summary, the extent to which children work, and the types of activity they undertake, varies between countries, but it is inevitably underpinned by household poverty. Gender and ethnicity also structure children's roles (depending on availability of girls/boys of the appropriate age) and the value they and their parents attach to work (see also Punch 2001, who suggests that it is important to consider intragenerational factors in the analysis of household division of labor, arguing that children's unpaid household work often cuts across gender and more often than not does not reflect adult divisions of labour).

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### 3 Intersections of Work and Poverty: Interdependence of Family Members

As Boyden (2009) suggests, multiple recurrent adverse events and the persistence of poverty mean that families have to balance the need for survival with the anticipated rewards of keeping children in school. Children may miss school because they play an important role in managing risks faced by families, through their work and care activities (see also Chuta 2014; Heissler and Porter 2013; Ogando Portela and Pells 2014; Vennam et al. 2010). Boyden (2009) suggests that:

there needs to be more attention to the things that some [children] gain, and to the things many of them do, to prevent or mitigate risk. The boys and girls . . . do not appear simply as helpless victims of circumstances beyond their control. Many are extremely concerned about the hardships endured by their families, and express a desire to assist them.... (p. 126)

Global ideals of childhood emphasize that childhood should be risk-free, yet, as Bourdillon (2014) argues, "poor children need to learn risk, and work can be seen as one site where they learn how to prepare to deal with risks" (see also Morrow and Vennam 2012). Work also appears to be associated with a sense of well-being and important pro-social skills, as well as with disapproval of inactivity or 'idleness' in others. . . work can be regarded as a protective factor in some instances, and may

enhance resilience in some children, especially when it can be combined effectively with schooling” (Boyden 2009, p. 127). As Chuta (2014) argues, children are severely affected by economic adversity, but they are not passive in such situations: “they are capable social actors who shape their difficult circumstances, as well as being shaped by them” (Chuta 2014, p. 2).

In some cases, costs related to education were a factor in decision-making, as children from poor households may work to pay for their schooling (Boyden 2009; Heissler and Porter 2013; Tafere and Camfield 2009). However, as Boyden (2009) emphasizes, children are integrated into their families through work, and in poor households in low-income countries, generations are interdependent: “coping with adversity is a collective rather than an individual responsibility and involves recognition of mutual obligations between generations of children, parents and grandparents” (p. 127). Contrary to assumptions that children are compelled to work by their parents, children often described work as a source of pride as they felt it was important to support their families and was part of what is considered being a “good child,” especially for sons to support their families/mothers. This is the case in all four countries (Boyden 2009; Crivello et al. 2014; Morrow 2013a, b; Abebe 2008). For example, in UAP, one boy recounted how his mother had been told by others in the community: “Look, you are a blessed one. You are being looked after by your son and there is no need for you to work. He is not only earning but also taking care of you.” The boy said, “I felt very happy. I want to get a good name, still want to work hard and do better things” (Morrow and Vennam 2012).

A further aspect of temporality in relation to work was the interplay between the present and anticipated future. Children found many ways to generate cash, effectively managing economic adversity in the present but also making plans for future difficulties. Chuta (2014) describes the case of a 16-year-old girl from a very poor neighborhood in Addis Ababa. Her father had died young, and her mother was often ill. The girl was in grade 10 when she was interviewed, and she worried that she might fail the National Exam and become a burden to her family. She described how:

she had already made herself ready by learning other necessary skills like embroidery and sewing that would help her earn a living. [She] was not totally relying on her formal education. She had been learning how to sew at the local mosque for the past six or seven months in case she needed that to fall back on. (Chuta 2014, p. 14)

Ogando Portela and Pells (2014) analyze children’s experiences in Ethiopia and Vietnam and illustrate how poverty intersects with work. A case study of a boy living in a rural drought-prone area in Ethiopia shows how family members are interdependent. The boy was eager to attend school and enrolled at age 7, but then his father became ill and lost his job. The family income declined and his older brother went to work in a local stone-crushing plant, so he had to take responsibility for cattle herding. Repeated droughts meant the family struggled to feed the cattle, and his mother was thinking of selling the cattle to feed the family and send the children to school. However, his father died, and he had still not started school by

age 10. He said he preferred to work to support the family (Ogando Portela and Pells 2014, p. 77). In 2009, few households in Ethiopia reported children having permanently left school by age 12. Orkin notes that “more common are repeated periods of absence, the inability to concentrate at school because of worries about the home situation or hunger due to food shortage, and children taking on additional responsibilities at home” (Orkin 2010, 2012; Pells 2011a).

In UAP, India, a 15-year-old boy described how he had left school and started working on the farm (Morrow and Vennam 2012, pp. 553–554):

What else can I do, sitting at home all the time, the day long? It is terribly boring and anyway we do need some money for the household. I started to work... No one asked me to work and they wanted me to remain at home but I felt very bad ... so I thought it would be better to work.

Cussianovich and Rojas (2014) describe how young people in Peru did not consider family work to be a “job,” but a way of “helping” or supporting their families. In general, they assumed these tasks as responsibilities that must be met by household members. Young people valued this role and said, for example, that they had been working in the family fields since they were young, and this had allowed them “to learn how to grow and harvest crops, pull out weeds, fertilize and spray land, and care for their animals” (Cussianovich and Rojas 2014, p. 168). In 2011, 17 out of 23 young people in the qualitative sample “were currently working or had worked for money.” Many considered paid work as part of their responsibilities arising from their own development toward “becoming an adult” (p. 168). Young people also valued work, because it allowed them to acquire skills that would be useful in the future. For example, one boy explained that work “has helped me a little”:

It’s made me see that earning a living is not so easy, that you have to work hard if you are not yet anything, if you’ve just finished school. You can say that the future that awaits you requires a bit of hard work, right? (Cussianovich and Rojas 2014 p. 169)

Crivello and Boyden (2014) also note that economic crises affect the likelihood of children taking on greater responsibilities:

For example, in 2008, several families in Andahuaylas struggled to cope with the rising cost of living, coupled with a drought. Boys and girls who in the previous year had not been working for pay sought paid work. This was the case for 14-year-old Esmeralda, who lived with her mother and grandmother. ... Esmeralda bore considerable responsibility at home and took a job as a farm hand during weekends and holidays, earning around 3.5 US dollars for a full days work. She was able to pay for her schooling, clothing and food, thus saving her mother these expenses. (Crivello and Boyden 2014, p. 387)

Powerful norms relating to family interdependency also operate in Vietnam. Crivello et al. (2014) illustrate this with the case of an older cohort girl, who had left school because of a series of family difficulties – her mother had a degenerative disease, a hailstorm destroyed the harvest, and their house was damaged by

flooding. She failed the entrance exam to upper secondary school, and her mother refused to let her resit the exam, reasoning that “it would be a waste of time if she failed again” (Crivello et al. 2014, p. 103). She is now working:

at a leather factory ten kilometres from home and eventually she decided to live in the workers’ compound there, to avoid commuting. With both her parents ill and a disabled brother, [she] considers herself the most capable worker. She works six days a week, returning home on Sundays to help her mother on their farm. She gives most of her earnings to her mother. (Crivello et al. 2014, p. 103)

In summary, rates and intensity of work for children depended very much on the intersection between local employment availability (or the lack of it) and family economic circumstances and fluctuated according to demand. Familial expectations placed on children were important factors. Thus, family members can be seen to be interdependent, and in the absence of adequate social support systems, such as health insurance, children make a valuable contribution to subsistence survival. This illustrates the spatial and temporal dimensions of children’s work.

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#### **4 What Do Children Learn Through Work? Skill Development**

While most international attention has focused on the harmful effects of hazardous child labor, moderate levels of work may contribute to children’s sense of social responsibility within their households and wider community. Work can support children’s learning and acquisition of skills (Bourdillon et al. 2010; Boyden 2009). Children gain considerable knowledge through work, and this has long been recognized in social anthropology and social geography research and is recognized by parents and children in all four countries. However, it is difficult to measure precisely what knowledge and skills are gained, not least because whatever children learn through work is contextually specific.

In Ethiopia, Abebe (2008) describes how “parents in Gedeo felt that school education offered little preparation for work...” (p. 19). He also found that “schoolwork seems to occupy very little of children’s engagement in relation to what they do and/or believe is important for them to do during the course of a day.” Abebe suggests that the work tasks children undertook outside school provided children with competencies that:

are relevant in their daily livelihoods as well as being appropriate for preparing them for responsibilities in later life. However, they seem not only to be marginal within the school curriculum, but are also very difficult to measure in achievement tests, thus reflecting contrasts between indigenous perspectives on child development, and the formal educational model of cognitive growth. (p. 20)

Abebe and Kjørholt (2013) note that “although local knowledge can be seen as an integral part of informal education and socialisation that children acquire as part

of growing up, this knowledge is gradually eroding. . . . knowledge from schools is being privileged over informal, tacit knowledge. . . .” (p. 31). The concern is that:

Many local knowledge systems in Ethiopia are at risk of becoming extinct. This is partly because globally natural environments are rapidly changing, and there are fast-paced economic, political and cultural transformations. . . . Many children in Southern Ethiopia, . . . learn agricultural skills but have no land on which to practice them; they attend school only long enough to learn skills that are inappropriate for non-agricultural employment; or they may learn to work with and use local resources, most of which are disappearing fast. (Abebe and Kjørholt 2013, p. 31)

Ali et al. (2013) explore indigenous knowledge about local food plants and resources and how this knowledge is acquired by children. They conclude that this process is under threat, as “the ways in which children acquire the knowledge to exploit vegetation resources in a more balanced way is being compromised” (Abebe and Kjørholt 2013, p. 33):

Children learn about local food items by listening to their mothers and other older children . . . they often talk about the plants while picking and eating them. The acquisition of knowledge about different plants is by directly involving themselves in collecting, preparing and consuming them. Children are also in charge of the work of bringing some fruits and plants which are vital for the livelihood of their family. (Ali et al. 2013, p. 198)

Abate and Abebe (2013) describe children’s gradual skill development through their involvement in paid work in *khat* farms and markets

Boys start to work in the *khat* business by assisting family members (parents and older siblings) or friends in the business. . . . Many boys learn to prune and wrap *khat* first by doing it for free or for a small tip. (p. 134). . . . Once children have acquired experience, they may not continue to work for the same employer. . . . (p. 135)

Through their work on markets, children learn about entrepreneurship, and this opens up to them possible livelihoods for the future.

Work is also considered preparation for the future in UAP, India. Children and caregivers believe that learning manual skills is important, given uncertainty over whether children will be able to complete their schooling and whether skilled jobs will be available (Morrow 2013b; Rolleston and James 2011). As a 15-year-old boy in UAP explained:

As it is, we are not sure of getting employment after completion of education. We are not sure of getting a job. So we cannot depend on one source for employment alone. We have to take up studies and work simultaneously during holidays. If we do these two things at a time, maybe we will be able to do some work to survive in case we don’t get a job. We can do one of these jobs and earn a living. We can also have some confidence in us that we can take up one of these jobs and survive. If we depend totally on education alone we will not be able to do any work in case we don’t get a job.

For girls, learning household chores and how to farm are considered essential for marriage prospects, particularly in rural Ethiopia and UAP. As one mother in UAP explained: “If we give her away to another’s house, there they will scold her if she does not do the work, saying, ‘Who taught you the work? Did your mother and father not teach you?’” (Pells 2011b; Morrow and Vennam 2012). Girls said that prospective in-laws “will certainly ask what we have learned in our parents’ house.” As one girl said:

after they get married and go, when there is more work, then the work learned here will come in very useful, and if they go there, without these skills, it would be very disadvantageous. So it is better to learn as they will be equipped for the future. (Morrow and Vennam 2012, p. 554)

Work is understood as teaching children skills that are useful. One girl said: “when we grow up, we can do the work.” One boy said: “Since we have no education, this is useful.” When asked what he had learned by working from an early age, one boy commented: “I can do things on my own. I need not depend on others.” In a group discussion, children mentioned that the suitable age to start work is 17–20 years. However, children talked about how occasional work was useful as training for full-time work and suggested that they should start earlier than that, so that they would be prepared for work by the time they are 18 or 20. “Learning work should start early, or else the learning will never take place, because it is difficult to learn as adults” (Morrow and Vennam 2012, p. 554).

In Peru, Crivello and Boyden (2014) describe how “work affords children practical skills that would enable them to ‘fend for themselves’ in the case of premature parental death or sudden illness” (Crivello and Boyden 2014, p. 386).

They cited other advantages, as when they work on other people’s land for pay, keeping some of their earnings for personal use and giving the remainder to their mothers. Children who work with their families may be given the occasional ‘tip’, but ‘not having to ask my mother for money’ was widely cited as a benefit of paid work. (Crivello and Boyden 2014, p. 386; see also Cussianovich and Rojas 2014)

Ames (2013a) analyzed the accounts of children aged 5 and 6 and their parents in two rural communities in Peru. She describes the learning and development of competencies that enable children to contribute to family livelihoods:

Adults clearly signalled that children would start a more significant involvement with the household and farm tasks from the age of 5. Although some adults said children might start to help at an even younger age – about 2 or 3 years old – most agreed that at 5 years old, children ‘have more knowledge’ and ‘they can understand’ and thus they are required to take on more responsibilities at home. Adults also agreed that as a result of the progressive participation of children in these responsibilities between the ages of 10 and 12 they were already fully involved in farm work and competent in a variety of household and agricultural activities. (Ames 2013, p. 147; see also Bolin 2006)



Older children in Peru, as noted above, are “already fully involved in agricultural and domestic work, were very aware of this” (Ames 2013a, p. 149). For example, Crivello (2011) describes how one girl lived with her grandparents for schooling, worked in her mother’s shop when at home, and was paid a small wage. The girl’s mother believed working was good for children so they do not become lazy: “because by knowing how to work they can earn their money and in that way can be educated also” (p. 401). At the following round of fieldwork, the girl had returned home because she missed her family and then took on responsibility for caring for her younger sisters and other domestic tasks, as well as working for pay as a day laborer during harvest (Crivello 2011, p. 401). Children who worked learned useful skills in their daily activities, through farm work, herding, and selling in the market place. Their work was valued because it represented something “to fall back on” in case they failed to secure professional careers (Crivello 2011, p. 404; see also Ames 2013b).

It is interesting to note that in all four countries, children and parents have a clear view that skills learned through work are important as a backup if education fails to lead to improved prospects and a route out of poverty. However, the long-term consequences for what knowledge is likely to be lost through attendance at school, and withdrawal of children from family-based work, are only now beginning to be explored.

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## 5 Intersections of School and Work

In all four countries, children and their caregivers were acutely aware that a balance has to be struck between work and school and that combining the two may be difficult for children and cause tensions within families and schools. However, disentangling the relationship between work and school is not straightforward. The following sections explore, first, examples where work conflicts with school and, second, where work enables children to go to school.

### 5.1 Working Conflicts with School

In Ethiopia, Abate and Abebe (2013) found that “nearly all the children reported that their school achievement was negatively affected by work because the work left inadequate time and energy for study. Children often missed classes and did not have time to do homework” (p. 141). Similarly, Orkin (2012) found that “children who needed to work worried about finding jobs, which in turn affected their concentration at school”:

Senayit was due to start Grade 5 in the 2008/9 school year. Her parents were both seriously ill. She worked on vegetable farms at weekends and sometimes before or after school in order to buy pens, exercise books, coffee and food for her family. She said, ‘I think about my parents while I am in class or studying: this definitely affects my learning’. (Orkin 2012, pp. 7–8)

Orkin describes how boys in Leki earned money catching fish, which was profitable at certain times of the year:

Fishing paid less well than working on vegetable farms. However, it was available year-round, and was particularly profitable during Lent (fasting season- when Orthodox Christian families do not eat meat). Boys rowed boats to deeper water in the middle of the lake to set their nets. Once there, it made sense for them wait there for the day, so they missed school. (p. 8)

Despite the high hopes for education in Ethiopia, the quality of schooling is unsatisfactory (Bourdillon and Boyden 2014). In parts of rural Ethiopia, a shift system still operates, which means that children attend school in the morning or afternoon. Orkin (2012) explored whether work and schooling are complementary or competitive and concluded that the characteristics of work (hard physical labor) and characteristics of schooling (high costs and inflexibility) combined to cause difficulties (see also Admassie 2003, who suggested a flexible schooling system that recognized the seasonal demands for children to work might be effective, and see Abebe 2011). Children are aware that working affects educational attainment. In UAP, one girl said, “Our education will be spoiled. . . the children who go regularly to school score more marks than we do” (Morrow and Vennam 2009). Some children also described being punished by teachers for missing school in order to work.

In some countries, further factors may operate to make work more attractive than school, alongside poverty. One of these is ethnicity. In Vietnam, schooling is conducted in Vietnamese, and children who do not speak Vietnamese at home describe finding school boring (Vu 2014). They also describe not feeling welcomed at school. For example, an older cohort boy who had left school at 15 described being teased for being from an ethnic minority:

According to his grandmother, parents, and sisters, he was the breadwinner in his family, and knows how to do many kinds of work on the farm. He once took care of the farm for 6 weeks while his father was in hospital, staying up in the hills for 6 weeks, with no TV, no cellphone no friends or electricity. (Vu 2011)

Drawing on longitudinal data comparing the two cohorts, Morrow et al. (2014) explore changes in rural children’s time use and the expansion of schooling in two rural communities, one in Ethiopia and the other in Telangana (UAP) over the period 2002–2011, and found that while children were spending more time in school, they were still to varying degrees combining school with work. In Telangana, there had been a change in children’s time use in 3 years, with children spending more time in school. This had taken place through a combination of surveillance and infrastructural improvement. In rural Ethiopia, more children were going to school, but in 2011,

boys were still expected to contribute to the household economy.... children express the view that they want to attend school. Some refuse to work, and this seems more explicit in

2011 than in 2007. Schools are more accessible in rural areas and, where possible, children attend school, though where family circumstances dictate, parents prioritise children's work. (Morrow et al. 2014, p. 148)

In summary, children and young people face competing pressures as they try to combine school with traditional work roles, in order to meet familial expectations that they will contribute to households, especially in rural areas. This varies across time and place, according to regional and local seasonal crop cycles.

## 5.2 Work Enables Children to Go to School

In numerous instances, working for pay enabled children to attend school. Orkin (2012) found that children in rural Ethiopia worked as casual wage laborers for planting seedlings and harvesting, and:

many children used their wages to buy school materials, which made work and schooling complementary. . . children had to buy exercise books, stationery and adequate clothes and shoes. Two children interviewed had dropped out of school because their parents could not afford these things. They worked and saved money and returned to school the next year. (2012, p. 7)

Morrow et al. (2014) describe the case of a girl in rural Ethiopia who had started going to school when she was 8 and also started work, picking coffee. She said, "If I didn't have a job, I couldn't have attended class because I would have had a financial constraint. Furthermore, our standard of living has improved since I started work" (Morrow et al. 2014, p. 146). Chuta (2014) describes how an older cohort boy in Addis Ababa was:

trying to gain work skills after his father had a car accident. He said he could handle his situation by doing some paid work, even in some future uncertainties. In addition to learning how to become a professional football player, he was already working as a taxi driver. . . he knew he should give attention to his education even though he had no one to help him pursue it. He said 'I have convinced myself that if there is no one who is ready to cover my school fees, I will work during the day and learn in the evening.' (p. 14)

Differing livelihood zones (space) have differing timings in the ways they demand children's involvement in work, with implications for national and regional policies in relation to the school calendar. Orkin found in rural Ethiopia that:

schooling was structured to accommodate children's work to some extent. The Leki school management committee, in consultation with farmers, adjusted the school calendar and moved the times of the school day according to the cycle of subsistence activities. In October, there was a two-week break so children could help with the harvesting, and when school resumed it was moved from morning to afternoon. In November, school was moved back to the morning. In April, school was moved back to the afternoon because of tilling. (Orkin 2010, p. 10)

On the other hand, Abebe, in research in Gedeo, found that the school calendar and agricultural work cycles were not in tandem and that work affected the schooling of children in gender-specific ways. In coffee-livelihood zones of southern Ethiopia, children, especially boys, had the highest level of absenteeism from school during the coffee harvesting season – October to December – because they were required to pick coffee berries that mature on the treetop irregularly (Abebe 2011). Orkin also found that “the school calendar did not change around the vegetable harvest, when many poorer children worked on vegetable farms” (Orkin 2010, p. 10).

Frost and Rolleston (2011) report on group discussions with children in rural Ethiopia and found that:

Poor children in rural areas often only have two choices: they can drop out of school to allow them to work or they can go to school if these activities are flexible, but they cannot give up work. They said the shift system helped prevent dropouts and that teachers needed to be more supportive of working children by providing extra tutorials for missed classes. (Frost and Rolleston 2011, p. 14; see also Boyden 2009)

Similarly, in Peru, Ames (2013a) notes that children actively contribute, earning to pay for school expenses, including uniforms, school materials, and even the paper sheet to print the exams, and bus fares (see also Cussianovich and Rojas 2014).

Sometimes children work to earn money to support their siblings’ education. For example, in Vietnam, Morrow and Vu (2015) describe how an older cohort girl stitched shopping bags at home to supplement the family income. She had also helped her father with construction work. The money earned paid for her older sister’s tuition fees – “back then, my family was short of money, I lent that money to my sister for her tuition fees.” One of her uncles had scolded her for working. “He said I failed [my exams] because I was absorbed in working.”

Formal education is very highly valued and competitive in all four countries. In Vietnam, children describe pressure on their time and the strong desire to succeed (Vu 2011). This leads to complex dynamics within families. Girls are expected to contribute to domestic work, but this can conflict with study time. For example, a 17-year-old girl with a younger brother and younger sister described how her mother had given up her job to take on her (daughter’s) share of the housework, so she could have time to study. Here, there is a tension between filial piety and pressure to achieve at school, and schooling has taken priority. Conversely, a boy had previously lived with relatives so he could study at a nearby high school, but had moved back to care for his father, who was mentally ill, while his brother was away on military service. His case illustrates the tensions between education and duty to care for parents. He said:

I take time to take care of him [father]. For example, I normally go to school in the morning so mom can take care of him, I come home at noon so I usually bring food for him to eat. After that, at night I boil water for him to wash himself, then after hanging around for a bit,

he goes to sleep, I wash his clothes when I can, if not then, my mom would wash it. After dinner, I remind my dad to take his medicine, then he goes to sleep.

He described how he helped his mother and earned extra money folding pineapple bags. He wanted to go to university and wanted to support his mother.

In UAP, children were acutely aware that working conflicted with school, and some described being punished for missing school because of work (see also Morrow and Singh 2014; children recount similar experiences in Ethiopia). A 12-year-old girl described how she was punished if she missed school:

I get hurt if teachers scold me. Sometimes they also beat us. Madam beats us more. She sometimes beats with stick.... If we do not complete our homework, she beats. . . She beats if [we are] not regular to school.... I feel very bad when teacher scolds me. I like to be regular to school, do home work, but I cannot do it all. It is difficult, but I have no choice but to do it.

A 13-year-old boy who was also involved in cotton pollination work described how he had missed school, and when he returned: “They [school management] beat us, madam. They hit us because I didn’t go to school for 1 month, and they have taught the lessons and I missed [them].” Ranadeep’s mother explained:

My boy scolds me for this. He liked going to school, but we stop him, he makes a lot of argument. Otherwise, . . . we don’t get labourers in time and there is no other way for us, so we had to do it like that. When he is absent without intimation to teachers, they shout at him and he is terrified.... His father goes there and informs them. . . . they scold us, they say, “how will he get on if he is absent for such a long time?”. . . we try to pacify them by telling them about our problems at home. (Morrow 2013a)

It is vital to acknowledge that working has negative consequences for children, including injuries (Morrow et al. 2013) and exhaustion (Morrow and Vennam 2012; Tafere and Pankhurst 2015; Ogando Portela and Pells 2014). As Crivello and Boyden (2014) note for Peru, but applicable in all four countries:

farm work is often carried out under arduous conditions, and in boys’ and girls’ own words, described as ‘tiring work’, ‘having to walk far to the fields’, and under the ‘unrelenting sun’. They complained about returning from work ‘dirty’, ‘exhausted’, ‘suffering from the heat’ and with ‘sore shoulders’. (Crivello and Boyden 2014, p. 388)

However as Crivello and Boyden (2014) also note, the quality of schooling that children are receiving is often poor, which makes it “difficult to predict which strategy of protection – school or work – will have the most positive outcomes for children and their families” (p. 389; see also Murray 2014; and Niewenhuys (1994) who argued that while compulsory education may be seen by governments as helping to reduce the incidence of child labor, in Kerala, schooling has not reduced children’s responsibilities; instead it has effectively intensified the time space of their burdens and duties).

## 6 Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter has described the spaces, values, and meanings of children's work in four countries. There are commonalities and differences in spatial and temporal dimensions of children's work and learning. Children manage a number of demands, especially if their households/living situations are poor, and in rural areas, there are seasonal demands of agriculture for children's work. Work is often taken for granted by children, something they undertake as part of their daily routines, though arguably this has become more problematic as the priorities for children's time use have shifted to attendance at school. However, while work may conflict with schooling, work is not without intrinsic future value, because children gain important knowledge through work and are thus prepared for the future and married life. Therefore, school and work need to be considered in relation to each other, not as separate discrete activities. Finally, work in many forms is part of children's responsibilities within their households and is a way they are integrated into family systems.

Work for children has been pervasive in the countries in which Young Lives conducts research, but is showing signs of decline for younger children, as primary schooling has been extended. Combining school and work causes difficulties for children, and the knowledge and skills gained through work do not appear to be valued in formal systems. There is a risk that children and families are blamed and punished when they work, but the demand for work is related to structural factors related to poverty, economic shocks, and insufficient availability of, or failure of, existing social protection schemes to act as safety nets. On the other hand, money earned through work may enable (some) children to go to school.

Generally, children's competencies and responsibilities increase through their involvement in work. They gain substantive knowledge about copious aspects of daily life. They also learn about the risks from work. This knowledge is not recognized or valued and in mainstream development discourses is seen negatively as conflicting with school, the acquisition of formal qualifications, and human capital development and thus as detrimental to the development of whole societies in the global South. Polarized views – of work as “bad” for children, “schooling” as good – are problematic, from children's points of view, because schooling does not appear to be the universal panacea it is held to be by international development agencies, governments, communities, parents, and children alike (Murray 2014).

However, it is important to balance an understanding of the positive aspects of work (learning, integration, interdependence) with an appreciation of the negative aspects of work (risks of injury, exhaustion, interference with schooling, and so on). Children's activities need to be understood holistically, from their point of view. Finally, there is acknowledgment by children and caregivers that skills learned through working will be useful if the promises of formal schooling are not met. At a time of rapid social and economic change, it is difficult for parents and children to know what skills are going to be necessary in future. It is clear that rural livelihoods like farming are not an aspiration for young people and they want to escape the poverty of their households. This leads to a further potential problem relating to

skills development. As Abebe (2008, p. 23) asks: “to what extent are schools preparing children and young people to deal with transient livelihoods? How can education . . . be made responsive to the wider cultural, socio-economic and political changes that are taking place?” This is a challenge for governments, education systems, communities, families, and children, globally.

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# Encounter, Interaction, and the University: Producing Practices of Inclusion and Exclusion of International Students

# 9

Sinéad O'Connor

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## Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how social differentiation of students is produced and reproduced through sites of encounter and interaction in the university. With increased internationalization of education actively promoting greater diversity and intercultural interaction on campus, the social landscape of the university is rapidly changing, leading to new forms of social dynamics. The university is traditionally a space associated with equality and openness to difference (Andersson, J. et al., *Social and Cultural Geography*, 13(5), 501–515, 2012); as such, it is timely to explore the ways in which international students in a higher education institution experience intercultural interaction and how this forms a sense of belonging or not-belonging. Research on international students has revealed much of these young peoples’ experiences, particularly in regard to sociospatial segregation and racialization of students (Collins, F.L., *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 47(2), 217–234, 2006; Fincher, R., & Costello, L. Housing ethnicity: Student housing as a site of multicultural negotiation.

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In B. Yeoh, T. C. Kiong, & M. W. Charney (Eds.), *Approaching transnationalism: Transnational societies, multicultural contacts, and imaginings of home*. Boston: Kluwer, 2003; Fincher, R., & Shaw, K., *Environment and Planning A*, 41, 1884–1902, 2009, *Geoforum*, 42, 539–549, 2011). Here, the diversity of international students' experiences are explored in an effort to extricate the complexity of young peoples' everyday interactions with and in these spaces, and consider how these processes of interaction are mutually constitutive in the formation of sites of encounter and the production of practices of inclusion and exclusion. It is suggested that the university, while employing a rhetoric of inclusion of diversity, is experienced in a more complex and ambiguous way by the students themselves and that multiple forms of inclusion and exclusion can coexist, maintained by particular patterns of interaction in particular university spaces. As these young people transition to a new educational, social, and cultural environment, examining their experiences through the lens of social reproduction untangles the complex processes of interaction that constitute their everyday lived reality that (re)produce spaces and practices of inclusion and exclusion.

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**Keywords**

International education • Social differentiation • Social reproduction • Racialization • Encounter

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## 1 Introduction

Student and international education mobility has progressively become the subject of increasing geographical inquiry, engaging with the diverse experiences of students and the implications of student geographies for universities and urban areas (Brown 2009; Chatterton 2000; Smith 2009; Smith and Holt 2007; Waters and Leung 2013; Chatterton 1999; Holdsworth 2009; Munro et al. 2009; De Vita and Case 2003; Findley et al. 2012). In recent times, universities have witnessed a drive to introduce internationalization policies and actively recruit international students, diversifying the campus population and promoting an ethos of inclusion and openness to difference in the process. Yet such processes are bound into neoliberal practices that place economic and socially symbolic value on international students and multicultural campus environments as an opportunity for developing the type of cultural and social capital that is progressively sought in highly competitive globalized contexts (Brooks and Waters 2014; Mitchell 2003). The pursuit of such capital, it is argued, comes at the expense of the multicultural education that fosters respect and acceptance of diversity in favor of a more individualistic “strategic cosmopolitanism” (Mitchell 2003). As such, the rise in international student numbers has resulted in literature that addresses such areas as the commodification of students, student spaces, and lifestyles in the context of the neoliberalization of education (Chatterton 2000; Chatterton 2010), unique student

geographies (Hubbard 2008, 2009; Smith 2008, 2009); transnationality and migration of students (Collins 2012); international students as arbiters of urban transformation (Collins 2010), placing international students in migration theory (Raghuram 2013), the social reproduction of (dis)advantage (Waters 2012), as well as the segregation of international students from domestic students and the factors that produce such marginalization (Fincher and Costello 2003; Fincher and Shaw 2009, 2011). Recently, some focus has turned to investigating the experiences of international students through the lens of “encounter” to reveal the complex spatial and social processes that engender their inclusion and/or exclusion in the social and academic spaces of the university (Fincher and Shaw 2011; Andersson et al. 2012).

The increased presence of international students in universities provides for a unique way of engaging with the question of what forms of cultural capital are (re) produced, how particular forms of belonging are engendered in the increasingly multicultural spaces of the university, and how those spaces are also constituent in the production of exclusive/inclusive geographies. Paying attention to the intercultural encounters and interactions between students reveals patterns of social reproduction through particular behaviors that reinforce the dominance of certain groups. The nature and outcome of intercultural encounters are influenced by a variety of elements. The space in which encounters take place are embedded with implicit social codes (Amin 2008; Laurier and Philo 2006; Wilson 2011); the language of the interaction is also significant (Valentine et al. 2008), as are the attitudes, past experiences, and predispositions of the individuals interacting with one another (Noble 2009; Valentine et al. 2010). The national and local context (Wessendorf 2010; Wise 2005; Wise and Velayutham 2013) and wider discourses around migration and difference (Leitner 2012) must also be considered as contributing factors in shaping the nature of intercultural encounters. Amin (2008) also points to the sheer scope of possibilities or “emergence” for different forms of interaction due to the multiplicity of activities and people in certain spaces. Elements such as language and disposition mentioned above constitute “cultural capital” which will vary among students from different backgrounds and cultures (Bourdieu 1986). In the context of international student experiences, the outcomes of students’ encounters could illuminate some of the dynamics of the process of social reproduction in terms of how the deployment of capital entrenches the advantages of some, while marginalizing and further differentiating others in the microspaces of interaction throughout the university. International education mobility is tightly bound into processes that perpetuate socially privileged middle-class students seeking to accrue symbolic and cultural capital (Brooks and Waters 2014; Waters 2012). With an increasingly diverse student population on campus seeking to belong in a new social and cultural context where a particular “student” identity is performed, the interactions taking place in the contact zones of the university provide insight into the relationship between identity construction, frameworks of power, and (re)production of social capital. This chapter seeks to contribute to these debates by drawing out the interconnections

between these processes as students engage with one another in their development of social networks and belonging.

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## 2 Cultural Capital and Social Reproduction

The concept of social reproduction is of particular pertinence in the study of young people and education, as it is concerned with the ways in which advantage and disadvantage are continuously perpetuated via the embodied and institutional capital accrued by young people, thus empowering and maintaining the dominance of particular groups. Central to this is “cultural capital”; advanced by Pierre Bourdieu, it is defined as the “sum of valued knowledge, styles, social and physical (bodily) characteristics and practices, behavioural dispositions within a given field” (Hage 1998, p. 53). Cultural capital may be “embodied” in the appearance, manners, behavior, cultural preferences, language, and dispositions not only derived over time through socialization, but consciously acquired from an early stage. Institutional capital is the recognition and qualification of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). In the educational context, students with more cultural capital are further equipped to navigate interactions and practices of the dominant culture, to fit in, and to expand their capital, propagating the inequalities between themselves and those with less cultural capital: “social inequalities are perpetuated as initial differences in cultural capital become systematically encoded in educational credentials, which then funnel individuals (or rather reproduce individuals) into social class positions similar to those of their parents”(Aschaffenburg and Maas 1997, p. 573).

Further exploring socializing and practices of belonging in particular spaces, Turner and Manderson illustrate the importance of performativity in the reproduction of cultural capital and identity (2007). Law students at McGill University attending a weekly event named “Coffee House,” where corporate law firms sponsored the networking of students, were given the opportunity to learn or reproduce the cultural capital associated with their future profession. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus emerges, as the students at Coffee House became accustomed to the informal skills and identity of a corporate lawyer, and learned to perform this identity; “one becomes entitled to occupy the role of powerful lawyer not merely through the attainment of formal qualifications, but through those dispositions that have been inherited and/or acquired, allowing one to ‘pass’ in a certain space where influence is brought to bear (Bourdieu 1977, 1988)” (Turner and Manderson 2007, p. 776). The students at Coffee House learned the behaviors and practices that were associated with corporate law professionals. The performance of that particular identity reinforced a collective sense of entitlement and exclusivity. In that space of socialization, they learned the rituals, behaviors, and practices of the profession. Thus, Coffee House became a site of the social reproduction and transmission of specific cultural capital.

When students undertake education abroad, they acquire both “embodied” and “institutional” forms of cultural capital. Waters (2012) contends that the capital accumulated through study in a foreign institution devalues the qualifications of

those who do not undertake education mobility. Simultaneously, the patterns of mobility of international education, whereby many young people from Asian countries seek a Western education in an English-speaking country for example, perpetuate the advantage of these countries (Waters 2012). The cumulative advantage of middle-class students who can afford to study in a foreign country is reproduced, as they seek to acquire not only institutional capital but the significant cultural and social capital associated with personal development during the university experience, further enhanced by the foreign context (Holdsworth 2009; Waters 2012). The reproduction of capital is evident through the cohort of students most likely to undertake mobility; they are typically raised in a context that encourages education, and/or where other family members have experience of education mobility (Christie 2007; Cairns and Smyth 2009). The resulting qualifications provide a comparative advantage upon returning home (Waters 2012). Therefore, depending on the context, international education and mobility is heavily implicated in the reproduction of particular forms of advantage and disadvantage.

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### 3 The “Everyday” as Analytical Tool of Intercultural Interaction

In our attempts to understand the outcomes of how international students interact with one another, the concept of analyzing the “everyday” communications, behaviors, and spaces has become a prominent lens of study (Amin 2002; Valentine 2008). Paying attention to the taken-for-granted, established rhythms of everyday urban life offers insight into how behaviors and assumptions become entrenched and claims to certain spaces are made through the embodied associations attached to such spaces (Clayton 2009; McLeod and Yates 2003). It also extends the capacity to determine how the social and spatial intertwine, how people situate themselves within spaces and how their activities or behaviors are affected by their spatial context (Amin 2002, 2008). This is especially relevant to the university context as a space that has established rhythms, patterns of use, and consistent users of its learning, living, and social spaces.

The “dynamics of place” are also significant in terms of how they inform processes of social relations, impacting not only on actions and behaviors, but on identity and belonging (Clayton 2009, p. 485). In Clayton’s (2009) case study of Leicester, UK, the complexity of belonging became apparent in subjects’ presumed notions of a community based on “whiteness” (a form of embodied capital), which was perceived to be increasingly under threat from immigration. Such attitudes were conditioned not only through their understandings and experiences of national belonging, ethnic difference, and cultures, but also through their everyday encounters. The subjects, all self-identified as British white nationals, were found to interpret their everyday experiences and understandings of racial and ethnic difference in places such as school to reinforce a sense of national belonging, justifying the inclusion or exclusion of particular groups (Clayton 2009). Language, in addition to whiteness, was perceived as another form of embodied cultural capital

that legitimated the acceptance of certain nonwhite students because of the way in which it produced positive encounters, while excluding others. Language is argued to be a significant aspect of the construction and performance of identity which also orders and is ordered by the spaces around it (Valentine et al. 2008). There are implicit expectations of appropriate language encoded in certain spaces, such as schools, that can produce particular ways of belonging or not belonging:

For example, migrants are often defined as ‘out of place’ (cf. Cresswell 1996) in their new environment despite being multi-lingual because their particular individual linguistic competencies do not always fit the norms or expectations of the particular spaces which they inhabit and so their identities are ascribed by others as not belonging. (Valentine et al. 2008, p. 377)

Valentine et al. (2008) connect the choice of language of young Somali students in the spaces of the home and school to the decision to perform a particular identity in those spaces. Such decisions were part of an active process of aligning themselves more closely to those they encounter by utilizing language as a form of social capital in establishing a shared identity to enhance their sense of belonging. However, others who do not have the capacity to communicate in their nonnative language easily can also be readily marked as different and “not” belonging.

For children and young people, everyday exposure to difference within the family can translate to more positive attitudes to diversity in encounters outside the home, as this exposure accumulates over time into “bridging capital” (Putnam 1995, cited in Valentine et al. 2014, p. 2). Individuals’ dispositions, attitudes, and past experiences with difference develop over the lifecourse into cultural capital; the level of “bridging capital” among international students will be contingent on the personal experiences of the individual (Valentine and Sadgrove 2013). In the university setting, domestic and international students are not positioned on an equal footing and the “bridging” capital – or past exposure to difference of both domestic and international students – may be a significant factor in the everyday interactions that occur between them. These differences could substantially influence the ways in which international students are able to produce a sense of belonging. Clayton (2009, p. 487) also points to the “racial ordering of space,” emphasizing that spaces are not mere backdrops within which people interact, but are permeated with meaning that influence interactions with difference through the associations that they embody. Micropublics such as the school and university hold symbolic meaning, and are enmeshed in complex frameworks of class as well as ethnic difference, where particular embodiments or performances of cultural capital can entrench the differentiation of students.

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## 4 Cultural Capital, Racialization, and Exclusion

Considering the substantial mobility of students from particular global regions in search of a Western education, it is pertinent to consider the experiences of specific student cohorts. What has become apparent is the racialization of particular groups

of students, as well as the racial inscribing of the spaces that they inhabit (Collins 2006; Fincher and Shaw 2009, 2011). Ward and Masgoret (2004) found that New Zealanders were significantly more positive in attitude toward European and American students than toward Asian students, who are increasingly racialized as a culturally homogenous group, masking the diversity present therein (Collins 2006). Peacock and Harrison (2009) uncovered similar processes in a UK university where distinct divergences emerged between UK students' interactions with Europeans and Americans compared to Asian students. In the focus groups conducted, UK students described Asian and African students in broad categories (e.g., "Muslim") that emphasized their tendency to form cliques, to the annoyance of the local students. When referring to their interactions with European students, they were generally more aware of who they were, where they came from specifically, and the cultural differences between their nationalities. Such examples highlight how embodied differences inform encounters; European and American students could be argued to have more cultural capital in terms of appearance, language, disposition, etc., than non-Western students, who are at a comparative disadvantage and have greater social boundaries to cross.

This resonates with the work of Fincher and Shaw (2011) who found that there were distinctly racial aspects to segregation of international students; European and American students were categorized as "Anglo", while the term "international" was preserved for the majority of Asian students (again, positioned as a culturally homogenous group). The racialization of students in Auckland, New Zealand, has also been observed, where Asian students were stereotyped according to economic, social, and cultural associations (Collins 2006). Not only did this unsettle their interactions with domestic students but it also drew in New Zealand students of Asian descent, extending the process of racialization to those whose bodies did not reflect the dominant capital of "whiteness" (Collins 2006). Hanassab (2006) also observed differences in experiences of discrimination and prejudice among international students in the US, whereby Middle Eastern and African students were subject to greater discrimination than students from other regions. What can be ascertained from such examples is the prevalence of "whiteness" as a form of cultural capital, whereby those who exhibit characteristics closest to the dominant group are less likely to experience discrimination and marginalization, reinforcing the dominant ideal and engendering segregation of those who do not "fit."

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## 5 Young People and the University

Young people provide a natural cohort through which to gauge how forms of social differentiation are produced, through the experiences of how they live together and how their identities are constituted. Their interactions are fluid and dynamic, taking place in a "lived field of action within which social actors both construct and deconstruct ideas of cultural difference, national belonging and place-making" (Harris 2009, p. 188). Their identities and constructions of belonging are dynamic



and mutable, as they invent or reinvent articulations and spaces of fitting in in their everyday lives.

In the changing social landscape of the university, increased internationalization is now heralded as a way of preparing students for life and work in multicultural environments. However, it is also implicated in the progressively neoliberal agenda of many higher education institutions seeking to increase revenue and international prestige from higher international student enrolment (De Vita and Case 2003; Mitchell 2003). As yet, it is suggested that little has been done to interrogate how students negotiate cultural differences and differentiation on campuses of increasing diversity (Hopkins 2011). Universities provide a plethora of opportunities for intercultural interaction, intensified by recent drives to increase international student mobility. Students are rooted in many of the same social spaces, and remain so for a number of years; they are also at a key phase of transition in their lives, where they are continually experiencing or even seeking out the new, and their attitudes and behaviors are open to change. The university is a space founded on particular liberal ideals, where equality and respect for difference are actively promoted (Hopkins 2011; Andersson et al. 2012). Looking at students' experiences opens up opportunities to determine whether the egalitarian ethos of the institution and the rhetoric of inclusion translate into everyday campus life.

However, concerns have been expressed that the increase in diversity through internationalization is used as a form of capital that brings economic advantages, rather than focusing on instilling young people with the ability to live harmoniously with difference (Andersson et al. 2012; Mitchell 2003; Brooks and Waters 2014). The focus of internationalization policies is often one of recruiting non-EU students, and while such policies outline the inclusion and integration of students, studies have shown that international students are often segregated from their domestic peers (Fincher and Costello 2003; Fincher and Shaw 2011; Barron 2006; Dunne 2009; Peacock and Harrison 2009). Katherine Mitchell argues that this shift toward neoliberal practices represents:

...a subtle but intensifying move away from person-centered education for all, or the creation of the tolerant, multicultural self; towards a more individuated, mobile and highly tracked, skills-based education of the 'strategic cosmopolitan'. (Mitchell 2003, p. 387)

While multicultural education placed value on the capacity to cooperate with and accept diversity, the "strategic cosmopolitan" emphasizes the skills needed to operate in a competitive globalized context. The UK, among other countries, has witnessed this drive to exploit the "knowledge economy," rendering the multicultural education she describes above almost irrelevant (Mitchell 2003).

At the same time, the resultant increase in diversity is used in university marketing material that contributes to a representation of the space as welcoming, inclusive, and tolerant (Andersson et al. 2012). In this sense, international students become a form of objectified capital; their cultural capital becomes a consumable, in a process of "productive valuing" (Hage 1998, p. 129). Such practices construct them as an object that provides economic and cultural value, and to capitalize on

this, they are incorporated into a discourse that promotes the advantages and benefits that cultural diversity brings to other potential students. However, the benefits of internationalization are represented in particular, nonthreatening ways so as not to undermine – in the UK context – the perceived benefits of a British education (Brooks and Waters 2014). Analyzing the representation of internationalism in higher education marketing materials and prospectuses, they contend that the value placed on an internationalized education setting only extended to “those multi-ethnic others who share normative white mile-class values” (Brooks and Waters 2014, p. 223). The marketing material analyzed depicted international engagement and multiculturalism to emphasize the opportunities prospective students would have to develop the skills of a “strategic cosmopolitan” (Mitchell 2003). Diversity, then, is used selectively as a marketing tool that does not necessarily offer meaningful engagement with difference, but the possibility to develop social and cultural capital that will distinguish graduates in a highly competitive globalized context.

Untangling the power relations within universities and the spaces in which encounters occur, Andersson et al. (2012) highlight the “paradox” of the university space; while espousing a liberal ethos, it can also be perceived to be an “ivory tower” institution that is increasingly subject to forces of privatization and detached from society in general. Yet it also has the capacity to create a space shared by different groups of people united by interests that cross racial, ethnic, class, and gender boundaries. They also point to the history of universities as sites of political activism and protest, wherein young people have led the charge in trying to effect social change. As such, the university is a unique space that can foster both processes of inclusion and exclusion through the different groups that are part of it.

As social relations are contextually contingent, it is worth examining the different spaces of the university, which Andersson et al. (2012) understand as having their own power dynamics. There is an apparent power disparity between domestic and international students; domestic students maintain the most cultural capital, being native language speakers and already being familiar with the education system. This puts them in the “structural position of power in the classroom environment” (Andersson et al. 2012, p. 505). It was also observed that the social norms of domestic students dominate the university, which became apparent particularly through the socializing habits of the students, an issue also observed by Hopkins (2011). Enforcing a normative student culture centered on socializing and consuming alcohol creates an additional layer of complexity to the university space due to the power structures, values, and differences that need to be negotiated. The university does not then, entirely live up to its liberal, inclusive ideology, because its spaces are already invested with particular modes of conducting oneself in power hierarchies that privilege a particular student and a particular student lifestyle. As such, there is already a normative student “culture” in place that perpetuates a particular “student” identity and can inhibit new forms of belonging being produced. Andersson et al. (2012) assert that this is not necessarily related to cultural, ethnic, or religious differences, but with ways of “being” a student (or perhaps, the value attributed to a certain form of cultural capital) that inform

their sense of identity, and therefore, their sense of belonging on campus. Infringing on these “social codes” is the more pertinent issue (Andersson et al. 2012, p. 507).

Narrow definitions or expressions of identity can also be seen in university societies, which would normally be perceived as sites of interaction. It is argued here that they can actually encourage “identity compartmentalization which can be experienced as exclusion rather than inclusion” (Andersson et al. 2012, p. 508). Students are continually engaged in forging their identities and constructing spaces of belonging, which can have their own “codes” that occlude the inclusion of certain groups or individuals. Consequently, these processes of identity formation activate a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion (Hage 1998). Such contradictory outcomes were also evident in the contrasting perceptions domestic students maintained toward international students in the classroom in Ireland; despite holding the position of relative privilege, domestic students viewed international students as “academically superior” because of their active engagement in lectures (Dunne 2009). Similarly, Korean American students in the University of Illinois were racialized as “the model minority”; stereotyped as hardworking and success oriented but also materialistic and single-mindedly ambitious (Abelmann 2009). Differences in behavior and attitude in spaces that accord certain students privilege can shift the balance of power, but also serve to differentiate one group as not belonging for contravening the “social code” of the space by emphasizing and enacting those perceived differences. This also ties into different expectations of the idealized university experience as enacted through a particular “student” identity, which for some students means defining your own path of personal development. Other students do not have the resources to do so, further underscoring the differences in capital between students (Abelmann 2009).

Dunne’s (2009) account resonates with Amin’s argument about the nature of spaces and their social codes, reflected also in Wilson’s study of encounter on the bus (Amin 2012; Wilson 2011). There are spaces that operate certain power structures that may transcend the cultural and ethnic differences present, while producing particular ways of being, and therefore legitimating inclusion or exclusion based on particular capital. The atmosphere, culture, and implicit social codes embedded in particular spaces must also be considered in tandem with the performance of embodied capital. In Dunne’s (2009) instance, exclusion was not justified due to ethnic or cultural differences, but through the lack of tacit knowledge on the part of the international students, unfamiliar with what can be considered “appropriate” behavior and the particular dynamics of a typical Irish classroom.

Andersson et al. (2012) analyzed different spaces separately, such as the classroom, the student union, university residence halls – the spaces of learning, leisure, and living. Each space provides a specific context which can present its own tensions, the residential space being foremost among them. As it is a shared space, and also quite an intimate space, it can be the site of greater tension, with students bringing different social, cultural, and religious behaviors to the living space. Furthermore, students felt somewhat marginalized by the marketing of alcohol and social activities in pubs and clubs prevalent around campus; evidence of the consumption of alcohol permeates the university environment through the

advertising of student nights out and student body connections to clubs and bars. This can be exclusionary for students (both domestic and international) as it reinforces the symbolic power of a particular student identity and further maintains the dominance of certain social practices and forms of cultural capital.

That there has been a lack of critical geographical consideration of the university as a contested space is highlighted by pointing to their active role in students' lives: "... university campuses are contested locations in terms of how they shape the production of knowledge, students' lifecourse trajectories and politics and power relations" (Hopkins 2011, p. 158). Hopkins investigated Muslim students' experiences of the campus, the issues of exclusion and inclusion, the provision of spaces for religious practice and the ways in which media discourses seeped into their university encounters. Rather than there being a divergence between international and domestic, differences arose through the students' particular use of the university space, with those living on campus reporting different experiences to those who only came in for library study and lectures. Some of the students reported very positive experiences of the university as a tolerant space, in contrast to public spaces outside of the university. They cited the education of their peers as the driving factor of their tolerant attitudes, which created a sense of security and fitting in. A common sense of identity as students superseded national or ethnic differences was observed among the majority of students (Hopkins 2011).

However, pointing to the contradictory ways in which students can experience universities as both spaces of inclusion and exclusion, Hopkins argues that the students articulated a "strategy of invisibilization" that established the university as a space free of racism and prejudice, in contrast to the public spaces outside of the campus, thereby distancing themselves from being perceived a certain way (2011, p. 161). Post 9/11 and 7/7 discourses around religious extremism and government security strategies were also described by students as permeating their university experience. Ethnic segregation and student societies were outlined as potential grounds for expanding extremist networks and such issues received relatively widespread coverage. This created an atmosphere of surveillance and "monitoring" where students described feeling watched as they went about their everyday lives. Government strategies identified particular embodied indicators as being worthy of monitoring, so that "these policies therefore operated to make Muslim students sense that they were invaders of the spaces of the university campus, had less legitimacy than other students, and therefore were under surveillance" (Hopkins 2011, p. 162). "Asian" students were marked out for surveillance, signifying the racialization of students based on perceived religious/ethnic background and further reinforcing their sense of not belonging. Incorrect media representations of their religion and practices denied their voice and contributed to a sense of exclusion and being watched. Such experiences speak to the ambiguous and unsettled nature of the student experience as the university creates a space where students are united by their identity as learners but divided by racializing institutional processes and predominating socializing activities. The representation of certain bodily indicators of difference, or particular societies as a "threat" to security, served to reaffirm and legitimize the normative student lifestyle in place.

The centrality of alcohol in the typical student lifestyle was a source of further differentiation. The prevalence of bars on campus and the use of bars for society gatherings prohibited many Muslims from attending such events or from being able to fully participate in campus social life, restricting their use of the space and further excluding them from the dominant social practices that form part of the student experience. The absence of social spaces for Muslim students is argued to be a form of institutional discrimination (Hopkins 2011). The complexity of student experiences here reveals the varied ways in which the university is not just experienced, but how it is complicit in producing social differentiation of students by providing for the culturally dominant group to the exclusion of others. Yet, it can simultaneously enable the inclusion of students in other ways, as has been suggested by Hopkins (2011). There is yet scope to engage with the contested manner in which universities in different local and national contexts enforce particular norms, reproducing the advantages of one student “lifestyle” over another; enhancing the inclusion and belonging of some groups while reinforcing the differentiation of others.

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## 6 Barriers to Intercultural Contact

In Ireland, some work has begun to explore the experiences of international students and the barriers to contact that occur in their everyday encounters with Irish students. Dunne (2009) found that Irish students’ perceptions of international students were complex and ambivalent, reducing their likelihood to engage with them in class and outside of it. There was also a distinctly spatial aspect evident in their interactions which manifested itself physically in lecture halls, where mature and international students would typically sit at the front, while domestic students would sit at the back, underscoring the spatial manifestation of their differentiation. Such encounters did not foster interaction and established a perception among domestic students that they were academically inferior. This physical segregation reflects how transgressing the implied social codes of a space differentiate groups through their divergent attitudes and behaviors. At the microlevel of the classroom, differentiation between groups was evident, producing and reproducing an “us and them” mentality.

Domestic students also identified other perceived differences between themselves and international students that speak further to the divergence between students and what they imagine their ideal university experience will be. For domestic students, being a student was synonymous with socializing and personal development; they were less concerned with long-term academic goals. They described themselves as being more laid-back in comparison to the international students, who they regarded as being extremely hard working and having precise educational expectations and goals. Their different approaches to not only academic but also social activities further reinforced a sense of difference between the two groups that reproduced a sense of being “culturally” different and in some ways, incompatible. This divergence in attitude further stifles opportunity to build a

sense of commonality or solidarity and reinforces the “not-belonging” of international students.

There were also subtle emotional and behavioral barriers to interaction with international students; Irish students exhibited anxiety and discomfort in engaging with international students. This anxiety stemmed from fear of causing offense, of being misunderstood and appearing racist, or fear of being put down by their peers for associating with them. There was also anxiety in case the Irish nature of “slagging” one another may be misinterpreted. The role of language (Valentine et al. 2008), and particularly emotion, must be recognized as substantial elements in causing particular outcomes of encounter (Leitner 2012). Other emotions such as self-consciousness were also evident in Dunne’s (2009) work with Irish students, who described feeling obliged to change their speech, avoid certain topics, and ultimately compromise their identity in their encounters with international students. Peacock and Harrison have termed this “mindfulness” – needing to think before speaking, clarifying and repeating oneself, and avoiding certain topics or cultural references (2009, p. 495). In both studies, students were found to associate interaction with international students with high levels of concentration and having to engage with one another in an active and somewhat unnatural way. The UK students were found to be extremely reluctant to talk about differences, in case they reverted to, or were seen to be stereotyping or discriminating (Peacock and Harrison 2009). The resulting feelings discouraged further encounters, creating negative associations with interaction and demarcating further the social and cultural boundaries between students. Indeed, their discomfort and lack of experience could suggest that they did not possess the “bridging capital” that would enable them to communicate easily with difference.

In the UK context, domestic students often described interactions with international students as between “us and them” (Peacock and Harrison 2009). UK students associated language fluency with being “like us”, further solidifying the importance of language as an example of embodied cultural capital that contributes to a sense of belonging or acceptance. The more easily the international student is able to communicate, the less likely they are to be seen as especially “foreign”, because their ability to communicate is a form of capital that converts to symbolic “nearness” to the dominant group. Yet those who tried to communicate, whatever their proficiency, were given credit for trying. However, those who did not try to initiate conversation or engage with local students were perceived to be distant, unfriendly, and rude – no matter their level of English. Students who “exclude themselves” (as the local students saw it) were perceived negatively. Such rejection of responsibility is justified through suggesting it as their own choice to effectively exclude themselves by not making the effort to speak English – suggesting also that there are expectations placed on the international student to fit into an assimilationist ideal, whereby their inclusion is contingent on particular conditions (Leitner 2012).

Peacock and Harrison (2009) found that domestic students were overall, unlikely to interact with international students, maintaining friendship groups formed mainly from co-nationals. Most interactions between both groups took place on

campus, with little interaction taking place during extracurricular activities, suggesting that campus encounters were not leading to further interactions outside of those spaces. References to international student “cliques” hinted at the British students’ feelings of being overwhelmed or “swamped”, stemming from a sense of loss of familiarity and security due to an inability to adapt to a changing environment, or fear of the loss of symbolic power. Local students also made reference to the “competition” for resources, and expressed being reluctant to ask questions in class in case they look “stupid.” This is similar to the findings of Dunne (2009) and there are further parallels to research in Australia (Barron 2006), where domestic students felt as if they were competing against international students and believed that international students had access to the best facilities and more time with staff. The resulting atmosphere of anxiety and competitiveness permeated interactions and exacerbated an “us and them” mentality, emanating from a fear of the devaluation of capital and thus, loss of belonging.

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## 7 Sociospatial Segregation of International Students

An emerging theme in the study of international student experiences looks at how the new social and spatial relationships students create impact their experience of urban life. Fincher and Shaw (2009, 2011; Fincher and Costello 2003) have looked at the way student social groups have taken a distinct spatial pattern and have in turn affected the nature of local and international student relations. In Melbourne, the types and areas of accommodation chosen by international students, compared to those chosen by local students, were in marked contrast. International student accommodation in Melbourne is clustered around the city center; Asian students are usually directed toward the purpose built accommodation and not made aware of alternative housing arrangements, which reduces their opportunities for encounter. Resonating with Hopkins (2011) in terms of how divergent social preferences, especially concerning alcohol, can reinforce differences through spaces of social interaction, in Melbourne the different accommodation and entertainment preferences of international and local students resulted in a deep-seated spatial segregation. This was also evident in Auckland, New Zealand; Asian students formed concentrations in the city center due to the relatively low cost (but also low quality) accommodation that developed in a process of market-led urban regeneration (Collins 2010).

Fincher and Shaw (2011) argue that students are too easily labeled as “host,” “international,” or “local”; this raises implications for a divide between international students and locals, differentiating international students as “not belonging.” The labeling of students as well as the concentrations of students in particular accommodation serves to differentiate them from domestic students, reduce the potential for encounters, and reproduce their exclusion from certain spaces and activities. There is a fine balance between recognizing difference while ensuring they are not positioned by the institution into fixed identities that partly contributes to their spatial as well as social marginalization. Similarly, Collins (2006) identified the racialization of Asian international students (as well as New Zealanders of



Asian descent) into a distinct, homogenous category, propagated through particular media representations. These representations marginalized Asian students by categorizing them into a fixed identity “void of internal differentiation” (Collins 2006, p. 220). Representations of Asian students included that of economic object, frequently discussed with reference to their economic value and the opportunities they provided for generating income. They were also constructed as an exotic “other” who injected a sense of cosmopolitan diversity into the CBD through their fashion and the resulting growth of Asian food outlets and entertainment there. Conversely, they were also problematized for their presence and the visibility of different Asian cultures in the city center, which some in the media positioned as cheap and tacky (Collins 2006). These discourses served to both legitimate and limit their presence, by intensifying an “us” and “them” distinction where “they” are impacting negatively on the urban and social fabric of the city. Such racializing practices differentiate Asian students, contributing to their exclusion and lack of contact with New Zealanders.

In Melbourne, Australia, the categorization of students has extended beyond university administration. More than half of the university’s clubs and societies are “nationality-specific” (Fincher and Shaw 2011; 543). Local churches also take part in this differentiation (Fincher 2011). Churches have been reported to send a student of a certain nationality to a different church where they believe the person will feel more “comfortable”, propagating the clustering of nationality-specific groups. Increasingly, it is the South and Southeast Asian students who are grouped (and group themselves) as “international,” while Americans and Europeans are considered “Anglo.” This appears to be part of a process of racialization and the privileging of “whiteness,” as students are categorized by their perceived race and/or cultural background which compounds their segregation.

For many international students, the lack of communal spaces in their buildings meant looking to the city center for entertainment, spaces where they were witness to antisocial behavior and drunkenness. As a result, they often seek out the familiarity of the company of their co-nationals, and the shopping malls reminiscent of those in their home countries. Certain public spaces have become invested with different meanings and this influenced the segregation and clustering of students, creating spaces of belonging based on very different criteria. Local students described a preference for the old laneways and shopping areas of Melbourne, which are not overly gentrified. They appeared to dislike the “bright, commercial spaces” of the city center that the international students favor (Fincher and Shaw 2011, p. 546). It was also noted how American and European (“Anglo”) students attended food events organized by the student union along with local students, which “international” Asian students did not, reinforcing the notion of a racial divide between foreign students. Student leisure spaces are a fundamental opportunity for encounter and interaction, but in this case have further differentiated students through their preference for particular social spaces, social activities, and lifestyles. At the same time, the lack of opportunity for interaction decreases the capacity of international students to develop certain cultural competencies and capital through interactions with domestic students.



These spatial and social divergences demonstrate how students create spaces of belonging that can serve to include some while excluding others, working along cultural differences. This practice is not limited to the domestic students, although the role of the university in inadvertently perpetuating the segregation of international students is significant. Young people establish relationships with certain areas of the city, discouraging some groups from use of those spaces, to the point where “international” (Asian) students and local (Anglo) students occupy two different worlds within the city center.

There is little evidence to suggest that friendships are developing between the two groups of students. Fincher and Shaw refer to Thomas (2005, 2009), who argues that students’ patterns of racialization in terms of their social groups is actually natural and that public space is just “the backdrop” (cited by Fincher and Shaw 2011, p. 547). Yet the way in which students attribute meanings to certain areas, (e.g., the city center is less safe because of rowdy behavior – therefore a place to be avoided at night time) suggests that this is not the case. Local students identified their social groups as being made up almost entirely of other local students. Echoing Dunne (2009), Peacock and Harrison (2009) and Barron (2006), local students noted that often it is just easier to not try to interact with Asian students because of the language barrier, and the fact that they always seem to be socializing with other Asian students. Clearly, these malls are not just a “backdrop” – they are heavily invested with meanings that contribute to segregation. International students were also described as being “difficult to work with” (Fincher and Shaw 2011, p. 547) and one student expressed what could be interpreted as “new racist” beliefs, maintaining that international students should find a balance between their culture and his own. Again, social belonging is contingent on conforming to certain ways of being, speaking, and interacting that have been established and are continuously reaffirmed by the dominant social group (Leitner 2012). These examples of tensions speak to the conflictual nature of the deployment of particular forms of capital and how these are represented in particular spaces.

In both Australia and New Zealand (Fincher and Shaw 2009, 2011; Collins 2006), students of Asian descent were also implicated by the racialization of students and spaces. In Melbourne, students of Chinese descent (who could not speak Chinese) had trouble befriending local students who believed them to be international students and found it easier to befriend international students instead (Fincher and Shaw 2011). This speaks definitively to the racial aspect of social division and the value attributed to whiteness as cultural capital. Many local students maintained “new racist” views, believing that international students should adapt to their culture and embrace “Australian” traditions. There appeared to be a pattern of thinking that international students do not make enough of an effort to fit in, also evident in New Zealand (Kobayashi and Peake 2000). This thinking extends into their actions and their unwillingness to socialize with international students, seeing them as “a relatively homogenous group who have more in common with each other than with local students, which can be interpreted as the exercise of the power of whiteness, excluding newcomers of difference” (Fincher and Shaw 2011, p. 548). It is evident that particular forms of capital, particularly language and

whiteness, are critical in terms of reproducing the advantages and lifestyle of the dominant domestic student, undermining opportunities for international students to attain the knowledge, behaviors, and “cultural artifacts” (Peacock and Harrison 2009) that might facilitate encounter, intercultural interaction, and greater social cohesion between students. This is further complicated by the students’ interactions with and in particular spaces, and the meanings they attach to spaces that serve to reflect their own preferences and dispositions.

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## 8 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has endeavored to examine how dominant student groups maintain their power through cultural reproduction, and how differences in cultural capital have resulted in the social and spatial segregation of students. While international education and mobility are implicated in the reproduction of particular advantages/disadvantages, such as institutional capital on a broad scale (Waters 2012), it is also worthwhile to unpack the ways in which dominant forms of capital reproduce inequality in the everyday lives and interactions of students. The privileging of “whiteness” as capital, as well as language competency (Dunne 2009; Peacock and Harrison 2009); the divergence of behaviors and social preferences that translate into the racialization of spaces (Fincher and Shaw 2009, 2011); the influence of public discourse and government strategy in the reaffirmation of dominant embodied capital (Hopkins 2011); the performance of identity in the development of *habitus* that reproduces belonging and exclusivity (Turner and Manderson 2007); the power frameworks embedded in the spaces of living, learning, and encounter in the university (Andersson et al. 2012); these multiple factors serve to reinforce particular dispositions and deployments of capital that entrench one particular student identity over others and limit the opportunity for international students – or other nonwhite students perceived and categorized as international – to develop their own cultural capital and sense of belonging. Engaging with student experiences through the lens of social reproduction reveals the complexity of how students experience “belonging” to different degrees depending on the form and articulation of their cultural capital.

The role of the university in perpetuating dominant norms must not be understated. It can be suggested that the actions of the university (deliberate and unwitting) should be further analyzed in terms of how they contribute to the segregation or even discrimination of international students. By reaffirming the value of a particular student lifestyle/identity, the differentiation of students is reproduced not only through their own interactions but through top-down structures that favor the dominant group, legitimizing the surveillance of some based on embodied difference (Hopkins 2011), the segregation of services and accommodation (Fincher and Shaw 2009, 2011; Hopkins 2011) and the particularizing representation of student identity (Andersson et al. 2012). Fincher and Shaw (2011) emphasize the importance of examining locational factors, decision making, and spatial attributes, rather than blaming student behaviors for the clustering of international students. Practices that differentiate students administratively and

residentially establish a pattern that reinforces their sociospatial marginalization from the entire student body. While the students' activities and preferences (particularly concerning alcohol) are also factors in the diverging lifestyles of students, universities could actively engage with students to create more open and inclusive spaces that cater to a broader variety of competencies, needs, and preferences. Within the context of progressively neoliberal internationalization policies that emphasize income generation and international prestige, the university is a space that actively transmits particular forms of cultural capital and is heavily implicated in the process of social (re)production.

Students' attitudes, activities, residence, language, emotions, combined with the active role of the university in providing and regulating spaces for students, serve to create a space in which students can experience both the inclusivity of an egalitarian and tolerant ethos while simultaneously being labeled, differentiated, segregated, and discriminated against (Hopkins 2011; Collins 2006; Fincher and Shaw 2009, 2011; Andersson et al. 2012). University social, living, and learning spaces are the sites of diverse encounters steeped in power relations and unwritten social codes that produce particular spaces of belonging where certain types of capital are valued and converted into symbolic "nearness" or belonging. The implication of British Muslim students (Hopkins 2011) and Australian and New Zealand students of Asian descent (Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Fincher and Shaw 2011; Collins 2006) speak to the power of whiteness as capital in patterns of social reproduction that transcends simple cultural/ethnic differences between groups in the establishment of geographies of exclusion. While geography has engaged with a number of strands of student experiences, there is yet scope to unpack the ways in which belonging is experienced to varying degrees according to students' embodied capital and how that creates patterns of inclusion and exclusion simultaneously.

Considering this multiplicity of factors, the university can be a contested space operating a dialectic of both inclusion and exclusion; while the institutional ethos celebrates diversity and equality, international students also constitute a form of capital; positioned as objectified capital that produces economic (through increased enrolment) as well as cultural capital (enhanced international reputation) for the university itself. While tied by a common student identity, they can be subject to exclusion through the actions and decisions of the institution, through their encounters with other students and their deployment of cultural capital, through their habitus and preferences for social spaces, and through the racialized associations attached to them and their spaces of interaction (Collins 2006; Fincher and Shaw 2009; Hopkins 2011).

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# Migration and the Spaces of Laboring and Learning for Children and Young People in Asian Contexts

# 10

Karin Heissler

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## Abstract

Drawing on published works from the disciplines of anthropology, education, geography, and sociology, this chapter focuses on the learning that takes place over the course of children and young people's migration for work or schooling from and within Asian contexts. As active contributors to social reproduction, children and young people are directly affected by ongoing changes to rural livelihoods and the modernizing process of formal education. Social reproduction takes place over geographical space and time, and for some "poor" and disadvantaged children and young people, migration serves as a means to achieve individual as well as collective (i.e., household) aspirations for upward mobility. For others, particularly males, it provides a spatial and temporal means by which

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to remain unemployed or underemployed so as to preserve one's self-respect rather than perform low status work locally. Learning occurs through multiple channels, revealing many ways by which children and young people create and negotiate their identities through structures imposed by status and through their engagement with social networks that facilitate processes of migration and through which employment is secured. The ways in which migrants engage with gender show both opportunities as well as limits created by migration. Mindful of not generalizing across a region as diverse as Asia, it is found that whereas girls and young women may gain status at home through their income and the purchase of consumption goods, the work they undertake is considered "low" status. While outside their home villages, they experience greater freedom and achieve a certain level of independence that is unlikely to be realized should they return home. In contrast, and mindful of the caveat above, migrant males who succeed, including in "low" status work, have increased status at home. With findings patchy from across the region as a whole, the findings also draw attention to the need for further research on this topic.

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**Keywords**

5–10 gender • Class • Learning • Laboring • Work • Children • Young people • Migration • Asia

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## 1 Introduction

The link between children and young people's work and schooling is well established (Bourdillon 2006; Bourdillon et al. 2010). There exists a growing body of research from across a number of disciplines that draws attention to the spatial dimension of childhood experience and the role of mobility in transitions within childhood and to adulthood (Dobson 2009; Whitehead et al. 2007). The role of learning in processes of migration and social mobility has been least explored, but evidence is growing (Waters 2015; Froerer and Portisch 2012; O'Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007; Whitehead et al. 2007). Primarily through qualitative research, the literature is also expanding on children and young people's dynamic (albeit constrained) engagement with these processes.

With geographic attention on Asia, this chapter focuses on the learning that takes place over the course of children and young people's migration for work or schooling (be it formal or alternative). It draws on published work from a variety of disciplines, primarily anthropology, education, geography, and sociology. Most of the sources find that the "modernizing" process of formal education on the lives of children, young people, and their parents has been global in its outreach, but its impact varies by socioeconomic context and individual and household-level characteristics. Following comments on the sources, the conceptual framework is presented followed by key findings from the experiences in Asia organized by a theme. The final section concludes.

For purposes of this chapter, laboring refers to all paid and unpaid work, including non-remunerated domestic/productive work often described as "chores."



Learning refers to the knowledge and skills acquired for current and future needs through the formal setting of school as well as informal or alternative spaces such as vocational training, work-based learning and, as will be explored, through processes of migration. Formal schooling is associated with acquiring “hard” skills such as literacy and numeracy, with success rewarded through good grades, certificates, and advancement. “Soft” skills not captured through formal qualifications, such as problem solving and negotiating, are also examples of learning.

## 1.1 Remarks on the Sources and Content

This chapter draws from published sources on the subject of children and young persons’ migration for labor and/or learning as defined above. It does not include the experiences of children left behind due to the migration of one or both parents or primary caregivers. The geographical parameters comprise Asia, the world’s largest and most diverse continent with the largest number of migrants. Particular efforts were made to collect a mix of materials, albeit those collected are all published in English. As compared to other parts of the world (such as Africa and Latin America), the number of sources from across the entire region is patchy. There is a preponderance of materials from South Asia (Bangladesh, India, and Nepal). From Southeast Asia, the material concerns Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Thailand. From East Asia, China and South Korea are the only examples. While there are a growing number of scholars working on the topic in other parts of the region, the material is not yet in the published domain. Most of the articles concern rural–urban migration within national borders, many concerning boys and young men and some concerning girls and young women as migrants; however, there are a few which involve international migration (Nepal to India, Bangladesh to the Middle East, Lao PDR to Thailand, South Korea to other parts of Asia and North America). The findings are primarily from qualitative research.

It should be noted that the bulk of articles concern migrant children and young persons from less well-off, “poor,” and disadvantaged backgrounds and not the experiences of those from more privileged backgrounds. There are exceptions (see, for example, Waters 2015). More sources were identified on migration for work (including the learning associated with labor) than for formal schooling. Research suggests that children who migrate for purposes of work tend to be older, rarely under 10 years of age (Huijsmans and Baker 2012), and most of the references included here support that observation.

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## 2 Migration and the Spaces of Laboring and Learning: Key Concepts

Social reproduction, the variety of structured material and social practices through which individuals, families, and communities reproduce themselves daily and across generations, provides an appropriate lens with which to explore

the topic (Boyden 2013; Huijsmans et al. 2014). Across contexts girls and boys are socialized to contribute to the household: work is central to the childhoods of “poor” and socially and economically disadvantaged children. From young ages, girls and boys develop a clear understanding of their gendered and aged roles and responsibilities and the contribution this makes to the household economy and social life (Morrow and Vennam 2010; Whitehead et al. 2007; Huijsmans and Baker 2012). Girls generally have more work within the domestic sphere, whereas boys have more work outside (Bourdillon et al. 2010). Work becomes more gendered as children get older. Boys are more likely to be working outside, whereas girls – especially when they reach puberty – are typically engaged in domestic work including cooking and cleaning for their household. As they get older, work by adolescents and young people may be remunerated, particularly if it is done outside the household. In the context of ongoing and profound social and economic change, and among “poor” children and young people, these roles and the expectations they create are not without contradiction and tension.

Social reproduction takes place over geographical space and time. Challenging “sedentarist frameworks,” Huijsmans (2011, p. 1309) is among a growing number of researchers whose work draws attention to the spatial dimensions of childhood experience, in particular girls’ and boys’ mobility and residence away from parents. Growing evidence shows that children’s migration – be it for work or learning – is central to the individual life cycle and domestic life cycle of the household, involving both vertical and horizontal transitions (Boyden 2013; Huijsmans 2008; Ni Laoire et al. 2010; Whitehead et al. 2007). This recognizes that while, on the one hand, migration is motivated by individual and collective aspirations and expectations, on the other, it happens in a context of vertical change at the individual level (such as upward progression through school or completion of a rite of passage) as well as across horizontal domains (e.g., be it from home to school to work). This draws attention to the relational (i.e., gendered, aged, and generational) characteristics of social reproduction, indicating that dynamism and struggle are associated with it (Huijsmans et al. 2014). It also reveals its association with patriarchy, class relations, and social status within the household and the community more broadly.

Social reproduction also concerns learning, recognizing that knowledge and skills are imbibed in various ways over different stages across the life cycle and the multiple and contextually determined ways in which learning takes place. This allows for a broader notion of “learning” than that just attributed to school. This draws attention to the concept of “situated learning,” the acquisition of skills and knowledge that occurs within and outside the formal institutional setting of school (Lave and Wenger 1991; Froerer and Portisch 2012), including through unpaid work for one’s own household, described by Lancy (2008) as the “chore curriculum.” As will be explored in this chapter, situated learning happens through observation, emulation, engagement, and interaction with others in a wider social and economic context, including in the context of migration.

## 2.1 Social Reproduction and the Intergenerational Contract

The dimensions of social reproduction outlined above show the importance of examining inter-household relations. These are best conceptualized as comprising an intergenerational contract between generations, where claims and responsibilities are backed by the rules of wider society; hence, they are aged, gendered, and temporal (Kabeer 2001; Whitehead et al. 2007). In contexts where state-level social security is minimal or nonexistent, and among “poor” families, interdependence among household members can serve as an important protective mechanism. Education becomes a new dimension in the contract given the expectations that it will lead to upward social mobility and the possibility of greater security for parents in their old age (Kabeer 2000). These findings draw attention to the obligations between parents and their children and among siblings and the ways in which the contract manifests itself over dynamic processes of migration (Whitehead et al. 2007) and including across socioeconomic classes (see Waters 2015).

Social reproduction and the intergenerational contract do not operate outside of ongoing social and economic change, including forces of globalization. Across the globe, Asia included, profound change is taking place across rural and urban settings. These modernizing processes have direct and indirect implications on how children and young people construct their social and economic identities (Katz 2004; Jeffrey and McDowell 2004). So understanding children’s and young people’s movements in the context of broader social, economic, and historical forces is central to this topic: children are not passive objects or “luggage” in the process of migration (Orellana et al. 2001).

While acknowledging that the processes and impact of migration are not static, across multiple Asian contexts and among some groups in Asia, the mobility of children and young people for learning or laboring is a long-established rite of passage (Valentin 2012; Whitehead et al. 2007). Processes of change taking place across the globe, including among rural settings, affect established patterns and/or create new ones (Huijsmans and Baker 2012; Waters 2015). Children and young people, through their engagement with formal and informal processes of learning and work and through their participation in migration, are central to social reproduction. Even if there are difficulties overcoming the various constraints, children and young people contribute to social and economic transformation, to varying degrees and in engagement with gender, at individual, household, and broader community levels (Camacho 2010; Minza 2012; Naafs 2013; Rao 2011; Rao and Hossain 2012; Valentin 2012). Having elaborated the conceptual framework here follows a discussion on formal education and its impact on the processes of migration.

## 2.2 The Modernizing Process of Education

The global interest in universal education, for example, through the Education for All Goals, Millennium Development Goals, and associated efforts to expand formal

schooling, has had a tremendous impact on the lives of children and their parents across the globe. Investments by governments, multilateral agencies, and donors have been made across the globe to strengthen formal education at primary and, in some cases, secondary education (Pells and Woodhead 2014). While access and enrollment rates have improved particularly among populations previously excluded from formal schooling, concomitant progress in the quality of schooling (including learning achievements) has been mixed (Pells and Woodhead 2014). Nevertheless, across contexts, the modernizing force of education has shaped the aspirations and ambitions of children and their parents who place high expectations in the ability of formal schooling to bring about upward social mobility as well as work associated with status and a secure income (Boyden 2013; Boyden and Crivello 2014; Camfield 2011; Froerer and Portisch 2012; Jeffrey 2009, 2011; Pells and Woodhead 2014). With few exceptions, however, and as elaborated below, the expected gains from formal education to secure decent employment have failed to materialize.

For “poor” and disadvantaged populations, the impact of formal education at local level has not necessarily been benign (Jeffrey and McDowell 2004). As many “poor” children and families are finding, success in formal school is often insufficient to overcome entrenched social and economic structures, including class hierarchy and gender, to secure a viable livelihood and achieve upward social mobility for which financial resources and social capital (personal contacts) are also required. Further, the pursuit of formal schooling may come at the expense of acquiring livelihood skills such as in agriculture. So, after acquiring basic numeracy and literacy, further progression in formal school may no longer be considered necessary or even beneficial. The quality of schooling and the subject matter may not be that relevant for the types of jobs and future they will have, so their time may be better spent elsewhere (Boyden and Crivello 2014; Bourdillon et al. 2010). Children do not work only to earn (Balagopalan 2008). For many it provides an opportunity to gradually learn and develop skills for their future well-being and that of their household, so vocational training, apprenticeships, or on-the-job training may be preferable to formal schooling (O’Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007).

Albeit a study of the migration experiences of middle- and upper middle-class East Asian families, Waters’ (2015, p. 291) findings are similar vis-à-vis the topic of children “as vessels of/for capital.” Within “knowledge-based economies,” academic credentials are the only means by which to ensure social reproduction. Rather than risk nonacceptance in a local schools due to intense competition for limited spaces (a consequence of the “democratization” of education), for those families with the resources, having an overseas-educated graduate from a Western school cultivates economic and social capital to help secure jobs on return and to anchor the family’s upward social and economic mobility in the longer term (Waters 2015, p. 284). The children do not migrate unaccompanied, rather migration is a transnational project with one parent, usually the mother, most often emigrating with the child to provide all necessary care and support to the child.

Having introduced formal education as a key aspect of “modern” childhood, particularly for “poor” and disadvantaged populations but also for those who recognize that class reproduction is best assured through academic credentials, the

rest of the chapter will focus more specifically on the situation in Asian contexts, notably ongoing social and economic change and what that means for laboring, learning, and migration.

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### **3 The Importance of Context (1): Changing Rural Contexts and How That Impacts on Migration**

Asia is vast, encompassing a mix of historical, political, economic, religious, cultural, and social dimensions that shape children and young people's migration. Despite its diversity, some commonalities emerge from the readings, most of which concern the experiences of adolescent girls and boys and young women and men from low socioeconomic backgrounds who migrate from rural areas within the country to urban centers as well as internationally. The first concerns changing rural livelihoods and how that impacts on migration.

From across rural South Asia, the literature shows a similar pattern. In her field sites in Central India, Froerer (2011) identified that, until recently, the higher-status Hindu population has exclusively relied on agriculture as their main source of income, and out-migration has not been pursued. However, with growing landlessness within this community, Hindus are finding themselves in an increasingly difficult position economically because they have little experience and few personal contacts to help diversify their income sources. In contrast, the Christian minority population is in a relatively better-off position because, given their relative and longstanding landlessness, they have long had to rely on outside wage labor for work and have cultivated external contacts. In Bangladesh, Rao and Hossain (2011) identified that agriculture is increasingly seen as a difficult work with limited returns, and Dhaka (the capital city) is no longer feared as a destination for work, resulting in higher numbers of persons considering out-migration. In Nepal, Valentin (2012) points out that the migration of young Nepali men to India is a long-established rite of passage. However, more young men have been motivated to migrate given limited schooling, the lack of employment available locally, and a context of armed conflict resulting in fear of harassment and harm by armed groups and recruitment into the armed forces (now over, but at the time of the research very present).

Writing on Southeast Asia, Huijsmans (2013, p. 1901) observes that the majority of the population lives in rural areas, yet noting the increased diversity of livelihoods, he describes them as increasingly "multifunctional and multilisted." For reasons that will be elaborated further, the young are not interested in farming, the traditional livelihoods of their parents, and through migration they get involved in nonagricultural work. In Indonesia, the articles present a range of themes. One theme is that of rural-urban migrants pushed out of their villages due to the lack of decent work locally. They are attracted by the increased availability of "light" manufacturing work in factories or employment as sales staff (for young women) and transportation, construction, and "heavy" industry (for young men) (Naafs 2013). Another concerns learning. Minza's (2012) study on young men and women migrating for higher-level tertiary education to Pontianak, an urban "transit

city” in West Kalimantan finds that most young people do not have the high grades to study at more prestigious schools in Java (the main island), and for reasons that will be elaborated later in this chapter, this destination is preferred.

China presents a slightly different scenario than those elaborated above. The state’s one child policy has impacted rural livelihoods with the single child generally not being tasked with heavy agricultural work at home (Hu 2012). Complicating internal movement within China, Zhang (2013) remarks on the *hukou* (household registration system) whereby households have “rural” or “urban” status with either “agricultural” or “nonagricultural” descriptors. Zhang explains that this status determines which benefits you are entitled to receive (including state welfare, education, and social benefits), regardless of where you live. This status is inherited from one’s parents and cannot be changed, complicating migration as a means of upward social mobility.

With regard to social reproduction, the aforementioned discussion illustrates its inextricable link to livelihoods and its dynamism in the wake of ongoing social and economic change. Across the settings presented above, agriculture is no longer sufficient for household survival. Those individuals and groups who have not diversified their income sources, including those with contacts for work outside village settings, are presented as more vulnerable and at risk of maintaining existing levels of income, let alone achieving upward social mobility. Among the country examples, China stands out for its registration system which impedes upward mobility, given the differential benefits applied based on fixed and inherited family status. Not only do these findings have implications for the intergenerational contract, particularly young persons who may fit the ideal profile of a migrant worker (i.e., young and single), they also illustrate the intragenerational aspect to social reproduction: beyond familial bonds, other ties of care, support, and reciprocity are critical.

In addition to age, a theme that will be discussed later in the chapter is the role of gender and how changing rural livelihoods and migration impact differently across time and place on individual males and females and their dynamic roles in the household and wider social and economic life. Also for subsequent discussion in the chapter is how individuals and groups engage with changing structures, particularly the learning that takes place over the processes of migration.

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## **4 The Importance of Context (2): Formal Education and Its Impact on Migration**

A second theme emerges from the literature, that of children and young people’s experience with schooling and how this impacts on migration. Formal schooling creates aspirations for work with status and upward social mobility. As the examples below illustrate, the implications of this may result in migration for certain groups of children.

In Indonesia, Bessell (2009) found that girls working in factories in the capital had mixed experiences with formal school. Girls talked about the costs of schooling

going up as one progresses in school, the result being that many had to drop out, often at the end of primary school. Some girls were able to combine school with work, with their income contributing to school expenses. Girls spoke about the way they were treated by teachers and peers, frequently being ridiculed for not being able to afford the required uniforms or school supplies.

Heissler (2011) found in her rural field sites in Bangladesh that all children, including the “poor,” have had some experience with formal school, most started late and few progressed past primary school. Nevertheless, the modernizing process of education had affected their aspirations, albeit with mixed results. All children and their parents aspire toward higher-status work, which is practically unavailable. Only those from higher-class backgrounds, who succeeded in school at least to the completion of college (after secondary school) and who have the social networks and money to pay the necessary bribe, were likely to get a “good” job locally.

From Eastern India (rural Jharkhand), Rao (2011) found that while economically and socially disadvantaged Scheduled Caste and Tribal children receive state support to cover school costs, the infrastructure of the schools and quality of the education they receive are poor, so the higher caste Hindus (who attend other schools) are doing much better. While education is seen as a key strategy for advancement, including among the disadvantaged and minority groups, these groups’ experience is mixed. The costs of private tutoring or private school are prohibitive for many, yet it may be required to advance in school. For those who can afford it, parents will invest in boys, not girls (particularly among Hindus and Muslims). For the minority of the disadvantaged groups that successfully completed highly competitive secondary school exams, the next key challenge is securing a “white-collar” job (i.e., secure and stable employment in government service). For this, sizeable sums of money are required to pay bribes, even for relatively junior-level positions. In the meantime, significant trade-offs have been made: in pursuit of an education, young men (as parents are more reluctant to invest in girls’ education) have largely focused on school-based learning, have acquired preferences better suited to middle-class norms and values, and have no interest in undertaking manual labor.

Findings from Jeffrey’s (2010c) study of lower middle-class male university graduates in an urban Indian setting were similar: lacking the social connections and stronger cultural capital of their upper middle-class peers, they were unable to obtain secure “white-collar” employment. Rather than return to their rural villages for jobs in less prestigious work in agriculture or as laborers (depending on caste or religion), they prefer to (and are economically able to) remain unemployed or underemployed or enroll in other courses, engaged in an existence of “timepass” or “waiting.”

Finally, Froerer (2011), also researching from India, found benefits for those girls and boys who stayed in school until Class 5: they learned literacy and numeracy, and their marriage prospects were enhanced. However, beyond that level, she identifies diminishing returns for “poor” and other disadvantaged groups: the opportunities for employment for those with school completion certificates are extremely limited without having social connections and money to secure jobs. She observed that



“education is a contradictory resource” (Froerer 2011, p. 697), bringing benefits to some while also creating new forms of inequality.

As the above examples illustrate, in addition to ongoing changes to rural livelihoods, formal schooling creates a new structure for some groups of children, young people, and their families that also impacts on social reproduction including the intergenerational contract. While imparting “hard” skills like literacy and numeracy, it also creates aspirations of children and parents for higher-status work. Yet, for the “poor” and other disadvantaged groups, and even lower-middle-class youth whose experiences are presented in this chapter, education does not serve as a viable strategy for upward social mobility. Social connections, cultural capital and, for some, money for starting out (including for bribes) are required, yet out of reach. At the same time, noting the intergenerational contract, children and young people feel a strong sense of obligation to support their household, presenting a strong driver for migration.

As elaborated above, two key overarching themes emerge which affect migration of children and young people in Asian contexts: changes in rural livelihoods and formal education. While these impose various limitations, girls and boys and young women and men find ways, including through migration, in which to engage with these structures to serve individual and household needs. The next section focuses on the three key structures and sites of learning over the process of migrating: the search for status and the complications of caste, class, and ethnicity and the role of social networks and gender.

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## **5 Seeking Status Through Migration and the Complications of Caste, Class, and Ethnicity**

Rural settings are changing with increased numbers of young persons unable to pursue viable livelihoods locally. The modernizing process of formal education creates aspirations for livelihoods different from those of their parents. In addition to the “push” factors, transformation in urban settings and across borders creates a demand in parts of Asia and beyond for young persons with some level of education. As will be explored in this section, even for those children and young persons from “poor” and disadvantaged backgrounds [such as being “low” class, lower-middle class, a member of a Scheduled Caste or Tribe (in the case of India), or of a minority religion (be it Christian, Muslim, or Hindu depending on location)], status of work is extremely important. For those unemployed or underemployed children and young people, migration may offer face-saving vertical and horizontal transitions that also contribute to social reproduction. And, the various strategies and tactics they employ show the creative and different ways in which children and young people apply their knowledge and skills to preserve their dignity and self-respect.

Heissler (2011) found from her sites in Bangladesh that educated boys who do not have the resources to secure decent work locally are embarrassed to do the locally available “low” status work. They prefer to migrate (even for similar “low” status work) where no one from their home village can make them feel ashamed. When



they return home, they choose to describe this work to their peers using terms associated with higher-status work. This helps preserve the migrants' self-respect as well as the family's honor. Similarly Rao (2011) found that migration offered the possibility for young women in rural India to leave a stifling environment and move to a cosmopolitan setting where, even though they are doing manual domestic work, it has higher status than if they remained at home. Please see later in the chapter for an expanded discussion on gender.

Rao and Hossain (2012) comment that migration makes the demeaning aspect to work invisible, providing young women and men with opportunities to contribute to social reproduction that also advances their own status, such as through individual consumption and lifestyle choices. For example, migrant Bangladeshi men who undertook "low" status manual labor while working in Gulf States were able to save and remit money. The visible displays of wealth as well as contributions they provided to the local mosque and community events brought themselves status in the community. Parents of educated daughters seek such grooms (Rao 2013).

Also concerning consumption and status, from the Philippines Camacho (2010) found that while girls aged 12–18 years old migrated for domestic work in response to their family's poverty, in addition to remitting income home (which brought them status within the family), they also earned enough to purchase the latest fashions and accessories which made them feel good about themselves and which set them apart from their peers at home who did not have such goods.

Yet not everyone has such opportunities to leave their homes. How do they cope? In North India, Jeffrey et al. (2004, p. 980) observed that young low-caste educated men who did not have the contacts and resources to migrate had little choice but engage in low status manual labor locally. To ease the humiliation, and while waiting for what they deem to be more suitable higher-status jobs, several referred to themselves as "unemployed" while still engaging in wage labor or short-term jobs. Jeffrey and his coauthors (2004, p. 964) refer to them as the "educated unemployed."

Showing more explicitly the schooling-related dimension and status in migration, Valentin (2012) found that young educated Nepali men moved to India for both formal and informal skills acquisition. Delhi (India's capital) offers better opportunities for learning – both formal and informal – for upward mobility than remaining in Nepal. In "new" skills such as information technology (IT), India also offers more opportunities than Nepal for professional development. Even if the young men take what they describe as a "low" status job in Delhi, they see it as a stepping stone for further upward social mobility and view Delhi as providing the base to earn and save money and to improve their skills so that they can secure even better work further afield.

From Indonesia, Naafs (2013) noted that the rural educated youth she studied from lower-middle and middle-class backgrounds all had school certificates at secondary or tertiary level. None had graduated from prestigious schools, had English language proficiency, nor had computer skills for good jobs in Jakarta (the capital). So they set more realistic aspirations for upward social mobility in a less competitive urban setting. From there, many combined irregular work with further schooling, seeking to secure a stable job for further advancement.

As the examples from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Indonesia illustrate, migration provides opportunities for children and young people to leave what may be seen as an oppressive home environment and move to a place where, even if one performs “low” status work, it is considered higher status than if one remained at home. The examples show that in the geographical space and time provided through the process of migration, migrants actively acquire and apply new forms of knowledge and skills to contribute to social reproduction while also seeking status and upward social mobility. The learning occurs through the opportunities that the migrant faces in a new environment: the exposure to new ideas, places, persons, and practices along with the lived experience away from one’s home. For those children and young people who do not have high-level skills or experiences, attributes such as “adaptability” are valued by some employers (Ansell 2005, p. 184). Learning also happens through the opportunity to remake oneself. This is particularly important for those who feel or who are made to feel inferior at home. As mentioned above, migration “invisibilizes” the “low” status associated with the work, so when you return home, migrants are in a position to describe it differently. Second, the migrants tend to move to more cosmopolitan setting where they acquire a more sophisticated way of speaking, dressing, and comportment associated with higher status and success.

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## 6 Engaging with Networks and the Learning that Takes Place

Having identified status in employment as central to livelihoods and a driver of migration for young persons, this section focuses on the social networks in the process of migrating and securing work and the types of learning that takes place through engagement with them. In so doing, it also reveals the intragenerational aspects to social reproduction including the cultivation of a support system that makes migration possible and which helps to sustain it.

In West Java (Indonesia), Minza (2012) found that the main appeal of Pontianak as a destination for migrant young men and women students is its social networks. Many of the migrants, be they ethnic Dayak or Malay, Chinese, or Madurese Indonesians, have established social networks in the city be it for government jobs (Dayak) or business (Chinese). These networks are valuable for providing information about possible jobs (while they are studying or to secure their first job after completing their studies). For some the contact may be able to provide accommodation in exchange for light housework. Parents appreciate this because they feel their children have adult supervision, and for the young person, it may ease their living costs. Given that most feel a strong sense of obligation to their parents, easing their costs is welcome. The most successful groups are the Chinese because their group dominates the local economy and industry, and they feel confident about using their contacts to secure work.

In the Philippines, Camacho (2010) describes that child domestic work is initially found through family or village connections. Over time, however, children widen their contacts and learn how to negotiate the terms of work to find and secure better

employment for themselves. As they work in private households, their opportunities for mixing with others outside work are limited. Nevertheless, over time, they find other domestic workers in the neighborhood whom they get to know and trust and from whom they find out about better work opportunities. As some explained, when they first migrated, most had little understanding of what they were getting themselves into and were dependent on others. However, as their experience grows they become less naïve, more resourceful, and more confident to find better opportunities.

Zhang (2006) discusses network practices employed in young women's rural–urban migration in China. *Guanxi* networks, as she describes them, are male dominated. And yet, jobs secured through such networks provide assurances of safety and trust, so parents prefer them, and young women secure their jobs through them. While there is a controlling element to such networks, as they gain experience and maturity over the process of migration, young women become less passively engaged. Once they have migrated and secured a job, they seek independence from the network as soon as possible. Zhang notes that when they are younger and less experienced, they are more easily cheated and taken advantage of; however, they learn from these experiences and become more astute, recognizing that they cannot trust anyone, and eventually they become potential networks for others.

Froerer's (2011) work in India provides an interesting contrast among groups in one rural setting in India. On the one hand, the tribal population has long had to cultivate social and economic contacts outside the village because of the limited opportunities locally. They further have a reputation for doing any kind of work. They have no qualms about leaving behind their relatives and community for periods of time, and the out-migration of young men and women to pursue vocational training outside the village is long established. In contrast, the local Hindus who have primarily relied on agriculture for their livelihoods have not invested in developing outside contacts. Now that landlessness is growing and they are no longer able to rely on their land to secure a living, they are in a difficult position. They currently lack the skills and social contacts to interact with the external world.

Hu (2012) presents a typology of migrant types based on research of young rural–urban migrants in China. The most successful, the “career builder,” is opportunistic, aware of social hierarchy, and makes strategic use of social connections. The least successful, the “lost follower,” is insufficiently well prepared and not under the “protective wing of relatives and friends” so easily taken advantage of.

As the examples illustrate, without social contacts who can facilitate the process and help secure employment, the process of migration is impossible. While “new” migrants may have some degree of formal schooling, they lack the “street smarts” to negotiate with employers and adapt to life in a new place. Over time, they learn from their experiences (including mistakes) and observations, they become more mature, and they gain a greater degree of independence from their initial contacts. They shift from having little control over their own circumstances to potentially mobilizing others to migrate. In so doing, they renegotiate and create their own identity that abides by the intergenerational contract while also cultivating a wider extra-household support system so as to improve the migration experience.

## 7 Engaging with Gender

Across almost all of the readings (notably from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Lao PDR, and the Philippines), the motivations for migrating, the processes by which migration happens, and the impact are heavily gendered. Despite the apparent rigidity of this structure, findings across the range of sources demonstrate how girls and young women (in particular) engage with and, through the experience, acquire not only basic survival and coping skills but also confidence and status, albeit limited in scale and duration.

First, the rigidity of gender. The examples from Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and India show that labor markets are extremely narrow, and female employment is largely confined to paid domestic work (in middle- or upper-class households) or, more recently, employment in labor-intensive industries, including export-oriented garment factories (in the case of Bangladesh). While migration of “poor” adolescent girls for domestic work is an established tradition in most of the contexts, the association of females with industrial work is more recent. Males, in contrast, tend to engage in other types of waged labor (Rao and Hossain 2012, 2013; Heissler 2013; Muttarak 2004).

Second, as compared to males, there is greater concern for girls’ physical safety, risk of inappropriate sexual activity, and protection of their morals. Their out-migration is generally seen as short term and temporary after which it is assumed they will return home and resume their domestic responsibilities as daughters, future wives, daughters-in-law, and mothers. The opportunity to work outside provides an opportunity to earn money for dowry in Bangladesh (Heissler 2011; Rao 2013); for remittances or to learn a skill or trade for Laotian migrants in Thailand (Huijsmans 2014), tribal women from Eastern India working in Delhi (Rao 2011), and child domestic workers in the Philippines (Camacho 2010); and to escape economic hardship and lack of independence at home for rural Indonesian girls working in factories in Jakarta (Bessell 2009).

Third, showing the contradictions around female engagement in the workforce, the preference is for young, unmarried, and childless female workers (Huijsmans 2014; Heissler 2011; Rao 2011). Writing of Indonesia, though applicable elsewhere in the region, Naafs (2013) notes that his situation suits employers and the nation-state, for whom a flexible, cheap, and compliant workforce is competitive and highly desirable.

Linked to the previous points, fourth, it is important to note new gender patterns among some Asian countries: there are increased levels of female migrants than has been the case in the past (Abebe and Kjørhold 2012). Ukwatta (2010), for example, writes that in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, women migrants comprise the vast majority of legal migrants (between 60% and 70%), primarily as domestic workers. The monetary and social consequences associated with the feminization of migration are mixed. The remuneration associated with this type of work tends not to be very high and, in some settings, comes with social costs in the migrant setting as well as subsequently on return.

Related to the topic of status in employment (raised earlier), both domestic work and factory work are deemed “low” status jobs for females both in the home community and in the migrant setting. On Bangladesh, Rao (2013, p. 11) writes:

Migration and the movement across physical space enhance their personal confidence, yet a price is paid in terms of higher dowries and submission to controls over their autonomy and sexuality like commuting to work from home, travelling in groups, modesty of dress and getting married as soon as possible.

Through migration, not only do girls and young women fulfill their responsibilities to the intergenerational contract (Huijsmans 2014; Heissler 2011; Bessell 2009) but also through waged work they engage in modernizing processes that put them into direct contact with national and global economic forces. This is not without irony and contradiction. As Rao (2013) observes from her study in Bangladesh, the labor of girls and young women is central to household and national and global economies, and yet this cannot come at the expense of family relations and morality; hence, it remains short term, temporal, and “low” status work.

Among boys and men, migration presents different opportunities and pressures. First, in contrast to girls’ migration for remittances and skills, parents in Lao PDR speak of migration as a means to create self-discipline for those who may otherwise have been considered “lazy” (Huijsmans 2014, p. 299). In Indonesia, Naafs (2013) found that young men are not expected to be serious, and they are given more personal freedom than their female counterparts. Yet when they reach their 20s or mid-30s, they are pressured to get married and become responsible providers for the family. This creates pressure on those young men who find it a challenge to find decent work. Naafs points out that, in contrast, young females can more easily assume the traditional stereotype of females undertaking unpaid domestic work within their household.

In Bangladesh, Rao (2013) found that the main driver of male migration was to meet the expectations for their future lives as husbands, fathers, and main income earners for the household. Young men feel considerable pressure individually and at household and community level to fill that role. For those young men who successfully returned home after working abroad, the reward was not only in having managed to save and remit earnings from their work to build up a house and contribute to the community but also in being seen as a desirable groom. In contrast to males in Bangladesh, Heissler (2010) found that on return, when it came to marriage transactions, migrant working girls and their parents in Bangladesh did not speak about the outside work experience or denied it for fear that it would compromise their ability to find a “good” groom and would result in higher dowry payments.

In the Philippines, migrant child domestic workers explained that as a result of the remittances they send back home, their parents consult with them more frequently, and they feel that their status in the family has improved (Camacho 2010). Furthermore they claim they themselves have more courage to express their views and

opinions on family matters and feel that they are being listened to and treated more like adults.

While the structures around gender appear rigid, girls and young women do engage with them in ways that display their existing and widening confidence and life skills. In addition to literacy and numeracy learned through the more formal setting of school and the confidence that may come with having completed a particular level of schooling, the experience of migration cultivates other life skills, including basic survival and coping skills in an unknown environment. These include the ability to negotiate and survive, ways of speaking and dressing in an urban and more cosmopolitan context, and the ability to interact with new cultures, different classes, and ways of living (Rao 2010; Rao and Hossain 2011; Heissler 2011; Camacho 2010). Being savvy and street-smart may lead to better opportunities for advancement (Heissler 2013; Froerer 2011; Camacho 2010).

Here follow several examples of how, with limitations, girls and young women engage with structures to meet individual and household needs. In Thailand, local (i.e., Thai) domestic workers tend to be more trusted than foreigners. They have, however, become quite scarce in the labor market because those who would have done this in the past have moved to other sectors or have migrated abroad, presenting them with more bargaining power with their employers (Muttarak 2004).

Rural adolescent girls working in Jakarta spoke about how work was a means for them to fulfill their obligations to the family while also providing an income for themselves and a degree of independence away from the more controlled environment at home (especially for girls). The girls expressed that living away from their families and having an income created choices and opportunities they would not have had at home, and all felt they were able to delay marriage and have more control over the choice of a husband (Bessell 2009). In so doing, they were able to renegotiate aspects of their relationships with families including in having more independence and choice in decision-making affecting their own and their family's future. This confidence and assertiveness would not likely have come had they remained at home, undertaking domestic work within their own families for no remuneration.

Christian tribal girls who worked in Delhi as domestic workers and who returned periodically to their homes in Eastern India had varying degrees of success in their engagements with the rigidity of gender (Rao 2011). On the one hand, for having taken on a typically "male" role in providing for the family, she is respected within the family and has greater influence on her parents, siblings, and in the wider community. And yet, domestic work in others' households, as in other countries cited in this chapter, is considered "low" status work. The irony is that most of these girls and young women had some level of secondary education deemed necessary for future "respectable" employment. However, with the high competition for jobs, many girls were not able to secure work locally. Through contacts with local women, the jobs were secured in Delhi. While some level of literacy and numeracy is required for such work, and these skills would have helped to some extent in negotiating the terms of employment and working conditions, other skills needed to be learned on the job: speaking the main language, learning to use the household

technologies and services in a middle-class urban household, and being loyal and submissive employees. Over the course of living and working outside their village, they adopted a more urban lifestyle, dress, and mannerisms. They also got used to less restrictive urban culture (including for females), which brought about new aspirations for an urban lifestyle and greater gender equality. While many intended the work to be short term and temporary, a number indicated that while they ultimately wished to leave the work given its “low” status, they themselves had changed, preferred the lifestyle, and would not be able to readjust to village life. Some further feared the lack of respect and marginalization they believed they would experience at home as soon as they were no longer working and remitting earnings (Rao 2011).

The examples provided above illustrate the ways in which young people, particularly girls and young women, engage with structures associated with gender. While it is not possible to get beyond narrow and gendered labor markets, migrant girls and women tend to engage in “low” status work, while they are working and remitting an income, they have an elevated status within their household and wider community. Over this period they actively engage in household decision-making and renegotiate household relations and the terms of the intergenerational contract. Throughout this process they have greater freedoms than at home and question the gendered norms and rules at home. The temporal dimension to their status and freedom is not lost on some of the girls, who are aware that should they cease working and return home, the enhanced status they will have achieved – unlike for boys and men – will cease.

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## 8 Conclusions

While acknowledging gaps in migrant children and young people’s experiences from across the region as a whole, some common themes emerge. First, children and young people directly contribute to the daily and generational reproduction of families and communities. Further, the migration of particular categories of children and young people is central to social reproduction, confirming its spatial and temporal dimensions as well as its interdependent individual and collective dimensions. The intergenerational contract drives social reproduction of “poor” and disadvantaged and disadvantaged families. Ongoing social and economic change, and the modernizing process of formal education impacts on the contract, creating new aspirations and expectations of children and parents for upward social mobility and economic security. Experience across Asian settings shows that for many families, particularly those for whom formal schooling is not something previously experienced within the household, educational capital alone cannot deliver on its claims. Migration provides an outlet for the unmet aspirations of rural children and young people, both temporally and spatially for educated unemployed and under-employed males. Having acquired skills of literacy and numeracy at school, migration provides an avenue for multiple sites of learning, including through young persons’ engagement with status, social networks, and gender, thereby illustrating



the intragenerational aspects of social reproduction without which the migration experience is likely to be less successful.

The findings illustrate that there is no single trajectory to upward social mobility and no fixed point of learning. The link between migration, laboring, and learning is complex. Through experiential learning, negotiation, adaptation to new ways of living, the development of life skills, growing self-confidence and maturity, migrant children and young people negotiate and engage with the various structures and opportunities they are confronted with. While seeking to meet obligations to their household, children and young people also seek to meet individual aspirations and desires, including for status. And yet there are limits to the spaces and opportunities they create for themselves. This is particularly in the case of girls and young women who have greater autonomy when they are away from home, with consequences such that many question local practices and restrictions at home and who question their ability to ever return home.

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## Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of Malaysia's skilled migration through the concept of "education-induced migration." The focus of this chapter is twofold: firstly, to explain how their migration pathways need to be contextualized to Malaysia's race-stratified education system that was institutionalized during the British colonial period and, secondly, to explain how Malaysia's skilled migration needs to be seen as a continuum from young people's education migration pathways. This chapter consists of five sections. The first section introduces the theoretical and empirical backgrounds to Malaysia's education-induced skilled

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migration. The second section provides the historical background to the institutionalization and development of Malaysia's race-stratified education system. The third section gives an overview of the geographies of higher education for Malaysian students in public, private, and overseas institutions. The fourth section reviews available data suggesting evidence of education-induced skilled migration among the Malaysian diaspora and describes two examples of such migration paths among non-*bumiputera* student-turned Malaysian skilled migrants in Singapore. The final section concludes this chapter and calls for researchers to adopt a continuum lens in understanding young people's learning-to-laboring migration processes.

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### Keywords

Education-induced skilled migration • Education system • Higher education • Learning to laboring • Malaysia • Race

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## 1 Introduction

Malaysia is a postcolonial country, which gained independence from the British colonial government in August 1957. In 2010, Malaysia's multiethnic citizen population is estimated to be 25.2 million, consisting of the official ethnic groups of *bumiputera*-Malays (54.5%), other *bumiputeras* ("sons of soil") (12.8%), Chinese (24.5%), Indians (7.3%), and others (0.7%) (DOSM 2013). In the year 2010, tertiary-educated Malaysian citizens aged 20 years and above who were resident in Malaysia made up 21.6% of the population (DOSM 2013, p. 5). These statistics, however, do not capture Malaysians who live abroad. Although it is common knowledge that many Malaysians have sought emigration, data on Malaysian emigration is not publicly available from the Malaysian authorities.

In a report on Malaysia's brain drain, the World Bank (2011) estimated that there are one million overseas Malaysians in the year 2010, for which a third are tertiary-educated skilled migrants (hereafter "Malaysian diasporas"). In 2010, one in ten Malaysian diasporas migrated to a country of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – twice the world average. Overseas Malaysians are located in Singapore (57%), Australia (10%), Brunei (7%), the UK (6%), the USA (6%), Canada (2%), and New Zealand (NZ) (2%). This contrasts with the geographical distribution a decade earlier: Singapore (46%), Australia (12%), Brunei (9%), the USA (8%), and the UK (8%). In January 2011, Talent Corporation Malaysia Berhad (TalentCorp), a public sector organization under the Prime Minister's Office, was established to oversee the current Malaysian government's plan for Malaysia to be a "global talent hub" by the year 2020. One of TalentCorp's tasks is to facilitate the return migration of Malaysian diasporas through the revamped Returning Expert Programme (REP). This signals the current Malaysian government's attention on skilled and return migration.

With the ease of global mobility and the internationalization of higher education, international student migration has been recognized as a stepping-stone for transition into skilled migration. For host countries, international students are increasingly seen and recruited as potential skilled migrants (She and Wotherspoon 2013). For migrants, overseas education, especially at the tertiary level, is seen as a way of accumulating capital for individuals and families (Waters 2006). Indeed, it is common knowledge that access to higher education is one of the contributing triggers for the Malaysian diasporas' emigration from Malaysia (Selvaratnam 1988). Practices of quotas privileging the *bumiputeras* in access to public university places, government scholarships, and postgraduate employment in certain sectors in Malaysia have contributed to a culture of migrating for education, especially among young middle-class non-*bumiputeras* (Koh 2015). It is commonly believed that "racial policies enforced Malaysia's brain drain" (The Malay Mail 2013). In fact, Andressen (1993) goes to the extent of describing overseas Malaysians as "educational refugees."

Despite literature highlighting the need to interrogate the interrelationship between education migration and other forms of migration (Findlay et al. 2012; Li et al. 1996; see also Raghuram 2013), little has been done in this regard with respect to the Malaysian case. This is not to say that existing research on the Malaysian diaspora does not point out that migrating for education has often been a step toward familial migration and permanent settlement in the host or third countries. In fact, studies on the Malaysian Chinese diaspora do highlight this (e.g., Cartier 2003; Nonini 1997). However, these studies come with two shortcomings. First, they contribute toward the assumption that there is a common and homogenous experience among the Malaysian diaspora. Second, and more importantly, they contribute toward the reification of race as a divisive and taken-for-granted social category – a contentious point for postcolonial, multiethnic Malaysia. Both points highlighted here contribute toward the obscuring of any diversity in experiences and motivations for migration among the Malaysian diaspora – that is, any diversity *despite, and in addition to*, race. This also includes the examination of how education experiences in Malaysia (i.e., prior to emigration) relate to the varied migration geographies among the Malaysian diaspora. In other words, how can a focus on "education" shed light on Malaysia's skilled migration?

This chapter discusses Malaysia's skilled migration in relation to the concept of "education-induced migration." The focus of this chapter is twofold. First, this chapter explains how their migration pathways need to be contextualized to Malaysia's race-stratified education system institutionalized during the British colonial period. Second, and consequently, this chapter explains how Malaysia's skilled migration needs to be seen as a continuum from young people's education migration pathways. In particular, this chapter highlights how these young people's education migration may have commenced as early as the primary school stage, with a view to future overseas higher education. In sum, the notion of "education-induced migration" enables an understanding of how education has been established as a first step toward young people's longer term labor and skilled migration. In doing so, this

chapter addresses recent calls for scholars to examine “how students become mobile” (Carlson 2013, p. 170).

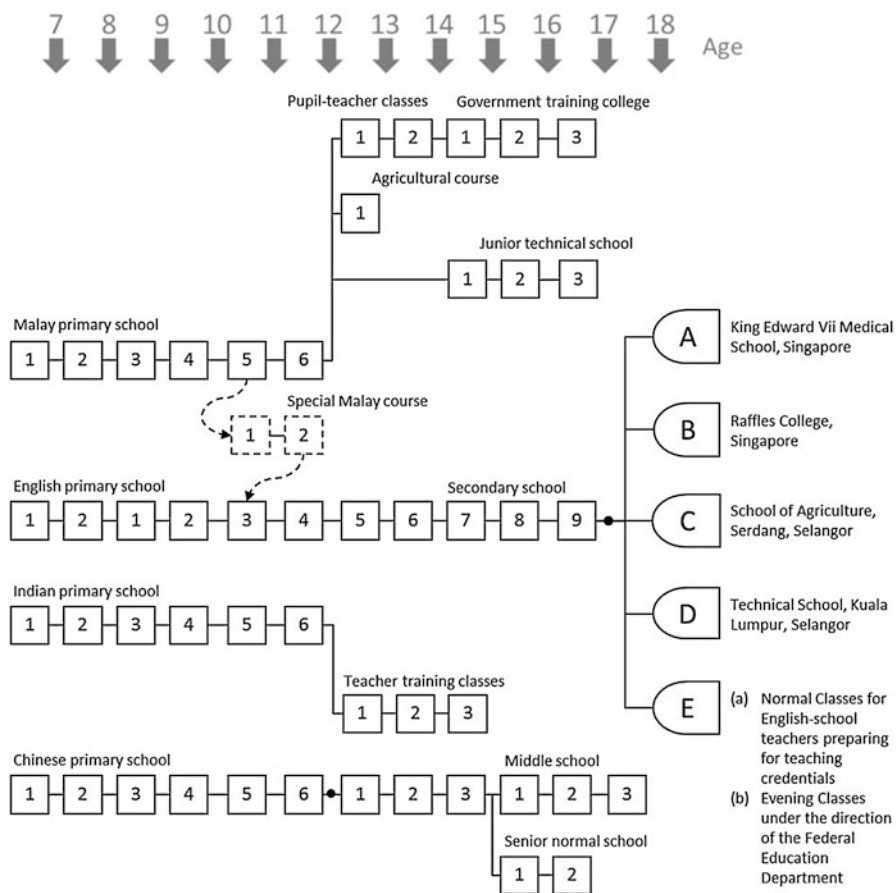
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## 2 A Race-Stratified Education System

In an edited volume entitled *Going to School in East Asia* (Postiglione and Tan 2007), various authors detailed how the education system in selected countries in East Asia is deeply intertwined with their respective national histories. Indeed, contexts matter for a deeper understanding of how the education system came to be in a particular place, young people’s schooling experiences, as well as the interrelationships between education, society, and the economy. In order to understand the connections between learning and laboring in Malaysia detailed later in this chapter, this section provides the historical background to the formation and development of Malaysia’s race-stratified education system. The focus on racial stratification in the education system as a resultant development of British colonial rule here is important and echoes many other observations on colonial legacies in the realm of education elsewhere (Joseph and Matthews 2014; Megahed and Lack 2011; Law and Lee 2012; Sai 2013).

### 2.1 British Colonial Period and the Early Independence Years: Institutionalization

Malaysia’s education system can be described as one that is stratified by race and language. Indeed, several scholars have highlighted that the roots of Malaysia’s education system consisting of four race-based parallel school streams can be traced to the British colonial period (Agadjanian and Liew 2005; Loh 1975; Watson 1993). Before the First World War, Anglo-Malay schools and vernacular schools (i.e., Chinese and Tamil) coexisted but received different treatments from the British colonial administration. While Anglo-Malay education received government funding and support, the development of vernacular schools was very much left to the respective communities. The British colonial administration’s *laissez-faire* attitude toward vernacular schools changed in the 1920s, when Chinese vernacular schools were placed under government surveillance to curb the rise of communism following the 1911 Kuomintang Revolution in China (see Lee 2011). The prioritization of Anglo-Malay education is clearly seen in the education system in the Federated Malay States in the 1930s (Fig. 1). For instance, while it was possible for students in Malay primary schools to transition into English primary schools through a 2-year special Malay course, this was not an opportunity open to students from Indian and Chinese primary schools. Furthermore, students from Malay and English primary schools were able to go on to various specialized courses beyond secondary school (e.g., teacher training and medical school). However, this was not possible for students from Indian and Chinese primary schools.



**Fig. 1** Education system in the Federated Malay States, 1930s (Source: Adapted from Loh (1975, p. 136))

After independence from the British colonial government in August 1957, the postcolonial Malaysian government made several attempts to consolidate the stratified school system. The Report of the Education Committee (1956) (“Razak Report”) and the Report of the Education Review Committee (1960) (“Rahman Talib Report”) established the principles for a unified national education system. In particular, the Razak Report emphasized four points: first, formation of a single national education system; second, Malay as the key medium of instruction; third, a Malayan-oriented curriculum; and, fourth, a common system of examination. The Rahman Talib Report reiterated a similar emphasis on a Malayan-oriented curriculum. The recommendations of these reports were subsequently translated into the Education Act of 1961. Following this, Malay medium primary schools were renamed *Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan* (“national primary schools”), while English, Chinese, and Tamil primary schools were renamed *Sekolah Rendah Jenis*

*Kebangsaan* (“national-type schools”). The medium of instruction was Malay in national schools and English, Chinese, or Tamil in the respective national-type schools. In 1967, the National Language Act stipulated Malay as the only national and official language of Malaysia. Thus, Malay was made a compulsory subject in schools. In 1968, English national-type schools were converted to national schools in phases.

13 May 1969 was a key milestone in Malaysian history. In the federal elections held on 12 May 1969, the governing alliance lost a large number of seats in the *Dewan Rakyat* (“House of Representative”) to the opposition parties. Riots broke out between supporters of the governing and opposition parties in Kuala Lumpur the following day, resulting in the declaration of a national emergency. In the national narrative, the May 13 incident has been described as racial riots (NOC 1969). However, some scholars have highlighted that the fundamental causes were indeed political (Kua 2008). Despite these alternative interpretations, the May 13 incident has been invoked by the Malaysian government as a cautionary reminder against threats to “racial harmony” and “national unity.” An oft-used argument is that since racial issues are highly sensitive in multiethnic Malaysia – as evident in the May 13 incident – all efforts must be placed to ensure “racial harmony.” One of the ways to do so is by instilling “national unity” through the national education curriculum and system. As Chai (1971, p. 37) notes, the rationale for Malaysia’s national education policy is a common syllabus and medium of instruction that would, firstly, promote a nationally homogenous outlook; secondly, lead to a common culture; and, thirdly, provide the basis for social cohesion and national unity. Indeed, this rationale has been translated to changes in the education curriculum and system. For example, in 1983, a common national curriculum known as *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah* (KBSR) (“integrated primary school curriculum”) was introduced across all national and national-type schools. In 1988, the common curriculum was extended to secondary schools through the *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah* (KBSM) (“integrated secondary school curriculum”).

## 2.2 From the 1970s to the Present: Reinforced Development

However, despite these integration and unification efforts, Malaysia’s education system remains stratified in terms of race and language. An obvious indicator is that student enrolment continues to be stratified by race – even in the present. The recently published *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025* (Malaysia 2012) notes that student populations in national and national-type schools have become increasingly racially homogenous. Comparing student enrolment data in 2011 with that in 2000, the proportion of Malaysian Chinese students in national-type Chinese schools increased from 92% to 96%; Malaysian-Indian students in national-type Indian schools increased from 47% to 56%; while national schools consist of 94% *bumiputera* students (Malaysia 2012, pp. 3–24).

At the secondary school stage, students from the national-type Chinese and Tamil primary schools are required to enter a compulsory year known as the “Remove



class.” The objective is to facilitate the integration of these students into a common secondary school system using Malay as the medium of instruction. In effect, this means that these students would have to undergo 6 years of secondary school education, compared to 5 years for students from the national schools. Singh and Mukherjee (1993, p. 95) note that about 30% of students from national-type primary schools are faced with the choice of dropping out of the national secondary school system, thus facing “a rather bleak future educationally” in Malaysia – unless they pursue private or overseas education.

It can be seen from the above examples that the objective of integrating the stratified education system has had the opposite effect of reinforcing existing racial and linguistic stratification in the education system. This is due to two reasons. First, integration efforts have been focused at the secondary school stage without making similar changes at the primary school stage. Second, and more importantly, these efforts have not gone beyond changes at a rather superficial level. An obvious example is in the introduction of the 1-year “Remove class” to transition students who have spent the preceding 6 years in racially and linguistically segregated primary schools into a unified secondary school experience – without tackling the fundamental factors at the primary school stage. In effect, these efforts are akin to treating the symptoms without addressing the root cause of the issue.

While racial and linguistic stratification in Malaysian primary schools could be said to be an inherited legacy from the British colonial period, the postcolonial Malaysian government has also extended and exacerbated such stratification into the upper secondary, preuniversity, and university levels. One of the key reasons for this was the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971 during the aftermath of the May 13 incident. The NEP was to be implemented in line with the Second Malaysia Plan (1971–1975), with the objective of resolving race-based economic inequality.

In line with the NEP objectives, pro-*bumiputera* affirmative action policies were put in place. With respect to education, the Malaysian government introduced new pro-*bumiputera* programs and infrastructure. For example, *Majlis Amanah Rakyat* (MARA), the Council of Trust for Indigenous People, was established on 1 March 1966 with the objective to aid, train, and guide *bumiputera* in areas of entrepreneurship, education, and investment. From 1972 onward, MARA established a series of residential colleges known as *Maktab Rendah Sains MARA* (MRSM) (“MARA Junior Science Colleges”). To provide skills training for *bumiputera* students, the *Institut Teknologi MARA* (ITM) (“MARA Institute of Technology”) was set up in 1967. The ITM enrolled 6,900 students in 1975, which rose to nearly 45,000 in 1996 (Lee 2005, p. 217). Technical and vocational skills training were provided through *Institut Kemahiran MARA* (IKM) (“MARA Institute of Skills”) and *Kolej Kemahiran Tinggi* (KKTM) (“Higher Skills College”). MARA also offers full scholarships and education loans for university preparatory programs and university and postgraduate degrees in local and overseas institutes. These facilities, however, are only open to *bumiputeras*.

In 1998, the Ministry of Education (MOE) established the Matriculation Division to oversee the delivery of the Matriculation Programme. This is a 1- or 2-year

preuniversity preparatory program to assist students in qualifying for degree courses in science, technology, and the professional arts in Malaysian public higher education institutions (HEIs). Starting from 2003, the Matriculation Programme is offered at matriculation colleges and MARA colleges only (i.e., only to *bumiputera* students). From 2005 onward, selection into the Matriculation Programme was based on a quota of 90% *bumiputera* to 10% non-*bumiputera* students. The Matriculation Programme has been viewed as a route to “expedite the intake of Malay students into the local universities” (Lee 2005, p. 217). There are two reasons for this view. First, the Matriculation Programme is only recognized for entry into Malaysian public HEIs, but not overseas HEIs. Given the pro-*bumiputera* selectivity for entries into MARA colleges, the Matriculation Programme, and Malaysian public universities, this is in effect a route catered for *bumiputera* students. Second, students taking the Matriculation Programme complete their primary to preuniversity education in 12 years, compared to 13 years for students who take the 2-year *Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia* (STPM, “Malaysian Higher School Certificate”) preuniversity qualification, which is equivalent to the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level (“A-Levels”). This means that students taking the Matriculation route would enter university at least 1 year ahead of students taking the STPM route. All in all, the introduction of pro-*bumiputera* education routes and facilities has extended the racial stratification in Malaysia’s education system from the primary to the university stage.

In contrast, postsecondary and higher education opportunities for non-*bumiputeras* were limited and curtailed. In 1969, Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TARC), a government-aided college, was established by the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) for non-Malays to pursue certificate and diploma education. However, its enrolment numbers paled in comparison to the government-funded ITM. TARC student enrolment increased from 4,046 students in 1975 to 6,000 in 1980 and to about 9,000 in 1996 (Lee 2005, p. 218). For the first 20 years of its existence, its certificate and diploma courses were not accorded government recognition (Freedman 2001). In the late 1960s, the Malaysian Chinese community proposed to set up Merdeka University to cater for graduates from the Malaysian Independent Chinese Secondary Schools (MICSSs), whose Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) qualification is not recognized for entry into Malaysian public universities. These schools are not government funded and adopt a curriculum developed by the United Chinese School Committees’ Association of Malaysia (UCSCAM) and the United Chinese School Teachers’ Association (UCSTA). Petitions submitted to the authorities were repeatedly rejected. As the next section shows, it was only after the expansion of the private higher education industry in the 1990s that MICSS students have alternative access to postsecondary and higher education that were otherwise curtailed in Malaysia.

This section has provided the historical background to the institutionalization and development of Malaysia’s race-stratified education system. Malaysia’s education system has its roots in the education system institutionalized during the British colonial period. While efforts have been made to integrate the different education streams into a unified system, the results thus far have been left wanting.

In particular, the education system remains stratified by race and language from the primary school to the higher education stages. The next section explains how this race-stratified education system has implications for the geographies of Malaysian students in public, private, and overseas higher education. This will contextualize the geographies of Malaysian education-induced skilled migrants in the fourth section of this chapter.

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### **3 Geographies of Public, Private, and Overseas Higher Education**

#### **3.1 Seeking Overseas (Western) Education**

Malaysian students have been pursuing overseas college and university education in England, Australia, New Zealand (NZ), and other countries since the British colonial period (Hirschman 1975). Starting from as early as the late nineteenth century, there has been a practice of offering prestigious scholarships for selected students to attend university in Britain. After the introduction of the Malay Administrative Service (MAS) for junior subordinates to the more prestigious Malayan Civil Service (MCS) in 1910, there has also been a practice of sending students for overseas education as part of their training for civil service jobs, especially to the UK, Australia, the USA, and Canada. However, these scholarships were awarded based on the applicants' academic performance in the English education stream. This meant that students from the vernacular education streams would have been excluded from the scholarships. On the other hand, students from the Malay education stream had the option of undergoing a 2-year special Malay course (Fig. 1) before transitioning into the English education stream. Furthermore, the colonial administration recruited local English-educated graduates to fill junior civil service positions to assist British and European colonial officials in the higher ranks. The exclusive nature of recruitment into the MAS also meant that civil service jobs were viewed with prestige. This inadvertently led to English education – and, in particular, British education – being viewed as a more desirable option for those who could afford to access it.

Indeed, as early as in 1947, there were three times as many privately funded students pursuing overseas studies (179 students), compared to those who were publicly funded (62 students) (Cheeseman 1948). By the early 1970s, Malaysian overseas students have increased in number from hundreds to ten thousands. In the 1972 country report for the Colombo Plan meeting (Commonwealth Consultative Committee on South and South-East Asia and Colombo Plan Bureau 1972, p. 103), it was noted that there were 10,000–12,000 overseas Malaysian students in Commonwealth countries between the late 1960s and the early 1970s. The report also noted that 9,969 students were on government scholarships to Great Britain (56.2%), Australia (26.8%), NZ (13.2%), Indonesia (3.2%), and Pakistan (0.7%) between 1967 and 1970. By the mid-1970s, it was estimated that there were 20,000 overseas Malaysian students (The Treasury 1975). Two decades later, this number has more than doubled: in 1999, there were 49,438 overseas Malaysian students (UIS 2013).

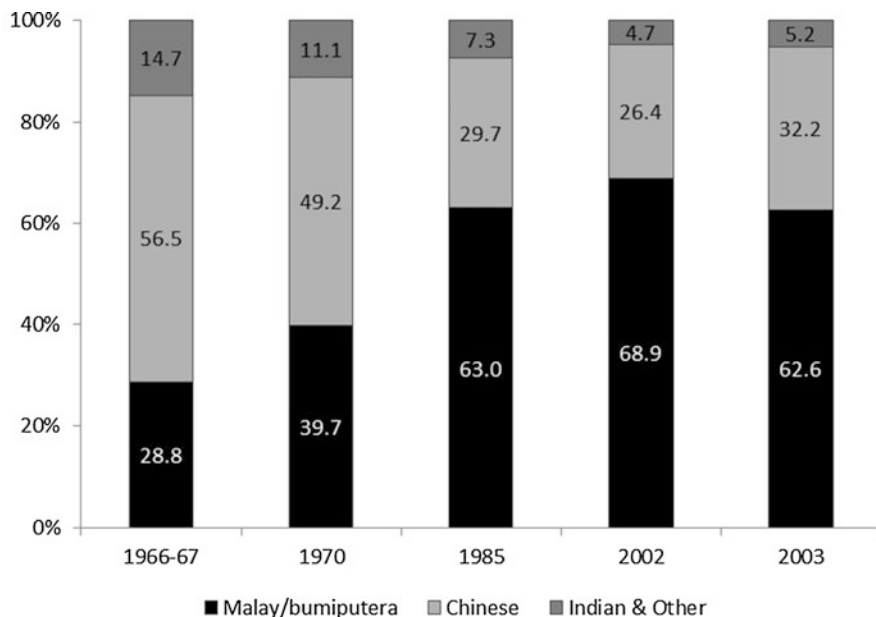
The inclination for overseas education has continued to today. For example, Pyvis and Chapman (2007) found that Malaysian students often associated international education with Western education and qualifications. Overseas education is perceived to be of a higher quality and more marketable for postgraduate employment (Sin 2009). Some parents send their children for overseas education in preparation for their subsequent family migration (Ghani 1990). Indeed, based on data available from 1999 to 2012, Malaysia has consistently been one of the top 12 countries with outbound international students (UIS 2013). In 2008 and 2009, for example, Malaysia was the top fifth international student-sending country after China, India, the Republic of Korea, Germany, and the USA. From 1999 to 2012, there were on average 47,500 Malaysian students in overseas HEIs per annum. For comparison, the total number of students enrolled in Malaysian public HEIs in the year 2012 was 521,793 (MOHE 2013). This means that Malaysian international students constitute about 9% of young Malaysians engaged in higher education.

### 3.2 Explaining Overseas Education Trends

There are three explanations to these overseas education trends in the post-1970 period. The first is the introduction of pro-*bumiputera* affirmative action policies that have limited non-*bumiputera* students' access to higher education in Malaysia. The second, which is closely related to the first, is the provision of public and private scholarships for overseas education. The third factor is the expansion of the private HEI industry in Malaysia following the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1996. Each of these three factors will be elaborated in turn.

The significant increase in the number of Malaysian students seeking overseas university education needs to be contextualized to the NEP and pro-*bumiputera* affirmative action policies. In the 1970s, limited university places, compounded with pro-*bumiputera* quotas, meant that non-*bumiputeras* faced fierce competition in gaining entry into Malaysian public universities. In 1971, about 3,000 out of 8,062 applicants (37.2%) were admitted into the three existing public universities (UNESCO 1973, p. 102). In 1988, only 15.7% of 54,557 applicants gained public university admissions (Ghani 1990, p. 6). Between 1970 and 1983, the number of Malaysian students overseas has more than doubled from 24,000 to 58,000 (Reid 1988). In 1985, 22,684 Malaysian students were enrolled in overseas institutions (37.5%), compared to 37,838 students enrolled in Malaysian public universities (62.5%) (Malaysia 1986, Table 19-3, pp. 490–491).

This increase in Malaysian students seeking overseas higher education also has an ethnic dimension. From 1970 onward – and especially during the 1970s to the mid-1980s – the ethnic composition of students in Malaysian universities has become predominantly *bumiputera* (Fig. 2). This contrasts with the ethnic composition of Malaysian students in overseas universities. In 1986, for example, *bumiputera* students constitute the dominant ethnic group in Malaysian public universities (63%), while Malaysian Chinese students constitute the dominant ethnic group in overseas universities (59%) (Malaysia 1986, Table 19-3, pp. 490–491).



**Fig. 2** Ethnic composition in Malaysian public universities, 1966–2003 (Source: Adapted from Sato (2007, p. 9 and p. 20))

This ethnic duality in local versus overseas education can be understood in relation to the availability of various ways to access local higher education for *bumiputera* students, which are not as equally accessible to non-*bumiputera* students. For example, while *bumiputera* students could enter Malaysian public universities through the Matriculation Programme, non-*bumiputera* Malaysian Independent Chinese Secondary School (MICSS) students would have to access private and overseas education as their qualifications are not recognized for entry into Malaysian public universities.

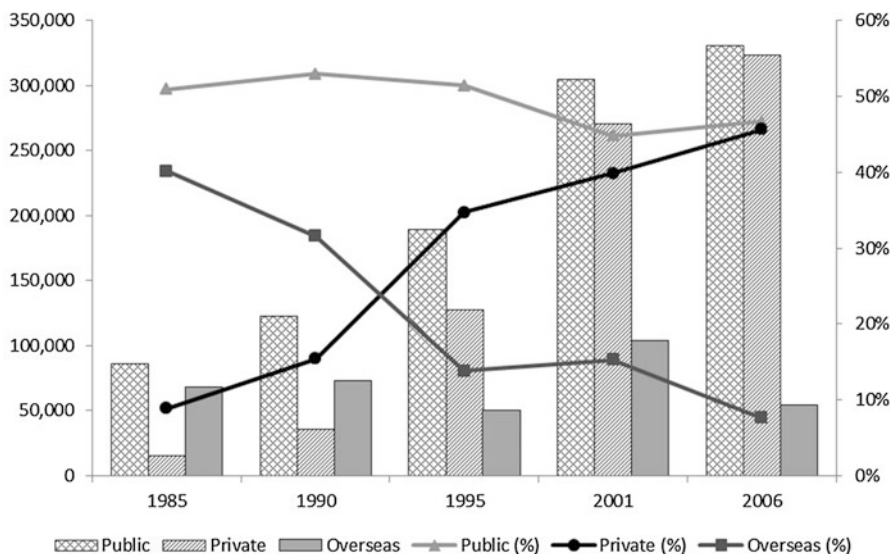
What can be seen here is a reinforcement of the existing racial stratification at the primary school stage that has been extended and expanded to the higher education stage. In other words, the introduction and implementation of pro-*bumiputera* affirmative action education-related policies in Malaysia have contributed toward the ethnicization of Malaysian students pursuing higher education locally and internationally.

A second factor for overseas education trends is the provision of public and private scholarships. As mentioned earlier, there has been a practice of linking government scholarships to civil service jobs during the British colonial period. This practice continued after Malaysia gained independence. One of the most coveted government scholarships is the *Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam* (JPA) scholarship administered by the Public Service Department. JPA scholarship holders are sent to selected overseas universities and are required to serve the civil service for a period of 6–10 years after graduation. The number of overseas scholarships awarded

annually has increased from 500 to 2,000, before stabilizing at 1,500 since the year 2010 (Wee 2010). In line with the NEP, JPA scholarships are subjected to *bumiputera* quotas. Given the fact that the JPA scholarship is a means of recruitment into the civil service, the limited nature of the scholarship indirectly affects the civil service as a potential graduate career choice. This is especially significant for non-*bumiputera* students who face restricted access at three stages: firstly, available options for preuniversity education; secondly, government scholarships and public university education in Malaysia; and, thirdly, recruitment into the civil service. This has implications for the Malaysian student-turned skilled migrants to be elaborated in the next section of this chapter.

However, the JPA scholarship is not the only means of sponsorship for overseas education. There are also a range of private scholarships awarded by Malaysian corporations, as well as scholarships from overseas universities and funders. For example, the Sime Darby Foundation (YSD) offers scholarships for preuniversity, undergraduate, and postgraduate studies at top universities in China, the UK, and the USA, and Shell offers Shell Malaysia Overseas Scholarships for undergraduate degrees in selected engineering fields in Australia, the UK, and the USA. Malaysian students studying in the UK and the USA also have access to awards such as the Commonwealth Scholarship and various awards under the Fulbright Program. While these scholarships have facilitated Malaysian students' pursuit of overseas education, they have also been instrumental in influencing student flows to specific destination countries – and even individual universities. For example, the Axiata Foundation offers undergraduate degree scholarships for Malaysian students who have gained entry into specified courses in the Russell Group universities such as Oxford University, Cambridge University, Imperial College, University College London (UCL), London School of Economics (LSE), University of Manchester, King's College London (KCL), University of Bristol, Durham University, and Warwick University. At the LSE, for example, students originating from Malaysia constitute one of the largest groups, after students originating from China, the USA, Germany, India, and Hong Kong, and are comparable to the number of students originating from Singapore.

The trend toward overseas education has also been encouraged by a third factor, which is an increase in the number of private higher education institutions (HEIs) in Malaysia following the introduction of the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1996. It is common for these private institutions to offer upper secondary and preuniversity programs such as the GCE A-Levels and Australian Matriculation diplomas, as well as twinning programs with overseas universities. Under such programs, students would engage in “transnational” study arrangements, such as splitting time between a Malaysian private HEI and the partner overseas university, and be awarded degree qualification from the partner university. The 1996 Private Higher Educational Institutions Act was amended in 2003, which enabled the establishing and upgrading of private HEIs (including foreign university branch campuses). The introduction of both legislations saw a significant expansion in the private HEI industry: the number of private HEIs has increased from less than 50 in the mid-1980s to 640 in 2000 (Chai 2006, p. 114).



**Fig. 3** Malaysian students in higher education institutions, 1985–2006 (Source: Adapted from Wan (2007, p. 4))

With the expansion of the private HEI industry, there has been a corresponding increase in the proportions of Malaysian students enrolled in private HEIs compared to those in public and overseas HEIs (Fig. 3). While students enrolled in private HEIs constituted about 10% of the overall higher education enrolment in 1985, this rose to about 35% a decade later. Two observations here need further clarification. First, while the proportions of Malaysian students enrolled in overseas HEIs appear to be decreasing in comparison, it should be remembered that some of them may be counted in the category of private HEI students in Malaysia. Second, the sudden increase in the number of students enrolled in Malaysian public universities at the turn of the twenty-first century needs to be interpreted in relation to an increase in the number of new Malaysian public universities since the 1990s (Table 1).

### 3.3 Overseas Education Destinations

The next question to be asked is: “*where do these Malaysian overseas students go to?*” Popular destination countries for Malaysian overseas students include Australia, the UK, the US, Singapore, NZ, and Canada. In 1968, 54.6% (8,000 out of 14,629) overseas Malaysian students were studying in Australia, Great Britain, or NZ (Takei et al. 1973, p. 23). As highlighted earlier, the concentrations of Malaysian overseas students in these popular destinations have been contributed in part by a history of Malaysian students studying in selected universities in these destinations, as well as the continued preference of students and scholarship funders for these



**Table 1** Public higher education institutions in Malaysia (established after 1990)

Name of institution	Year established
University of Malaysia, Sarawak (UNIMAS)	1992
University of Malaysia, Sabah (UMS)	1994
Sultan Idris Education University (UPSI)	1997
Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM)	1998
MARA University of Technology (UiTM)	1999
University of Malaysia, Terengganu (UMT)	1999
Tun Hussein Onn University of Malaysia (UTHM)	2000
Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM)	2000
University of Malaysia, Perlis (UniMAP)	2001
University of Malaysia, Pahang (UMP)	2002
Sultan Zainal Abidin University (UNISZA)	2005
University of Malaysia, Kelantan (UMK)	2006
Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM)	2006

Source: MOHE (2011)

destinations. With the mushrooming of the private HEI industry in Malaysia, students going overseas as part of their twinning programs have also ended up in partner universities in Australia, the UK, and the USA.

Other than these Western countries popular among publicly and privately funded Malaysian students, Singapore and Taiwan are also popular destinations. In addition to Singapore's geographical proximity and shared sociocultural contexts, the Singapore government has also been actively recruiting Malaysian students since the late 1960s. In 1969, Singapore's Ministry of Education started offering the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Scholarship for ASEAN nationals to pursue preuniversity education in Singapore (Ho and Tyson 2011). Furthermore, the Singapore government introduced the Tuition Grant Scheme in 1980, offering highly subsidized tuition fees in exchange for 3 years of postgraduate employment with a Singapore-registered or Singapore-based company.

Taiwan has also emerged as a popular tertiary education destination, particularly for MICSS students. As mentioned in the previous section, MICSS students take the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) administered by the United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia (UCSCAM). The UEC is not recognized by Malaysian public universities for admissions, although it is recognized by other tertiary education institutes in various countries, including Taiwan. The number of Malaysian students studying in Taiwanese universities has increased from a mere 27 in 1990/1991 to 425 in 2005/2006 and to 2,286 in 2011/2012 (Ministry of Education Taiwan 2011).

In addition to the Western countries, Singapore, and Taiwan, countries such as Egypt, Indonesia, India, the Russian Federation, Jordan, Japan, China, and Germany have also emerged as overseas education destinations in recent years (Table 2). The Middle East countries have emerged as key destination countries especially for *bumiputera* students enrolled in the disciplines of medicine, pharmacy, dentistry,



**Table 2** Malaysian students studying overseas, 2012

Destination	Total	Government funded		Self-funded	
		N	%	N	%
Australia	16,152	3,441	21.3%	12,711	78.7%
UK	14,735	5,533	37.6%	9,202	62.4%
Egypt	10,758	6,130	57.0%	4,628	43.0%
Taiwan	7,304	1	0.0%	7,303	100.0%
USA	6,600	1,819	27.6%	4,781	72.4%
Indonesia	5,914	2,214	37.4%	3,700	62.6%
India	3,400	–	–	–	–
Russian Federation	3,350	821	24.5%	2,529	75.5%
Jordan	3,042	778	25.6%	2,264	74.4%
Singapore	3,016	16	0.5%	3,000	99.5%
Japan	1,211	1,211	100.0%	0	0.0%
NZ	1,088	762	70.0%	326	30.0%
China	789	245	31.1%	544	68.9%
Germany	452	400	88.5%	52	11.5%

Source: MOHE (2013, Table 5.1, pp. 146–148)

and a range of Islamic studies including Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic and Islamic theology, Islamic finance, and Islamic banking.

From Table 2, it is interesting to note that there are distinct geographies between students who are government funded and self-funded. For example, students in Taiwan and Singapore are almost all self-funded, while students in Japan and Germany are almost all government funded. However, Table 2 is based on data from the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) and may not have captured self-funded students who have not registered themselves with the respective Malaysian overseas offices. For example, data from the Japan Graduates' Association of Malaysia (JAGAM) shows that there have been about 50% of self-funded students studying in Japan between 1985 and 1996 (Table 3). It is highly likely that the self-funded students and students on Japanese government scholarships were MICSS students, as their UEC qualification is recognized for entry into Japanese universities (UCSCAM 2012). Furthermore, for MICSS students who are relatively more proficient in the Chinese language, the Japanese language could be an easier foreign language to pick up as there are *kanji* characters which resemble the Chinese writing.

#### 4 Transition from Overseas Students to Skilled Migrants

Taking the two preceding sections together, it is clear that the geographies of higher education for Malaysian students are closely related to Malaysia's race-stratified education system and the differential access available to students from different

**Table 3** Malaysian students studying in Japan, 1985–1997

Year	Japanese government scholarship		Malaysian government scholarship		Self-funded		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1985	109	17.2%	116	18.3%	410	64.5%	635
1986	135	15.1%	227	25.4%	532	59.5%	894
1987	165	14.7%	315	28.1%	640	57.1%	1,120
1988	197	16.4%	355	29.6%	649	54.0%	1,201
1989	232	17.7%	395	30.2%	683	52.1%	1,310
1990	254	16.5%	446	28.9%	844	54.7%	1,544
1991	262	15.0%	492	28.2%	988	56.7%	1,742
1992	252	13.0%	572	29.6%	1,110	57.4%	1,934
1993	254	12.1%	600	28.5%	1,251	59.4%	2,105
1994	270	11.9%	775	34.1%	1,231	54.1%	2,276
1995	287	12.9%	872	39.1%	1,071	48.0%	2,230
1996	299	13.7%	1,004	45.9%	886	40.5%	2,189
1997	324	15.2%	1,194	56.1%	610	28.7%	2,128

Source: JAGAM (2002)

ethnic and linguistic groups. This section tackles the question of “*how do Malaysian emigrants transition from overseas students to skilled migrants?*” This section first discusses interpretations of available data – on migrants’ age of entry, duration of stay, and reasons for migration – as proxy evidence for the Malaysian diasporas’ education-induced migration. This is then followed by a brief description of two examples of education-induced migration geographies among non-*bumiputera* student-turned skilled migrants in Singapore. These are: firstly, young border commuters (between Malaysia and Singapore) and, secondly, ASEAN Scholarship holders who pursue education in Singapore at all levels.

The focus on non-*bumiputera* students here is deliberate, since they constitute a larger proportion of Malaysian overseas students. More importantly, they are arguably the ones who more often than not transition from “overseas student” to “skilled migrant” as they pursue postgraduate careers and livelihoods in their higher education host countries or other third countries. One of the factors influencing such a migration trajectory is the fact that pro-*bumiputera* policies apply to the socioeconomic spheres of Malaysian life. These include differential access between *bumiputeras* and non-*bumiputeras* to civil service jobs, property ownership, subsidized housing, financial products, and business licenses in certain industries. In effect, this means that some non-*bumiputera* young Malaysians have resorted to overseas education as a means to pursue livelihoods beyond Malaysia, given the multiple limitations they may face had they remained in Malaysia during their adulthood. The examples described hereafter, however, are not meant to typify all education migration geographies among Malaysian skilled migrants. Instead, the purpose is to illustrate how various types of education-induced migration have been operationalized.

## 4.1 Age of Entry and Duration of Stay

Beine et al. (2006) used migrants' age of entry to OECD countries as a proxy to determine if migrants gained education before or after migration. Their findings show that Malaysia's brain drain ratios at the various controlled age of entries (12+, 18+, and 22+) are considered one of the lower ratios for countries with over 0.25 million population. This suggests that Malaysian emigrants obtained their education qualifications abroad. In other words, Malaysian skilled migrants left Malaysia as young students, before they gained tertiary education and became officially categorized as "skilled migrants." Indeed, comparing the age of entry of immigrants across countries in the same benchmark group as Malaysia, the World Bank (2011, pp. 112–113) notes that with the exception of Vietnam, Malaysian emigrants left the country at an early age – especially at the below 12 age group. Furthermore, the same report notes that Malaysia's emigration trends indicate that migrants have become younger as more people below the age of 23 are leaving the country. This suggests evidence of early student migration among Malaysian migrants.

Drawing from OECD data, Koh (2012) notes that the majority of skilled Malaysian migrants in OECD countries have resided there between 10 and 20 years. These constituted 39.3% of the overall skilled Malaysian migrant communities in Australia, 38.5% in NZ, 35.8% in the USA, and 37.3% on average across OECD countries. Drawing from the Wake Up Call Malaysia (2012) survey data, Koh further notes that the reasons cited by overseas Malaysians for residing in their current locations were, firstly, "study" (i.e., overseas education) and, secondly, "study and work" (i.e., overseas education followed by postgraduate employment). More importantly, 50% of overseas Malaysians in the 25–30 age group indicated "study and work" as their reason for residing in their current location. Since young Malaysians would have completed their overseas undergraduate degrees in their early twenties, this means that those in the 25–30 age group would have stayed overseas after they had graduated. This suggests that theirs has been an education-induced skilled migration pathway.

## 4.2 Education-Induced Migration to Singapore

While the above suggests that there is education-induced skilled migration among the Malaysian diaspora, how exactly did young Malaysians make these transitions? This subsection looks at two examples from Malaysian skilled migrants in Singapore. Singapore hosts the largest number of overseas Malaysians. The World Bank (2011, p. 140) estimates that there are 385,979 Malaysian residents in Singapore in the year 2010, of which 121,662 (31.5%) are skilled migrants above the age of 25 years old. One popular migration pathway for young Malaysian migrants is through schooling in Singapore – some beginning as early as the primary school stage. This is especially popular for Malaysians residing in Johor Bahru, Malaysia's second largest city located at the Malaysia-Singapore border.

Daily commutes across the Malaysia-Singapore border is not something new. In the 1970s, Hirschman (1975, p. 42) notes the “unhindered mobility . . . with a heavy to and fro traffic consisting of visitors, daily commuters, and temporary and permanent migrants” across the border that has not been captured in migration data. The scale of Malaysian daily commuters to Singapore has grown more than six times from 24,000 to 150,000, between the 1990s and the 2000s (Koh 2014). This number has further increased to 221,793 in 2012 (Liew 2014). Although the majority of these daily commuters are Malaysians working in Singapore, there are also some who are young children attending school in Singapore. Koh’s (2014) research shows that some Malaysian skilled migrants in Singapore performed such daily commutes during primary school, before moving permanently to Singapore during their teens and young adult years. Some would have completed their higher education in Singapore, built their professional careers, and subsequently settled down in Singapore. Thus, through schooling in Singapore, these Malaysian skilled migrants transitioned from being young daily border commuters to skilled migrants in Singapore.

Another means of education-induced migration in Singapore is through taking up scholarships for entry into Singapore’s national education system. As mentioned earlier, the Singapore government started offering ASEAN Scholarships for preuniversity education in Singapore in 1969. The scholarship has since been extended to lower and upper secondary levels. This means that students were recruited to study in Singapore when they are between the ages of 12 and 16 years old. The number of ASEAN Scholarships awarded annually has increased from about 20 in the 1970s to about 1,000 each for both preuniversity and university stages (Tan 2013, p. 28). The scholarship offers waiver of school fees, boarding, living allowance, and other miscellaneous expenses and is valued at \$18,000–\$25,000 (USD \$14,400–\$20,000) each. Given the prestigious nature of the scholarship, as well as the prospect of gaining what has been perceived as a better quality education in Singapore (*vis-à-vis* that available in Malaysia), the ASEAN Scholarship has become an established means of education-induced migration for a selected group of Malaysians.

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## 5 Conclusion: Learning to Laboring

This chapter has provided an overview of Malaysia’s skilled migration through the concept of “education-induced migration.” The first section provided the theoretical and empirical backgrounds to Malaysia’s education-induced skilled migration. The second section provided the historical background to contextualize the institutionalization and development of Malaysia’s race-stratified education system. The third section provided an overview of the geographies of higher education for Malaysian students in public, private, and overseas institutions. Finally, the fourth section discussed existing available data supporting the education-induced migration trajectories among student-turned Malaysian skilled migrants.

The Malaysian case detailed in this chapter highlights two points for the literature on the geographies of laboring and learning for children and young people. First, notwithstanding the utility of the separate literatures on student migration, skilled (professional) migration, and transnational migration, the Malaysian case highlights how the education-induced migration and mobilities of children and young people form the triggering basis for their subsequent migrations as they transition into adulthood. This has been particularly true for non-*bumiputera* students in general and the Malaysian Chinese students specifically – as can be seen from the proportions of Malaysian Chinese students pursuing overseas higher education compared to students from other ethnic groups. However, there is as yet little comparable macro data on the ethnicity of the Malaysian diaspora in various host countries. More research needs to be done to examine the diverse compositions of Malaysian diaspora communities and their intersectionalities. For a start, this would enable a more thorough examination of how Malaysian skilled migrants in their respective geographical locations undertake specific education-induced migration geographies.

Second, the Malaysian case suggests the urgent need to adopt a continuum lens in understanding young people's learning-to-laboring migration processes. Despite Li et al.'s (1996, p. 64) suggestion for research to investigate whether the desire for long-term settlement in the country where one undertakes overseas education “pre-dates their education-related move,” there still remains much to be done in this regard. Indeed, Findlay et al. (2012) recently argue that student migration should be analyzed in relation to student-migrants' wider life course aspirations. The Malaysian case reviewed in this chapter further complicates this research agenda as Malaysian international students' education-related mobilities are intertwined with the unequal geographies of education at all levels in Malaysia *prior to* their departure from Malaysia. In this sense, a continuum lens that takes into account how and why decisions to enroll in what types of schools (as early as the primary school stage) would shed light on the geographies of education-induced migration these student-turned skilled migrants would eventually partake in. Ultimately, this is a quest that goes beyond understanding “how students become mobile” (Carlson 2013, p. 170). More importantly, it is about understanding how education becomes a crucial means for young people's learning-to-laboring transition.

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# Adolescents' Part-Time Work and Its Linkage to Educational Outcomes: The Case of South Korea

# 12

Eunsu Ju and Moosung Lee

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## Abstract

This chapter sheds light on the emerging phenomenon of South Korean adolescents' involvement in part-time work during school years. Over the last two

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decades, the number of adolescents employed in various part-time jobs in South Korea has increased at a rapid rate. Despite this, research on the emergence of youth part-time work in the context of South Korea remains scarce. Only a handful of studies have investigated this issue and the vast majority of these studies have been published through domestic outlets. As a result, the phenomenon is not much known to international research communities and audiences. This chapter aims to fill this gap by comprehensively reviewing the existing literature from South Korea. Specifically, we focus on the linkage between adolescents' work experience and educational outcomes (and developmental outcomes in general). In so doing, we also compare the case of South Korea with the experiences of other economically advanced countries such as the USA and those in Western Europe in order to identify commonalities or differences with South Korean adolescents' part-time work. In addition, to make sense of what we have learned from the existing literature, we offer a theoretical framework that can be used for research on youth part-time work. Based on this, we discuss the implications for research, policy, and practice.

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**Keywords**

Adolescents • Part-time work • Educational outcomes • South Korea

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## 1 Introduction

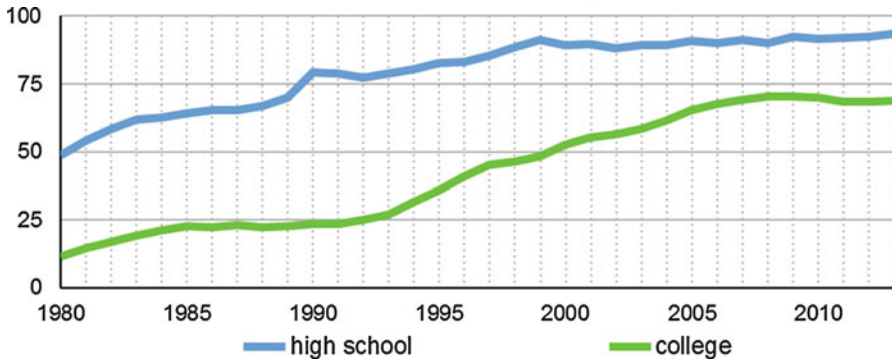
Recently, a growing proportion of the youth population in South Korea is participating in part-time work. Although findings from prior research vary depending on research methods and subjects, official records show that the number of part-time workers aged 15–19 increased from 79,000 in 2003 to 146,000 in 2014 (Statistics Korea 2014). Since the records only reflect the number of official and legal workers at the time of investigation, the numbers of adolescents with part-time work experience could be much larger. According to a study by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (1999), approximately 10% of the adolescent population participated in part-time work during their school years in 1998. More recent studies indicate that this figure reached approximately 20% by 2008 (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs 2009).

Reflecting the growth of adolescents' labor market participation, adolescent part-time employment in school years has become an important topic in adolescent or youth studies in South Korea. However, the literature on adolescents' part-time work in Korea predominantly consists of commissioned project reports (Ministry of Employment and Labor 2011; Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Family Affairs 2009) or nonacademic articles published by advocacy groups and NGOs (Youth Labor and Human Right Network 2014; Moon 2002). To fill the gap of the literature in the context of South Korea, over the last years we have conducted empirical studies with a focus on adolescents' part-time work. This chapter includes some of the key findings drawing from our research studies presented at various national and

international organizations' conferences, including of the annual conference of the Society for Social Work and Research in 2010, the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in 2010, the World Conference on Educational Sciences in 2010, and the annual conference of the Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training in 2009. Drawing from our research on the issue, we have noticed that the literature pays more attention to the consequences of part-time work experience rather than the causes of part-time work. Specifically, prior studies have reported that labor market participation during school years is significantly associated with negative outcomes such as lower academic achievement (Kim 2003; Ryu 2005) and higher involvement in juvenile delinquency (Kim and Kim 2009). Regarding the cause of participation in part-time work, prior research has documented an association with personal factors (Bachman et al. 2011; Staff and Mortimer 2007), family factors (Kim 2004; Ryu 2005; Staff et al. 2011), and school factors (Kim and Lee 2010a; Staff et al. 2011). However, less is known about the effects of recent changes in socioeconomic environments in Korea such as the increasing high school and college attendance rate, increased social acceptance of adolescents' part-time work, the development of IT and Internet media, and labor market changes. It is unclear whether adolescents' part-time work has increased as a result of the listed factors or not. In what follows, we thus address these factors as broad socioeconomic contexts that have led to increasing numbers of Korean teenagers participating in part-time work.

## 1.1 Higher Attendance Rate

High school and college attendance rates have dramatically increased for the last few decades (see Fig. 1). Prior to 1980, high school attendance rates in Korea were under 50%. During this time, many adolescents with or without a high school diploma entered into the labor market as full-time workers rather than part-time workers since a high school diploma was often sufficient to get a full-time job (mostly blue collar occupations). However, high school attendance rates increased rapidly during the 1980s and 1990s. In particular, since 1990, Korean society has seen virtually universal secondary education at the level of high school (Korea Education Development Institute 2011). The college attendance rate was also as low as 11.4% in 1980, but it reached 70% in 2010. During this period, the inflation of academic credentials substantially weakened adolescents' competitiveness in terms of accessing full-time employment. Consequently, the higher attendance rates to high schools and colleges changed the status of adolescents in the labor market from full-time workers to potential part-time workers. As the majority of adolescents have attended high school since 1990, it became less viable for adolescents to participate in the labor market as a full-time worker, and the number of part-time workers increased. In addition, it should be noted that the increasing rate of college attendance stemmed from the growth of newly established colleges, which considerably increased the number of college admission places.



**Fig. 1** Trends in high school/college attendance rate (Source: Reconstructed from Statistical Yearbook of Education (from 1980 to 2013), Ministry of Education (1980–2013))

This therefore reduced competition for entry to higher education during secondary school years in South Korea to some extent. As a result of such developments, increasing numbers of secondary school students appear to begin to participate in part-time work during school years.

## 1.2 Increased Societal Acceptance for Adolescent's Part-Time Work

During the 1970s and 1980s, it was rare for adolescents in South Korea to engage in part-time employment during their school years. While some adolescent populations participated in the labor market as part-time workers, most employed adolescents were school dropouts and full-time workers who could not attend school due to factors such as economic hardship (Cho 2001). Even in the 1990s, youth part-time work during school years was culturally prohibited by schools or local education authorities. With the hypercompetitiveness of the education system (Seth 2002), the majority of middle school and high school students participated in private tutoring, making the most of their after-school hours to secure themselves an edge in the race for admission into elite universities (cf. Kim and Lee 2010b). Thus, part-time employment during school years was arguably regarded as a “deviant behavior,” because the expected role of students was assumed to be in line with preparing for university entrance exams. However, the societal perception of part-time work changed throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Owing to changes in college admission system, colleges’ autonomy was extended in the student selection process (Kim and Lee 2009). This enabled colleges to consider nonacademic factors such as voluntary work, leadership, and experiences taken outside of school programs in the student selection process. Also, there has been increasing emphasis on field internships, especially for vocational school students. This change had a positive influence on the cultural acceptance of adolescents’ part-time work.

A similar phenomenon of adolescents' participation in part-time work has been observed in other Asian countries such as Japan. In her case study of Japanese high schools, Brinton (1998) found that while a majority of the schools had a prohibition on working while enrolled, most students were employed in *arubeito* (part-time jobs). According to Brinton, "These students represent a population over which teachers do not exert the traditional social control of recommending good jobs as reward for high grades and responsible school behavior" (1998, p. 448). Based on her field research, Briton (2010) argued that Japan's employment system has been replaced in the twenty-first century by temporary and insecure forms of employment for its youth.

### 1.3 IT and Internet Media

On account of the development of information technology and Internet media (e.g., Cyworld which is an early form of social networking service in Korea and other Internet community services, cf. Lee et al. 2011), adolescents created their own subcultures. Differentiated from their seniors, they were variously labeled as Generation X, Generation Y, or Generation N. While the concepts of these generations are somewhat different from one another, the young generations at the time of 1990s and 2000s were commonly characterized as free from traditional culture, familiar with Internet media, dominating mass culture, and engaged in a conspicuous consumption culture (Han and Kang 2009; So and Han 2013). While they had limited purchasing power, such consumption was often possible with financial support from their parents' generation or with their own earned money from work. As teenagers' consumption power increased by spending more time in paid work and they became major consumers as well as producers of the mass culture, the societal attitude toward adolescents' work appeared to become more accepting. As a result, adolescents in 2000s and later, compared to their counterpart in the 1980s or 1990s, are often more willing to participate in the labor market so that they can buy trendy goods and consume cultural products.

### 1.4 Changes in Labor Market

The economic crisis that hit South Korea in 1997 and the subsequent restructuring of the economic system also indirectly affected adolescents' part-time work. One of the core conditions that were proposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to restructure the Korean economy during the crisis was to have a more flexible labor market. To meet the IMF requirements in return for financial assistance, Korea had to increase labor market flexibility by restructuring labor market policies such as increasing temporary employment and eliminating regulations. In addition, as in developed Western countries, the restructuring of capitalist production and the continuous expansion of the service economy facilitated flexible production patterns (cf. Lind and Rasmussen 2008; Pupo and Duffy 2000). Since they emerged

and grew after the economic crisis, this contributed to accelerating the increase of temporary employment and irregular positions in many fields. Under such circumstances, part-time youth and student labor were dramatically increased in response to the demand for their low cost, disposability, and relative tolerance of mindless and unrewarding work (cf. Mizen et al. 1999). Notably, the consequence of the changes in the labor market (i.e., flexibility of labor market) has remained in place since 1997, given its benefit to employers.

## 2 Mapping the Situation

In this section, we focus on what has happened in Korea in terms of adolescents' part-time work over time. This will include tracking the prevalence and the nature of the part-time work among Korean adolescents. We also delineate the way Korean adolescents find part-time jobs.

### 2.1 Prevalence of Part-Time Work

Statistics on labor market participation rates among adolescents somewhat vary according to the research methods used (see Table 1). According to the Korean Welfare Panel Study (KOWEPS), the number of adolescents with part-time work experience was 1.5% in 2005 and increased to 7.7% in 2008 and 11.9% in 2011. The rates were much higher in other studies. The Chamgyoyook Research Institute (2011) found that 26.9% of high school students had part-time work experience in 2011 based on a national survey with 1,681 high school students across South Korea. The rate was 27.4% according to the report of Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL 2011) which analyzed national data of 2,700 adolescents. The Korean Education and Employment Panel (KEEP) data, another nationally representative data of 6,000 adolescents, presents slightly higher rates again of 36.0%

**Table 1** Prevalence of youth part-time work (state source)

	Year	Study subject			Part-time work experience (%)
		Area	Grade	Sample size	
Ministry of Labor	2009	Nationwide	9–12	3,100	32.9
Choi In-Jae	2010	Nationwide	7–12	6,509	11.7
			9–12	4,517	14.4
Lee and Ju	forthcoming	Nationwide	9–12	6,000	35.8
Chamgyoyook Research Institute	2011	Nationwide	10–12	1,681	26.9
Ministry of Employment and Labor	2011	Nationwide	9–12	2,700	27.4
			Dropouts	142	62.0

Lee and Ju ([forthcoming](#)). It was even higher if we limit the subjects to high school dropouts. According to the study of MOEL (2011), rates went up to 62.0%, which was twice that of their non-dropout counterparts.

## 2.2 Types/Places of Part-Time Jobs

Table 2 presents the types or places of part-time work which adolescents were involved in during their school years. MOEL (2011) reported that the top three types or places to work were restaurants or cafes, flyer distribution, and food delivery regardless of school enrollment.

## 2.3 Channels Leading to Part-Time Jobs

Table 3 presents data on how adolescents find their part-time jobs. As presented in the table, almost all the cases of adolescent part-time work were initiated through channels such as friends, posters/flyers, newspaper ads, or Internet. Among these channels, the most influential channel was friends. According to the MOEL (2011) study, 61.2% of middle or high school students and 39.6% of dropouts found jobs

**Table 2** Types/places of youth part-time jobs

	MOEL (2011)	
	Students	Dropouts
Flyer distribution	225 (25.2)	35 (22.3)
Restaurant or cafe (serving)	482 (54.0)	52 (33.1)
Food delivery	67 (7.5)	14 (8.9)
Gas station	33 (3.7)	17 (10.8)
Construction or factory	47 (5.3)	18 (11.5)
Others	39 (4.4)	21 (13.4)
Total	893 (100.0)	157 (100.0)

Source: Ministry of Employment and Labor (2011)

**Table 3** Channels leading to part-time jobs

	MOEL (2011)	
	Students	Dropouts
Friends	452 (61.2)	36 (39.6)
School/teacher	5 (0.7)	–
Posters/flyers	42 (5.7)	8 (8.8)
Newspaper ads	16 (2.2)	5 (5.5)
Family	94 (12.7)	7 (7.7)
Internet	121 (16.4)	32 (35.2)
Others	9 (1.2)	3 (3.3)
Total	739 (100.0)	91 (100.0)

Source: Ministry of Employment and Labor (2011)

through a recommendation from their friends. The Internet was found to be in second place (16.4% for students and 35.2% for dropouts). In sum, adolescents find their job through noninstitutionalized channels (institutionalized channels here refer to adolescents' job seeking through vocational school teachers involved in internship programs with industry, youth centers, and community organizations).

Another noticeable pattern was that a substantive portion of part-time work occurred through independent routes without any systematic educational supervision. Therefore, adolescent's work experience tended to provide additional income but with limited developmental or educational benefits.

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### 3 Theorizing the Impact of Youth Part-Time Work

In the previous section, we illuminated how prevalent youth part-time work is in South Korea and how Korean youths get involved in part-time employment. In this section, drawing from differential socialization perspectives, we shed light on the effect of youth part-time work on adolescent development. In so doing, we focus on the negative effects in general and particularly school disengagement, based on previous literature. We think that differential socialization results from differential opportunity structures from which adolescents face differing accessibility to opportunities embedded in society. Students thereby adopt particular cultural norms in the course of interactive processes with peers who are their part-time co-workers. That is, in the context of South Korea, we view youth part-time work as part of the opportunity structure where adolescents experience unique socio-spatial settings in terms of problem behaviors. This view is further supported by social control perspectives as below, given that most part-time work settings lack appropriate types and levels of social control, which reinforces differential socialization process of adolescents involved in part-time work (cf. Lee and Ju [forthcoming](#); Lee et al. [forthcoming](#)). In the following section, we provide a review of the relevant literature, which is mainly adopted and reconstructed from our previous work (i.e., Lee and Ju [forthcoming](#); Lee et al. [forthcoming](#)). Specifically, we discuss two complementary theoretical lenses for understanding the negative impacts of youth part-time work, namely, differential socialization and social control. To offer a more comprehensive discussion, we also address challenges to these theoretical positions by discussing the perspective of differential selection of youth part-time workers.

#### 3.1 Differential Socialization

The perspective of differential socialization emphasizes that adolescents experience differential socialization through their part-time work, which shape adolescents' social conducts such as engagement with school. We note that the different socialization perspective is a theoretical composite of several interrelated



sociological or sociopsychological concepts – i.e., opportunity structure, differential association, and social control.

The concept of opportunity structure provides a theoretical platform in understanding the negative effects of youth part-time employment on adolescents' behavioral outcomes. Robert Merton's classical research titled *Social Structure and Anomie* conceptualized that the occurrence of deviant behaviors is not simply due to "lack of opportunity," but it is more related to "differential access to opportunities" (1938, pp. 679–680). For Merton, individual adolescents are placed in different social structures (e.g., socialization through part-time work), which lead them to differing structural probabilities of access to legitimate means to achieve culturally desirable goals. In this socialization process, a disjunction may occur between socially acceptable means and desirable goals, leading to deviant behaviors. This reflects individual variability in terms of accessing an array of opportunities mainly forged by individuals' structural positions (Merton 1995). Drawing from this logic, he formulated the concept of opportunity structure, defined as "designat[ing] the scale and distribution of conditions that provide various probabilities for acting individuals and groups to achieve specifiable outcomes" (1995, p. 25).

Informed by the concept of opportunity structure, we believe that adolescents participating in part-time work in South Korea experience differential opportunity structures from their counterparts who do not, given that the major types of part-time work in South Korea are low-skilled and noneducative jobs such as flyer distribution on the street, peddling miscellaneous goods on the street, working at a cafeteria (e.g., McDonald's), and as a gas station attendant (Lee and Ju [forthcoming](#)). Arguably, these types of jobs or places for part-time work do not appear to offer access or opportunities for upward social mobility to part-time working adolescents.

Merton's concept of opportunity structure was further elaborated by Cohen's (1965) work that highlights the importance of individual adolescents' interaction in forming a collective subculture to deal with the disjunction or discrepancy between accessibility to socially legitimate means and culturally prescribed outcomes. Cohen called such collective subcultures a "delinquent subculture" in which particular social groups experience differential socialization through which deviant behavior develops (Cohen 1965). While in line with Merton's anomie theory, Cohen's theorizing of deviant behavior of adolescents was also influenced by Sutherland's work (1939) focusing more on psychological dimensions of delinquency. Sutherland's "differential association theory" views the causation of adolescent delinquency as a learned phenomenon through social interactions with other adolescents who define delinquency in favorable ways. In other words, adolescent deviant and/or problem behavior is culturally transmitted through the accommodation of certain attitudes about the appropriateness of delinquent activity within peer groups. By being frequently exposed to deviant peers, adolescents come to adopt peers' delinquent behavior – i.e., redefining their perception about the appropriateness of delinquent behavior. In particular, when adolescents have high attachment to deviant peers through shared time and space, a redefinition of their perception on the appropriateness of delinquency can occur (Agnew 1991).

Previous research supports differential socialization perspectives. For example, intensive part-time employment has been shown to result in negative developmental outcomes among adolescents by exposing them to opportunities and associates that facilitate problem behavior, e.g., the use of substances including alcohol and cigarettes (McMorris and Uggen 2000). Kounoven and Lintonen (2002) reported that in the workplace, adolescents may come across adult workmates who serve as a negative role model of (heavy) drinking or procure alcohol, as well as youth peers who encourage drinking. In a similar vein, Tanner and Krahn (1991) found that part-time working teenagers who report alcohol drinking are more likely to be associated with and influenced by delinquent peers.

In the context of South Korea, we note that the adolescents participating in part-time work are quite a homogenous group in terms that (1) they tend to be from low-income families, (2) they are more likely to drop out of school, and (3) more often than not, they get involved in part-time work through their peers (Lee and Ju [forthcoming](#)). Given their relatively homogeneous demographic characteristics, they are more likely to accommodate problem behaviors of their peers working together at part-time workplaces. Within these contexts, differential association theory's emphasis on delinquency or problem behavior as a learned phenomenon through the accommodation of peer adolescents' behavior appears to be appropriate for understanding youth part-time work in South Korea. In addition, given that negative incidents such as underpayment and human right violations against adolescents involved in part-time work have been continuously reported in South Korea (cf. Lee and Ju [forthcoming](#)), we think that differential association theory's emphasis on negative interactions or relations from all individuals (not just their peers but also adult workers) contributes to shaping delinquent subculture at their part-time workplaces.

### 3.2 Lack of Social Control

The criminology literatures provide additional lenses to understand adolescent delinquency. Notably, Hirschi (1969) provided an alternative explanation for adolescent delinquency to conventional approaches. That is, instead of explaining why adolescents commit delinquency, he focused on why and how adolescents refrain from delinquent behavior. He paid special attention to "social control" which refers to the collective abilities of family, school, or community that refrain adolescents from delinquent activities by promoting and maintaining positive values.

Notably, the concept of social control can be integrated into different socialization perspectives, in the sense that the collective ability of social control is generated from strong social ties equipped with attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief (Hirschi 1969), which are social resources that make socialization processes different (cf. social capital literature). Specifically, the quality and quantity of social ties surrounding adolescents can mold the socialization process of adolescents through generating different levels and types of social control

(Lee 2009, 2014). For example, negative relations or a lack of positive relations from proximate individuals such as parents and teachers leads adolescents to differential socialization experiences (Agnew 1991; Lee and Madyun 2012; Lee et al. 2014).

This conceptual linkage was later elaborated by the community research literature, suggesting two forms of social control based on social ties: informal and formal. Informal control refers to both private and public interpersonal social ties designed to maintain order (Kubrin and Weitzer 2003). For example, these types of social ties may result from one parent informing another about a child's behavior (e.g., adult supervision or intergenerational closure), which possibly upholds community expectations and norms. Formal control is exercised through both institutional authorities (e.g., including law enforcement) and neighborhood authority (e.g., pastors, community leaders). Social control perspectives suggest that adolescents are developmentally influenced by the collective ability of a community (or other social boundaries) to promote and maintain collective values, which in turn reflects and indicates its level of social control (Janowitz 1991, see also Madyun and Lee 2008). As such, it is involved in the socialization process of adolescents.

Further studies evidence that the negative effect of part-time employment is associated with weakened social control. Greenberg and colleagues (1980) found that working signified less time spent by adolescents with their family. Similarly, research has documented that working for long hours was associated with less parental supervision (e.g., McMorris and Uggen 2000; Steinberg and Dornbusch 1991). Safronet al. (2001) also reported that the more intensively adolescents work, the less engaged they are in schoolwork and extracurricular activities. What these studies suggest is that part-time work weakens the social control that adolescents are subject to in the family or the school community. Youth are thus less able to refrain from problem behaviors. Indeed, Safron et al. (2001) also found that the intensity of part-time work was positively associated with "unstructured activities" (e.g., recreation, parties) characterized by the absence of authority figures responsible for social control. Recent research has also evidenced that weakened social control is associated with school disengagement (Tucker et al. 2011).

In the context of South Korea, the major route of youth part-time work participation is through their peers, suggesting that there is a dearth of formal control by institutional agents or informal control by parents in the process of youth's part-time work participation. Given that most part-time work occurs at places such as streets, cafeterias, and gas stations, there is often relatively less adult supervision. This lack of social control seems to reinforce existing differential socialization processes by isolating part-time adolescent workers from appropriate social control. Note that part-time workplaces (e.g., gas station, streets) are in general perceived as negative socio-spatial settings for adolescents in the context of South Korea, since they are places where adolescents more often than not demonstrate status delinquency. In this regard, social control perspectives can be a lens to understand the negative effect of adolescents' part-time work such as school disengagement in South Korea.

### 3.3 Differential Selection

A number of researchers have constantly documented negative correlates of part-time employment with adolescent problem behavior, and some researchers further suggest that such consequences result from their negative working experiences (e.g., Mortimer et al. 1996). As discussed above, such findings have been theorized through perspectives of differential association and social control. However, one may question whether adolescents associated with deviant peers could be preselected into part-time employment. Indeed, Mihalic and Elliott (1997) showed that adolescents more involved with delinquent peers were more likely to work. In other words, part-time working youth are more likely to have had experiences of differential socialization before they undertook part-time employment. The issue of selection bias in youth part-time work research was first raised by Steinberg et al. (1993) – i.e., whether the correlations of youth part-time jobs with negative developmental outcomes are actually due to the consequences of part-time work itself or not. The issue of prework differences (e.g., family background, self-concept, school factors) among adolescents who do and who do not participate in part-time employment during their school years remains unclear in most correlation-based studies. Indeed, Lee and Ju's (forthcoming) recent study found that adolescents who have to participate in part-time work are more likely than their peers who do not need to work during their school years to be placed in more disadvantaged situations (e.g., low SES, low family support). If this is the case, one may further argue that such disadvantaged situations can also lead them to school disengagement or delinquency.

Of course, researchers have tried to ascertain the isolated effects of part-time employment on adolescents' developmental outcomes and to strengthen the level of causal inference from their data by controlling for various covariates of developmental outcomes – e.g., key sociodemographic variables such as household income and parents' educational level (Bachman and Schulenberg 1993; Breslin and Adlaf 2005) and other variables such as parental control, GPA (Kounoven and Lintonen 2002), mental health syndromes (Wu et al. 2003), and disposable allowances (e.g., Kounoven and Lintonen 2002). Despite this, identified causal linkages between part-time work and problem behaviors in previous research are often confounded with other unobserved variables and are somewhat biased due to non-feasibility of nonrandom assignment of youth samples by part-time work experience. Thus, no firm conclusions can be drawn about the pure impact of part-time work on problem behavior at the empirical level, apart from those well-established theoretical stances (e.g., differential socialization).

With this issue in mind, some researchers have started to use research designs for causal inference. Specifically, longitudinal research indicates that part-time employment exerts on adolescents' problem behaviors such as alcohol use which can accumulate into adulthood (e.g., Mihalic and Elliott 1997). McMorris and Uggen's (2000) longitudinal study also found that an independent effect of work hours on the growth in alcohol use among 12th grade high school students was greater than the effects of work hours on drinking behavior recorded when students were in the 9th grade.

In recent years there has been a growth of research using propensity score matching (PSM) techniques as an alternative approach when longitudinal data are not available or when experimental research with random assignment is not possible (Lee and Staff 2007; Lee and Ju *forthcoming*; McCoy and Smyth 2007; Monahan et al. 2011). As described above, one of the major issues regarding the effects of part-time work on adolescent development is whether the differences between the employed and nonemployed groups are caused by preexisting differences among the adolescents or by the work experience itself. As an analytical strategy to offer a causality inference, PSM minimizes the influence of nonexperimental factors on outcomes in cases where random assignment is not applicable (Guo and Fraser 2010; Rosenbaum and Rubin 1983; Rubin 1980). That is, PSM aims to minimize selection effects and to measure the precise effect of part-time employment on youth developmental outcomes.

Studies using PSM have consistently reported the negative effect of youth part-time work on developmental outcomes across different countries. For example, McCoy and Smyth's (2007) study using PSM found that working part-time influenced underperformance at upper secondary level and also led to increased dropout rates in Ireland. Monahan, Lee, and Steinberg's PSM study (2011) utilized the same data from the earlier study of Steinberg et al. (1993) in the USA. They found that intensive work (i.e., working more than 20 hours per week) disengaged adolescents from school and encouraged more use of substances when compared with those remaining unemployed. Lee and Staff's study using US student samples showed a slightly different finding: long hours of part-time work do not significantly contribute to high school dropout among "all" students. Instead, they argued that there is a varying impact of adolescent work intensity on high school dropouts in the USA. (Lee and Ju's *forthcoming*) study using PSM showed that part-time work of Korean adolescents during school years results in increasing school disengagement behaviors.

In sum, although there needs more empirical studies designed for causality, recent studies utilizing longitudinal designs or PSM techniques tend to show consistently the undesirable effects of youth part-time work on adolescent development outcomes, including school disengagement or dropout. In this regard, it can be concluded that differential socialization as a theoretical lens for understanding the negative effect of part-time work on adolescent development is still valid even though there has been a concern for selection effects.

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## 4 Review of Part-Time Work and Adolescent Development

In this section we have two aims. First, we offer a review of the relevant literature on the effects of part-time work on adolescent development, including educational outcomes. In doing this, we focus on classical and contemporary studies conducted in Western societies and also emerging studies in South Korea. Second, based on capturing the overall picture of part-time work effects on adolescent development,

we introduce a brief synthesis of our recent studies using large data in order to fill the research gap on youth part-time work in the context of South Korea.

#### 4.1 Effects of Adolescent Part-Time Work

There are some studies reporting the positive sides of youth part-time work. For example, youth part-time work is regarded as integral to adolescent development in some North American literature (cf. Mizen et al. 1999). Youth part-time work is also viewed as promoting positive psychosocial development (e.g., enhanced self-esteem) and responsible behavior as young adults, hence, preparing adolescents for their transition to adulthood (Lennings 1993; Mortimer 2003). Also, low-to-moderate work experience appears to be positively correlated with college degree and socioeconomic attainment (Staff and Mortimer 2007, 2008).

However, an overwhelming body of literature has indicated undesirable relationships between adolescents' part-time work and adolescent development such as delinquent behaviors, problem behaviors, and negative educational outcomes (Bachman and Schulenberg 1993; Bachman et al. 2003; McCoy and Smyth 2007; McNeal 1997; Mihalic and Elliott 1997; Ploeger 1997; Steinberg et al. 1993; Steinberg and Dornbusch 1991; Tanner and Krahn 1991). These undesirable associations have been reported across different societies. For example, Steinberg et al. (1993) revealed that working more than 20 hours per week tended to exacerbate school disengagement behaviors such as unexcused absence. Bachman and colleagues' study (2003) found that adolescents who desire to work longer hours not only tended to smoke and drink more than average but also were more likely to show low academic achievement and aspirations. Drawing from the UK context, Payne (2003) reported a similar finding that the longer the students work, the lower their grades. Robinson (1999) found that part-time work was negatively associated with completion rates and grades of Australian secondary school students. McCoy and Smyth's (2007) research also reported that working part-time is significantly associated with underperformance at upper secondary level and also led to increased dropout in Ireland. In summary, prior studies conducted in Western societies appear to reach a consensus about certain undesirable effects of part-time work on adolescent development, including educational opportunities and outcomes.

In contrast to the sizable body of literature on youth part-time work in Western countries, literature on the topic in South Korea is relatively scarce. However, there has been an emerging line of research on this topic since 2000 (e.g., Jun and Nho 2003; Kim 2003; Lee and Park 2006; Lee and Ryu 2007; Moon 2003; Yang 2004), reflecting the dramatic increase in youth part-time work in South Korea since the late 1990s. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this appears to be due to changes in labor market structures, societal norms on youth part-time work, and the economic polarization of social classes.

Research has reported various negative socialization experiences of South Korean adolescents involved in part-time work such as underpayment and human rights violations (Jun and Nho 2003; Lee and Park 2006). Similar to the findings

from the Western literature, undesirable social outcomes such as low educational outcomes (Kim 2003) and youth delinquency (Moon 2003) have also been documented as a salient phenomenon among youth involved in part-time work in South Korea.

While informative, there are two important limitations in the existing literature addressing Korean youth's part-time work. First, most of the studies address the issue with a small-scale, qualitative approach. This has a clear limitation on yielding generalizable findings of youth part-time work and their individual development on a larger scale. Second, and more importantly, even though there are a few quantitative studies using relatively large datasets (e.g., Jun and Nho 2003; Kim 2003; Lee and Park 2006) capturing certain developmental outcomes, it is not clear whether those negative outcomes are influenced by part-time employment. That is, it is uncertain whether those outcomes are consequences of the experience of "differential socialization" embedded in part-time work (e.g., Greenberger and Steinberg 1986) that youth are subject to as a result of their part-time work. This is because existing studies failed to consider the "selection effects" of sample populations, i.e., whether youth part-time workers have been preselected into negative developmental outcomes, as previously explained.

## 4.2 The Korean Education and Employment Panel (KEEP) Study

With the aforementioned limitations of existing literature in mind, we aim to tease out the impact of youth part-time work on problem behaviors and educational outcomes by briefly summarizing key findings reconstructed from our current studies: *Part-time employment and problem behaviors: Evidence from adolescents in South Korea* (Lee et al. forthcoming) and *Differential selection or differential socialization? Examining the effects of part-time work on school disengagement behaviors among South Korean adolescents* (Lee and Ju forthcoming). In these studies, we used data from the Korean Education and Employment Panel (KEEP), which is the largest panel data covering substantial information on the educational experiences of Korean adolescents and their participation in the labor market. We utilized data from Waves 1–4, including a nationally representative sample through a stratified cluster sampling method. The original sample included 2,000 senior students from each of 100 middle schools, general high schools, and vocational high schools. Our target students were restricted to the middle school cohort for two important analytical reasons. First, contrary to the middle school cohort, the two high school cohorts participated in only one interview before graduating high school. As a result, all the background information available for the middle school cohort is not available for the two high school cohorts. Second, socioeconomic conditions during school years might be different between middle and high school cohorts. Because most of the students in the two high school cohorts had entered middle school after the Korean economic crisis (i.e., post 1997), their adolescent years may have been systematically affected by both

macro- and microeconomic conditions. As such, 1,364 out of the original 2,000 middle school students remained at the time of the fourth survey. We used propensity score matching (PSM) and a series of logistic regressions in order to minimize selection effects.

Key findings are summarized below:

- **Family backgrounds:** Work experience was significantly associated with certain disadvantaged family background characteristics. Students with part-time work experience were more likely to come from lower-income families or to have parents with lower levels of educational attainment. Moreover, students with part-time work experience were more likely to come from broken families, perceived parenting styles less favorably, and showed lower levels of satisfaction with family life. Lastly, students with part-time work experience tended to be less satisfied with the amount of their pocket money.
- **Schooling experience:** Students with part-time work experience were more likely to attend vocational schools than general schools, where most students aspire to go to college in the South Korean context. Lower educational aspirations and lower academic achievement were identified among students with part-time work experience. Students with part-time work experience also expressed lower levels of satisfaction with school.
- **Presence of preexisting differences:** All these findings noted above provide supporting evidence for the differential selection perspective. Generally speaking, the more socioeconomically and academically students lag behind, and the less satisfied they are with family and/or school life, the more likely adolescents are to undertake part-time work.
- **Independent effect of part-time work:** All the preexisting differences between students with or without part-time work experience, however, disappeared after propensity matching. This suggests that part-time employment in itself inclines adolescents to problem behaviors (i.e., drinking and smoking) and educational outcomes (i.e., lower grade and unexcused absence).
- **Support for differential socialization and social control theories:** The findings supported the view that Korean adolescents are more likely to learn to drink and/or smoke (more) because of differential socialization embedded in their part-time work experience and/or of the way their part-time work diminishes the social control exercised by family and school.

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## 5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we began by outlining the broad socioeconomic, cultural, and schooling contexts shaping the growth of participation in part-time work among youth populations during school years in South Korea. Based on the description of the newly emerging phenomenon of youth part-time work, we focused on illuminating the negative linkage between youth part-time work and educational outcomes. Based on our review of previous studies and our own work, we argue that



youth part-time work in South Korea is detrimental to educational opportunities and can result in negative outcomes such as school disengagement. More specifically, our recent analysis of nationally representative samples (Lee and Ju [forthcoming](#); Lee et al. [forthcoming](#)) resonates with the body of domestic literature that documents the adverse impact of part-time employment upon various youth developmental outcomes in South Korea (e.g., Jeon and Nho 2003; Kim 2003; Lee and Park 2006). Drawing from this finding, it is imperative for researchers to address one crucial issue: What does the well-documented detrimental consequence of part-time employment on youth development mean when the incorporation of work into school life is increasingly seen as a “norm” or even a “value-adding” endeavor, as some Western researchers maintain?

Based on existing research, we think that interventions should target adolescents from lower-SES and/or broken families. Their disadvantaged family background may not only put them under pressure to work; it also means they are more liable to heavier drinking and/or smoking once they are at work. In relation to this, we also think that interventions should target parents as well. This is because unfavorably perceived parenting styles, as well as lower satisfaction with family life and with pocket money, appear to draw adolescents into part-time work in the first place and/or into problem behavior once they are at work. In addition, interventions should target students who are low achieving, less academically aspirant, less satisfied with school life, less engaged in school, and/or studying in vocational schools. These “low promise” students, as in the case of adolescents coming from disadvantaged family backgrounds and/or finding their family life problematic, are expected to be subject to less social control and more vulnerable to differential socialization with deviant peers. This explains their stronger proclivity for part-time work in the first place and for school disengagement behaviors more often after they take up part-time work.

Finally, we think that there should be more institutional guidance, resources (e.g., information centers for part-time job seekers, counseling services for youth part-time workers), and legal protection (e.g., ensuring payment of the minimum wage, human rights in workplaces) for youths who are involved in part-time work. At the same time, formal education institutions should strengthen curriculums with regard to career development education to support effective youths' transitions from school to work.

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# Cultural Politics of Education and Human Capital Formation: Learning to Labor in Singapore

# 13

Yi'En Cheng

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## Abstract

This article uses Singapore as a lens to explore some of the key issues relevant to scholarship on geographies of education and youth under contemporary economic and social change. It begins by providing a brief overview of key transformations in the education landscape in postcolonial Singapore and highlighting the role of the state in creating an education system that enrolls young people into the projects of nationalism, social mobility, and economic globalization. It then turns to consider some tensions and dilemmas experienced by young people in Singapore in recent years, specifically the period after the economic crisis in the 2000s, to reflect on the contemporary politics of education and human capital formation. The discussion focuses on three prevailing issues around education to work transitions in present-day Singapore: the significance of credentials, the politics of “learning” in neoliberal times, and young people’s responses to economic change. In taking stock of scholarship with a focus on Singapore and making connections to broader literature, the concluding section gather some notes for further research on education as a dynamic site of social

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reproduction, the neoliberal restructuring of education and youth citizenship, and the role of education in shaping young people's political agency. This article serves as a resource for those who are interested in contemporary issues around education, learning, and youth (within and beyond Singapore) to critically reflect on young people as both subjects and actors under the current capitalist regime.

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**Keywords**

Education • Learning • Youth transitions • Human capital • Citizenship • Neoliberalism • Singapore

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## 1 Introduction

Formal education in post-independent Singapore has played a key role in transforming the small island-state into a global city, renowned for its economic success and political stability. Indeed, “education reform in Singapore is primarily [and remains as] a way of retooling the productive capacity of the system” (Gopinathan 2007). The educational landscape we see in present day is the result of a carefully planned program to invest in human capital and to “school the nation” after independence. Under the British colonial empire, Singapore was seen as a mere trading emporium and outpost in the Far East. Educational institutions under the British government were more interested in providing administrative skills to civil service staff who are supporting the colonial administration, rather than responding to the need for a sustainable education system for the local population. At the turn of the nineteenth century, pockets of vernacular educational provision have sprouted mainly in the form of Christian mission schools and private schools founded and funded by rich Chinese immigrant merchants (Gopinathan 1974). The educational landscape was a fragmented one, divided along four mediums of instruction – English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil languages – and schooling infrastructure was poorly invested. All these changed after the ruling government took on the task to reengineer this haphazard education system passed down by its colonial predecessor by centralizing it and using it to fuel economic growth and nation-building. In 1966, the government conducted a major review of the education content and syllabus at the secondary school level, such that the curriculum would be directed at producing desirable students who are “good citizen[s], robust, well-educated, skilled, and well-adjusted” (Lee Kuan Yew, cited in Hill and Lian 1995, p. 81). In this way, formal education takes on the role of developing “good” and “responsible” citizens who have the necessary training and skills to adapt to (economic) challenges.

The first decade upon self-government was spent on rehabilitating the postcolonial education system, which was driven by a “crisis and survival” approach that included the merger of different ethnic-based vernacular educational streams into a single national system held together by a bilingual education policy; the rapid building of schooling infrastructure and large-scale recruitment of teachers; and investment in vocational and technical education in order to match

the then rapidly industrializing economy. By the early 1980s, Singapore has become a newly industrialized economy and was faced with the challenge of upgrading the industries in order to remain economically competitive in the region. The “one-size-fits-all” education system at that time was unable to produce a labor force with skills that match those required by the evolving economy. There was also a growing concern over large numbers of premature school leavers and failures in the late 1970s, with “only 29% of each primary one cohort progressed to secondary school, with 14% surviving to the pre-university level, and 9% eventually enrolling in universities or polytechnics” (Tan 2010, p. 404). What the government needed was an “efficiency-driven” model of education based on a “streaming” and “tracking” system, whereby students were being grouped by their different academic abilities, with the aim of creating a more differentiated system for students to learn and develop at their own pace. What this also meant, however, was the emergence of a “conveyor belt” system that distributed students into the “academic” and “vocational” tracks based mainly on their academic performance. Across the 1980s, the polytechnic sector strengthened in terms of its number and ties with industries. Further review of the economic and education policies in the late 1980s also led to the establishment of the Institute of Technical Education that provides a structured program of vocational training and education (Gopinathan 1999). This calibrated restructuring of the education landscape has ensured a continued production of human capital that fits closely to the demands of a newly industrialized economy.

The 1990s saw a profound restructuring of the global economy that was driven by knowledge and innovation, leading to another round of educational reform. Most notably was the introduction of the “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation” initiative in 1997 with the key objective of nurturing a generation of school leavers with a whole new set of skills, including innovation, creativity, and flexibility. Since its inception, “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation” has become the guiding vision for the national education system, which describes “a nation of thinking and committed citizens capable of meeting the challenges of the future and an education system geared to the needs of the twenty-first century.” The then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong asserted that this new vision “is a formula to enable Singapore to compete and stay ahead” (cited in Gopinathan 2007, p. 60) in the changing economy. Another watershed change was the passing of the Compulsory Education Act in 2000, which stated that a child is of “compulsory school age” when he/she reaches age of 6 years. National education continued to emphasize the importance of Singapore’s core (neo-Confucian) values, national belonging and identification, and civic commitments. Notable efforts have also been put into strategies that sought to preserve young educated Singaporeans’ loyalties and attachments, especially in the face of globalizing cultures and opportunities. Throughout the 2000s, the elements of flexibility, choice, and autonomy continued to be pursued by the government and led to the development of new “pathways” such as the Integrated Program – a scheme that removes the need for high-performing students in elite secondary schools to sit for the GCE O-level examination – as well as a more recently introduced “counterpart” scheme that offers students who have performed well in



the GCE N-level examination to progress to polytechnics via faster routes (Ministry of Education 2010). At the tertiary level, polytechnics and universities are also undergoing major transformations, namely, through building new networks, alliances, and physical infrastructure, which are part of the government's aim to transform Singapore into an education hub via the Global Schoolhouse project (Ng and Tan 2010; Sidhu et al. 2011).

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## 2 Singapore's Education: Meritocratic Beginnings and Present Dilemmas

Against the backdrop of these successive changes that were made to all levels of the national education landscape, the postcolonial ruling elite's project of "schooling the nation" and preserving close links between education and economy has been premised upon an ideology of meritocracy (Gopinathan 2007). The education system inherited in the wake of independence was plagued by large achievement gaps between the ethnic Chinese population on the one hand and the Malay and Indian populations on the other hand. The ruling government saw this as a stumbling block to nation-building as well as economic development and quickly buckled down to the task of nipping this undesirable system in its bud. The education system had to be replaced by a universal state-funded system resting on the principle of equal access rather than that of discrimination along the lines of ethnicity and religion. After Singapore was separated from Malaysia, the urgency for development saw senior statesman Lee Kuan Yew gave exceptional emphasis on human capital and civic virtues such as talent, hard work, and individual merit. Given that the political project was to mold Singapore into a "multiracial, non-communist, non-aligned, and democratic socialist state" (Chan 1991, p. 158), the egalitarian aspect of meritocracy served as an especially appealing foundation for governing the nation. Since then, meritocracy – broadly conceived "as a practice that rewards individual merit with social rank, job positions, higher incomes, or general recognition and prestige" by giving "all potentially qualified and deserving individuals an equal and fair chance of achieving success" (Tan 2008) – has remained a cornerstone philosophy of the ruling government. Under this principle, the ideal system by which individuals can earn their place in the society is through a system of "merit" that would be measured by grades at school and university (and performance in workplace). What ensued after the creation of this "brave new meritocracy" was a series of "incremental structural shifts in education policy... which made meritocracy part of the lived experience of generations of parents and children" (Barr and Skrbis̃ 2008, p. 60).

The use of meritocracy as a guiding principle for policy formulation within Singapore has led to a systematic entrenchment of the importance of educational achievement. Young people and parents place high premiums on education as it is seen as the key, and probably "inevitable," site through which social mobility can be achieved or maintained (Ng 2011b). This is unsurprising given that Singapore's education system has made a significant contribution in transforming class

stratification over the past decades (Chang 1995). But parallel to this heightened emphasis on educational achievement was also the intensification of the discourse of academic merit, that is, merit based on academic performance. Since education is structured and marketed as a positional good, there is immense competition to outdo each other. This led to a situation where young people are made to push their limits and excel in their academic studies by schoolteachers and parents. At the same time, parents (especially those of middle-class backgrounds) also increasingly feel responsible to help their children accumulate various forms of social and cultural capital that would improve their chances at becoming “good” students. In addition to academic excellence, young people are encouraged to become “all-rounders” who are able to accumulate achievements in extracurricular activities. Ironically, while this can be seen as a shift away from an overemphasis on academic merit in defining children’s potential and ability, the consequences are often translated into parental anxieties over an intensification of investments, such as private tuition and enrichment classes, that are required to ensure the child retains positional advantage. While some commentators are quick to stereotype intense parenting as distinctive to “Asian parenting” (encapsulated in the caricature of “Tiger Mum”), scholarship on childhood and youth in the Global North has suggested otherwise (see Ennew 1994; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2014). This building up of a pressure-cooker environment for both children and parents has led to the emergence of the culture of *kiasu* (Hokkien phrase meaning “fear of losing”), a widely known national characteristic of Singaporeans (see Barr and Skrbiš 2008 for a detailed discussion of how *kiasu* plays out in Singapore education).

While the government continues to grapple with the slippery concepts of “fairness” and “equality” in their vision of meritocratic educational provision, the contradiction between meritocracy’s elitist and egalitarian dimensions is already unravelling at level of everyday life. A prominent example of how meritocracy translates into inequality in practice is to be found in the Gifted Education Program (GEP). The GEP was implemented in 1984 under the elitist rationale that more resources should be invested in a small pool of talented individuals, who will then be groomed to become future leaders of the society. This group of “gifted” children comprises of the top 1% of the cohort who sits for the selection test each year at the age of 9. Despite having received criticisms for its unequal distribution of resources and exerting unnecessary stress on children and parents, the GEP continues to be implemented on the grounds that the “intellectually gifted need a high degree of mental stimulation” which “may not be met in the mainstream classroom” and that given human capital is all that Singapore has for its resources, it is “to the advantage of the nation that the gifted are helped and nurtured” (Ministry of Education 2014a). The Integrated Program introduced at the secondary school level is one other major program that reflects the elitist strand in the education system. Although policy-makers envision these programs as differentiated learning pathways that would allow young people to maximize their potential as learners, such initiatives often end up serving the interests of families from better socioeconomic backgrounds. For instance, only 40% of the students enrolled in primary schools that offer the GEP reside in public housing flats (Ministry of Education 2012a). This raises a

central dilemma of education: while curricular and pedagogical diversification is crucial for meeting the different learning styles of young people, such classificatory practices tend to be inscribed by a hierarchy of values (Bourdieu 1984). In 2011, senior statesman Lee Kuan Yew commented that more than half of the students at Raffles Institution, one of the top performing schools in Singapore, had parents who are university graduates and of high socioeconomic backgrounds. This is in contrast to 13.1% of students with university-educated parents at another non-elite mainstream secondary school (Chang 2011). Lee's speech hit the news and was being circulated on Internet forums and social media, which quickly led to passionate discussions around the topic of social mobility and educational inequality. The "revelation" of such stark contrast in the socioeconomic background of students between elite and mainstream schools added fuel to many Singaporeans' ongoing unhappiness with the government's perpetuation of elitism through its economic-driven policies.

As "ordinary Singaporeans are becoming more conscious of socio-economic inequalities, the barriers to fair competition, and their divergent life chances in a global city" (Tan 2008, p. 11), the government is also raising its efforts to strengthen its legitimacy among a more critical generation of Singaporeans. A host of policy initiatives have been implemented since 2004 to soften the rigidity of the education system's streaming and tracking approach, such as the Direct School Admissions exercise that allows schools, junior colleges, and polytechnics to practice autonomy in providing preferential admission to a fixed percentage of students based on nonacademic achievements. Even more recently, the Ministry of Education introduced a new aim under the rubric of "Every School A Good School" in order to mark its commitment to tackle growing anxieties around unequal opportunities in the schooling landscape. While these successive policy initiatives signal attempts to break away from an educational model that emphasizes on tracking talents and the unequal distribution of rewards, "the piecemeal manner of their conception and implementation would ultimately prove insufficient in engendering a common commitment towards meritocracy" as long as "individuals' social mobility continues to be indexed by their educational attainment" (Lim 2013, p. 6).

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### **3 Learning to Labor: Educational Capitalism and Critical Considerations**

One of the challenges for modern capitalist societies is to produce the "right" worker for the "right" economy in order to maximize economic efficiency and productivity. The most recent global economic restructuring has created a phenomenon in which an increased number of educated youth are unable to convert their credentials into secure employment and economic resources (Jeffrey and McDowell 2004; Jeffrey 2009; Roberts 2013). This has alerted both scholars and policy-makers to debate about how education and training should be designed in such a way that would ensure the continuing "relevance" of the national stock of

skilled workers. Even though the global economic crisis has impacted Singapore significantly, the government's calibrated approach in maintaining a tight relationship between the education and employment has largely ensured the incorporation of educated youth into the labor market. The highly centralized formal education system in Singapore has contributed to low youth unemployment rate, which stood at 6.7% as compared to the global average of 12.6% in 2011 (Ye 2013). Indeed, it has been a longstanding concern of the state to keep a close eye on the management of human capital in response to rapidly changing needs of the economy (Ho and Ge 2011). While the Singapore's experience in human capital management has been celebrated as a successful case, it is sealed in a conception that is narrowly economic. Within the human capital theory, our educated bodies are turned into vessels stocked up with knowledge, competencies, and skills embodied in a narrowly conceived purpose – the ability to perform labor that produces economic value. As we are beginning to observe, the idea that education serves as a vehicle for social mobility and progress is a product of immense political work and social engineering. In short, there is a cultural politics of education and human capital formation that requires unpacking in order to critically understand what education is doing to young people's lives.

The rest of the discussion will turn to consider the contemporary youth experiences of education to work transitions in Singapore, with the aim of fleshing out the role that education plays in shaping human capital. Three selected themes will be underlined for elaboration. It begins with a discussion on the intensified interest in accumulation of credentials by youth and parents and an overview of the key transformations in the university landscape following its most recent reform. Attention will then shift to examining how the state is enrolling the idea of “learning” to manage labor productivity in the current knowledge economy. Finally, key tensions and anxieties emerging in the last decade pertaining to the increasingly difficult terrains on which young people are transitioning from education to work will be discussed.

### **3.1 Singapore: The Credential Society**

There is now a hegemonic understanding of university education credentials as the minimum basis for young people to achieve upward mobility or to maintain their middle-class positions in Singapore. The valorization of credentials as the cultural currency in modern capitalist societies is closely connected to the bureaucratization of recruitment practices, which led to a systematic transformation in the way laboring bodies are sorted accordingly to educational certification. This is accompanied by a growth in demand for credentials among the middle classes whereby the pursuit of education is geared toward the goal of gaining an advantageous position when competing for desirable jobs. These processes resulted in the rise of the “credential society” (Collins 1979). Within a credential society, individuals who are able to secure prestigious credentials will more or less be assured of employment opportunities in large corporations and public offices. Their wages will also

commensurate with their educational qualifications. For instance, statistics released by the Ministry of Manpower showed university graduates earn a median monthly starting wage of S\$3,050, while graduates of polytechnics and technical education institutes earn a starting wage of S\$1,950 and S\$1,350, respectively (Ministry of Manpower 2013). This relationship between education credentials and employment achieved such a strong discursive power that formal education was to be embraced as a vehicle for upward mobility. In addition, the deeply embedded ideology of meritocracy that framed formal education as the best mechanism for sorting individuals into different segments of the labor market further entrenched educated youth's interests to participate in the "paper chase." For many of these young people, whether they come from junior colleges, polytechnics, or technical education institutes, there is an aspiration to attend university and get a degree (Davie 2012). Although it may seem intuitive that there is a disparity in wages according to educational levels, it is still noteworthy as such differences are part and parcel of the pragmatic rationalities that many Singaporeans consider when devising strategies to realize their aspirations.

As the global pool of highly educated and mobile workers is growing, the government needed to prepare Singaporeans to become more resilient and versatile in order to compete on the international stage. Just as the higher education sectors from other parts of the world are undergoing reform, the Singapore government found it pertinent to make adjustments to its own university landscape in order to stay relevant in the global higher education scene. The unveiling of an expansion plan was also timely because of the growing demand for higher education credentials by Singaporeans. The Ministry of Education set up a committee in 2011 to formulate a strategic plan to expand the university landscape. In the report produced by the committee, key consideration was given to "the risks of expanding the university sector too much and too fast" and avoiding the consequences of rapid expansion that have hit other countries in Europe, North America, and Asia such as that of "high attrition rates, reduced graduate employability and a dilution in the value of university degrees" (Ministry of Education 2012b). The result is an aim to raise the publicly funded university cohort participation rate from 27% in 2012 to 40% by 2020, therefore increasing the number of degree places from 13,000 to 16,000. This is accompanied by the official instatement of Singapore's fifth and sixth universities in 2012 – the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and the Singapore Institute of Management University (UniSIM). The private education sector has also played an important role in catering to the educational needs of young Singaporeans. According to the Council of Private Education, the regulatory board of private educational provision, there were a total of 71 registered institutes, and out of which the largest four of them saw an enrolment of 47,500 Singaporeans (80% of them below 30 years old) for undergraduate degree programs in 2011 (Ministry of Education 2012b). This figure is comparable to the estimate of 45,000 Singaporeans pursuing undergraduate study at local universities in the same year (Davie 2011).

At the same time when university expansion is underway, the government is also beginning to embark on a project to regulate the mounting demand for degree

education by Singaporean youth. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's speech at one of the local polytechnics first signaled at this when he reminded the students that university education is not the only option for polytechnic graduates, who could go on to work or even become entrepreneurs (Chan 2013). This is made even clearer when the Minister for National Development told more than 160 students and young adults at a national dialogue session that the university degree is not the key to become successful (Toh 2013). This drew mixed responses from many "digital citizens." While some of them viewed this as a positive shift away from a narrow definition of "success," others raised concerns such as the readiness of employers to recognize the value of nondegree holders as well as the wage disparity between degree and diploma graduates. There were also those who saw this as an elitist idea that is aimed at culling individual aspirations for university education in the service of maintaining a cohort of "middle-skilled" workers for jobs that do not require university graduates. The diversity of views expressed in relation to this new discourse around higher education reflects the dilemmas and insecurities that many young people are struggling with in the face of economic change. On the one hand, Singaporean youth envision a society in which ideas around "success" and "good life" are able to penetrate beyond the walls of credentials and academic achievements. On the other hand, they are also acutely conscious of the economic and cultural profits that they might gain from obtaining university degrees. Given that the current generation of youth and their parents views the prospect of becoming a "degree holder" as a normative goal in their pursuit of employment, efforts to recalibrate Singaporeans' expectations around and desires for university credentials may require more than just a change in societal perceptions of the value of degree education, but also a shift away from credentialism at the institutional level.

### 3.2 Learning in the Neoliberal Economy

In Singapore's latest round of education reform, there is a focus on what the Education Ministry calls the "student-centric and value-driven education." At the heart of this approach is the aim for schools to help students develop interest, disposition, and fundamental skills to embark on a lifelong journey of learning. A call is being made for parents, educators, and students to enter a collaborative space whereby "learning" can be mobilized in a way that attends to the aspirations and individual interests of students. It is an attempt to enliven education by drawing attention to the ways that schooling can enable students to become "engaged learners," who are then able to navigate future challenges. This was revealed in a speech given by the Minister for Education, Heng Swee Keat (2013): "At each stage, our student must be enabled to learn in ways appropriate for his age and development levels. Education is a marathon, not a sprint. Let us focus on what matters for the long-haul, and not just what matters for exams. Let us plant in our students the seeds of lifelong learning." Under this new approach, the concept of "learning" is invested with meanings that depart from those associated with the

competitive, monotonous, and examination-oriented schooling system. Young people are urged to imagine “learning” as a form of ability, which serves as a key resource to help them adapt to a changing world and to deal with economic and social problems in a creative and effective manner. Although young people are being repositioned at the center of this renewed education agenda, it is also an important strategy for the government because the extent to which the state can continue to regenerate its national narrative of economic success with the contemporary education system is dependent on how well it can enroll young people and their families into a common vision of learning as an aspect of life-making. Indeed, in order for education to preserve its capacity for engineering young bodies into productive bodies in/for the new global economy, there is an increasing reliance on the energies and resilience of young people themselves (Anagnost 2013).

Although young people largely experience education and learning through the formal curriculum in schools, polytechnics, and universities, which are under the purview of the Education Ministry, there is another strand of education that has gained a significant role in recent years especially after the economic crisis in the 2000s. In 2008, the government launched a master plan for Continuing Education and Training (CET) in order to centralize and improve existing CET initiatives with an endowment fund of S\$5 billion. The key aim of this comprehensive plan is to champion lifelong learning and provide the infrastructure to train Singaporean workers with the knowledge, skills, and capabilities that are required in the global workplace (Workforce Development Agency 2014). Since the Asian Financial crisis in 1997, Singapore has stepped up its CET efforts with the immediate goal of retraining workers whose skills had become obsolete to help them find new jobs. However, CET is now seen as a core aspect of human capital management in which workers have to constantly upgrade themselves through a lifelong learning process. The Prime Minister elaborated on this in a speech given at the unveiling of the master plan for CET, “a change in mindset from the old paradigm of completing your schooling, and then leaving it behind to pursue your career and work [is required]. With a rapidly changing business and employment landscape, workers have to continually pick up new skills and knowledge. No matter how useful the skills and qualifications we attain in school are when we graduate, they will become steadily less relevant over time” (Lee 2008). This rhetoric adopts a “survivalist” approach to call upon Singaporeans to embrace education as a lifelong process, to accept messy transitions between education and work as a norm in the new knowledge economy, and to develop a disposition for constantly improving the self as a worker. Although this way of governing the worker bodies is useful in an increasingly precarious labor market, it relies on a logic of economic productivity and perpetuation of “the specter of redundancy” (Anagnost 2013, p. 15) in which human bodies are constantly under the threat of becoming obsolete and useless to the society.

As some scholars have observed, the ability to learn – including possession of qualities such as trainability and willingness to upgrade the self – is replacing credentials as the most formidable cultural capital in this new global knowledge economy. For instance, Kariya (2009) observes that the J-mode credential society



in Japan is undergoing transformation given that learning competencies are becoming central to human capital formation in the country's post-Fordist economy. The deepening of neoliberal restructuring in many parts of the world is also making this new definition of human capital a global reality through the normalization of market-oriented values such as individualism, flexibility, freedom, and self-responsibilization. It is unsurprising to find that many young people engage with education "in an atmosphere saturated by a neoliberal imaginary, a frame of mind (socially speaking) characterized by an ethic of entrepreneurial self-management" (Urciuoli 2010, p. 162). Singapore's strategy to plug into the knowledge economy and to create a "learning society" began early in 1997 with the official launch of the "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation" initiative. Later in 2006, another call was made for a pedagogical reform to encourage teachers to "Teach Less" and facilitate students to "Learn More," aimed at getting students to take charge of their own learning (Ng 2011a). Although there is now a prominent discourse on the importance of being able to learn in self-directed and creative ways in order to stay "relevant" in a rapidly changing knowledge-based economy, this emphasis has not eroded the significance of university credentials nor shifted Singapore into a "post-degree society" (Borovoy 2010). On the contrary, both academic qualifications and learning competencies are understood to be complementary resources that serve as the ammunition one would need in order to brave through difficult and uncertain futures. What this also means is that young people are facing mounting pressures to maintain themselves as valuable subjects in the eye of the self, the family, the community, and the state.

### 3.3 Transitional Woes and Anxieties

The global economic decline in the late 2000s propelled a widespread anxiety among a majority faction of the Singaporeans, leading to a heightened sense of economic instability and material well-being. At the same time, education's promise for opportunities to obtain good jobs and incomes, which Brown et al. (2011) termed the "opportunity trap," has led to a social congestion as people continue to scramble for prestigious cultural capitals. This situation has deepened prevailing insecurities around the idea of being able to "survive" in a country faced with an ever-growing cost of living, disproportionate rise in wages, as well as competition from hypermobile professional workers who are entering Singapore via its open-door immigration policy. Although youth unemployment rate is low, university-educated youth are finding it increasingly difficult to enter the full-time labor market immediately upon graduation. According to a Graduate Employment Survey published by the Ministry of Education (2014b), which is a compilation of respective surveys conducted by the National University of Singapore, the Nanyang Technological University, and the Singapore Management University, it took about 6 months for graduates to find full-time employment in 2013. Although there are eight out of ten graduates who were able to secure jobs within this period of time, full-time employment rate for graduates holding degrees such as Bachelor of Arts,



Sociology, Sports Science, and Bioengineering fell below 70%. The lowest employment rate was at 53.6%. The tightening of the graduate labor market means that a growing number of highly educated youth are taking up temporary positions and short-term contract jobs and sometimes accepting lower wages in order to secure employment. Such conditions reflect a well-established observation of contemporary youth: prolonged education, precarious labor market, and increased difficulty in gaining the sort of prestige, status, and upward mobility associated with university education as compared to their predecessors (Furlong et al. 2011). When these are juxtaposed against the economic prosperity and spending power enjoyed by middle-class Singaporeans since the descent of the “Asian Miracle” in the 1990s, young people’s optimism about the future starts to give way to a new mood of disenchantment and skepticism that is unfamiliar to earlier generations.

Instead of acknowledging the gradual erosion of youthful energy in a country saturated by the demands of global capitalism, the government sticks to “what works” by constantly prompting Singaporean youth to stay resilient in the face of challenges brought by globalization and economic forces. In a speech given by Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong (2010), young Singaporeans are reminded to combine “soft skills with ruggedness” because the nation needs “Singaporeans who are rugged,” rather than a generation of young people who are “fragile like strawberries” (the “strawberry generation” describes the fragility of post-1980s children who grew up in middle-class, affluent environments and are unable to withstand hardship). The allusion to this term reflects a broader concern around the current generation of Singaporeans being complacent and taking for granted the peace, economic prosperity, and stability that the nation-state has enjoyed over the last two decades. Young people are not only incited to carry the burden of self-development, but that as future leaders of the nation-state, they too bear the weight of developing the nation and maintaining its global positioning. Although Singaporean youth are seduced into this state-vaunted ethos largely as a pragmatic antidote to their increasingly precarious positions, they are not silently toiling through these worrying times. Much of the anxieties and woes pertaining to difficult youth transitions are manifested in the forms of online critiques, commentaries, and even banal complaints. But these prosaic styles of critical sensibilities can also escalate and feed into, as well as draw on, existing public debates on issues around the government’s fixation on economic growth and failure to listen to the voices of Singaporeans. Unfortunately, many of these frustrations are often channeled toward the “foreign talent” and “foreign scholar” bodies whereby they are constructed as “stealers” of local jobs and university places. Indeed, anti-foreigner sentiments – especially toward the figure of the “foreign talent” – not only continue to seep into the ways Singaporeans are making sense of their socioeconomic positions under threat but also their sense of national belongingness (Yang 2014).

With the Internet and social media quickly becoming a common aspect of our daily lives, Singaporean youth are turning to online platforms and communities to air their frustrations and worries as well as to seek psychic support from others who have found difficulty in securing secure employment. One example is a locally

initiated online portal, *transitioning.org*, founded in 2009 in the wake of the economic crisis to provide emotional support for unemployed Singaporeans. Amidst the numerous forum letters published on the website are some striking headlines, such as “Generation Y female PMET jobless despite graduating from elite JC and local uni,” “Jobless young SMU graduate stucked and feeling desperate,” “Jobless young fine arts honours graduate feeling the blues,” and “Young jobless NUS graduate in banking sector unsure about career option,” that illustrate a picture of the “mounting debt of stress, [and] a slow attrition of life” (Anagnost 2013, p. 15) that more and more young people (and their families) are made to bear in hypercapitalist societies. The extent to which social reproduction has taken a toll on young people’s lives is perhaps most visibly noted in the Singapore General Elections 2011, where the ruling People’s Action Party saw an unprecedented vote swing toward oppositional parties. In what is now called the “watershed election,” about 25% of the 2.2 million voters were between the ages of 21 and 35 – a generation of youth who are Internet savvy, highly educated, and critical of the hard-handed style of government that is characteristic of the ruling party (Chong 2012; Ortmann 2011). This cohort of young people, as described by author and social commentator Catherine Lim (2012), is disaffected by “the overbearing, intolerant and patronizing approach that was so stifling to their vibrant and creative energies; the elitism, superiority and highhandedness that offended their youthful ideals of equality and fair play; the inflexibility, stiffness, and formality that were at odds with the casual, spontaneous, friendly manner that they favoured.” It is perhaps within this bold depiction of the stark contradictions between the aspirations of the state and that of its youthful citizens that we find an appeal to take seriously the voices of young people.

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## 4 Conclusion

The last decade has seen Singapore pursuing its development agenda in a time of economic globalization and neoliberal restructuring, with the nation’s youth made to take on an ever-more significant role in reproducing the state’s remarkable achievements. Formal education serves as a crucial tool for the government to ensure that the knowledge, skills, and values imparted to young people are relevant within the logics of economic productivity and hypercapitalist efficiency – a defining function of schooling under educational capitalism. This is such that they too would be able to survive global crises, navigate unforeseeable challenges, and contribute to the remaking of Singapore’s success story in new times. Under the current neoliberal norms, which require new kinds of workers for new conditions of labor, social reproduction becomes all the more intensified at the site of education – a space in which the ethos of life-making and citizenship can be cultivated en masse. Since the birth of the nation-state, Singapore has already been engaging with a carefully planned and calculated project of social engineering to produce a governable population, beginning with a strong concern over well-defined “difference” along the lines of race/ethnicity, language, and religion. As the

developmental agenda shifted attention to economic regionalization and globalization, new embodied values such as multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism became the ideals that Singaporean youth are encouraged to aspire toward (Gopinathan 2007; Koh 2004; Ng 2011b). Indeed, a key to Singapore's ability to reinvent itself in the face of changing economic forces lies within its shrewd enrolment of citizens to participate in and profit from the state's aspirations for economic globalization. But even as the Singaporean state urges its citizens to stay optimistic and adapt to the new economy, many of them remain unsettled. As income gap widens across various socioeconomic segments of the society, the middle-class category is becoming more fragmented. The historical inequalities around race/ethnicity and socioeconomic class as well as elitism that continue to haunt the education system are beginning to be revealed. There is a deep concern with educational opportunities, unemployment, and lack of welfare policies that would prepare young people for adult life and old age. Both schooling youth and young working adults are grappling with the question of how to make sense of their lives in an age of heightened uncertainty. How might thinking about the shifting conditions around education and work, including but not limited to those that have hitherto been underlined, contribute to our understanding of the contemporary geographies of youth in Singapore?

A key issue that requires continual attention is the way in which education contributes to the reproduction of social and cultural capital. As Singapore's education landscape becomes increasingly fragmented, children and young people are compelled to navigate complex institutionalized pathways as part of their growing up experience and more often than not with intensified involvement by parents who are deeply concerned with the futures of their children. First, although studies that examine the role of families in shaping young people's educational lives do exist (Khong 2004; Ren and Hu 2011), there is still room for critical attention on the ways that changing norms and values of family life in Singapore are shaping young people's perceptions toward education and work. If we also take seriously the idea that young people are social actors, then it would be worthwhile to think about how they might be transforming intergenerational relationships through the various cultural resources that they acquire through education. Second, there is much scope for expanding the conception of social difference as a way to augment critical analyses of education as a dynamic site of social reproduction and inequalities. Existing research on unequal distribution of and access to resources has centered on educational stratification as a form of "difference," whereby students in different educational tracks and institutions are differentially prepared to become future citizens (Chong 2014; Ho 2012; Loh 2013; Tan 1993). The issue of how differences along the lines of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic class (as well as gender to a lesser extent) are shaping educational achievements has also garnered considerable attention (Kho 2004; Senin and Ng 2012; Thye 1993). Given that there is now a growing presence of international students and children of cross-cultural marriages in Singapore, more complex layers of "difference" are being added to the everyday landscape of educational institutions. Also, what educational distinctions and hierarchies are being introduced to the local youth

population when we take Singapore as a “sending” country of international students? The scholarship on transnational education provides insights into how educational pursuits involving emigrant and immigrant students are changing the ways that different cultural resources, including education credentials (Waters 2006) but also that of notions around time (Cheng 2014), are implicated in the reproduction of exclusionary representations and socio-spatial relations. All these point to a call for reflections on how new meanings of social difference are emerging alongside an ongoing expansion of educational pathways and options and the ways they are shaping young people’s practices of social reproduction.

Another important line of inquiry is to reflect on what restructuring of education tells us about the changing relationship between the state and its youthful citizens. This is a way using education as both an “inward-” and “outward-looking” lens to understand the constitutive interactions between local lives and global processes (Holloway et al. 2010). Commenting on the global economic crisis and future of Asian economies, Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam (cited in Wong 2014) said that in order for Singapore to become a “truly advanced economy,” restructuring of industries have to be “driven by market forces and entrepreneurial innovation,” which depends on a fundamental transformation of “social culture” with “disruptive players” in every sector of the economy. He urged that this process “has to be more intrinsic” and with that mindset that “I have to be the master of what I am doing, whatever it is.” This pronouncement confirms the touching down of a neoliberal ethos in Singapore, which is described by Anagnost (2013, p. 12) as being premised on “a prevailing ethos of ‘empowering’ individuals as risk-bearing subjects and of unleashing the power of the markets to order human affairs.” A focus on education as a site in which the Singaporean state engages with neoliberal restructuring of youth is particularly productive, especially given that “education reform is and will remain the business and prerogative of the Singapore state” (Koh 2004, p. 345). It opens up questions around what the role of education is in terms of producing models of ideal citizen-worker subjects and new forms of embodied values required for the “self-enterprising” subject, as well as the kinds of strategies young people are engaging with in order to become “winners” (or “floaters”) in the new economy. Existing studies and commentators on the globalizing (higher) education landscape in Singapore have pointed to the state construction of a cosmopolitan, entrepreneurial risk-taking, and creative neoliberal subject as the ideal citizen in the new knowledge economy (Collins et al. 2014; Ong 2007; Olds and Thrift 2005; Sidhu et al. 2011). Of course, this should concomitantly direct critical attention to how the very same transformation that is seen as “enabling” by some can render other bodies vulnerable and less “desirable.” Levinson et al.’s (1996) notion of education as a site of “paradoxical potentialities” serves as a useful epistemological tool here to help apprehend some of these contradictory dimensions of contemporary educational spaces and subjects.

It is this point about young people as actively making and reworking their lives that will steer the discussion for a final way of thinking about youth through Singapore as a case study. There is already a body of literature that points to the multiple sites, scales, and expressions of youth agency, which can take the shape of

organized political actions or the more mundane, sometimes visceral, acts of coping with pressing structures (Jeffrey 2011). In the context of Singapore, it is well established that the state has a strong role in intervening and shaping almost every aspect of ordinary life, including the way in which young people learn to become workers in the changing economy. This has led to a stinging critique of the way in which ideology has become a manipulative tool of the Singaporean state to govern and control the citizens. For instance, Cherian George (2000, p. 202) writes in *Singapore: the Air-conditioned Nation* that the ruling government “systematically rewards the individualistic majority and discourages the socially-conscious minority” and produces a nation-wide mentality in which “the overwhelming ethos is to mind your own business. Singapore’s embrace of the market forces. . . has provided rich incentives for Singaporeans to work hard, and to create wealth,” giving rise to a state of comfort – the ideal ground for cultivating a nation of docile citizens. But as highlighted earlier, the state’s control over the citizens (and in particular the youth) is beginning to lose its grip in recent years due to a generational shift. One cannot help but wonder whether the success of Singapore’s education system has turned on itself, as a segment of the new generation of highly educated, globally oriented, and reflexive middle-class youth are using their knowledge, critical thinking, and social capital to challenge the state. But at the same time, there is still a prevailing sense of Singaporean youth’s lack of involvement in overt political actions or oppositional cultures. This poses a series of questions pertaining to the role of youth political agency: How might notions of young people’s political participation (Skelton 2010) and student citizenship (Ahier et al. 2003) be reconceptualized to include more multiple ways of “doing” politics? How can the analytical theme of “resourcefulness” (Jeffrey 2011) help us reflect on the variegated resources that young people are drawing on not only to cope with neoliberal economic change but also to enact the sort of everyday politics associated with struggling for class, gender, ethnic/racial, and other forms of recognition.

In outlining the three broad areas for further research on the geographies of youth, education, and work in the context of Singapore – social reproduction and difference, neoliberalizing education and citizenship, and young people’s agency and politics – the intention is to create critical openings, interventions, and interests. The article invites scholars to take up and develop these issues using Singapore as an ethnographic locus and with a possibility for advancing comparative research notes in the future. It is hoped that scholars and non-scholars (policy-makers, educators, etc.) will continue to take stock of and reflect on the complex cultural politics of education and their bearing on young people’s lives. As Singapore continues to transform under the logic of capitalism, bringing with it mounting stress on youth to exceed themselves at the global sites of education and work, it is crucial that we remain curious of, and concerned with, the question posed by Anagnost (2013, p. 2): “to what extent the new regime of capital accumulation relies on the energy of youth and its optimism and resilience in the face of life’s challenges”?

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## Abstract

Greater interconnectivity has led to a growth in the number of students enrolling at universities outside of their home country. This chapter offers a review of the changing policies that have led to greater competition between both countries and universities for international students and the development of education as a key export industry in many industrialized societies. It analyzes the complex and multifaceted issues that play a part in student decision making. In particular, it assesses how greater consumerism and the marketization of higher education has led to an interest in these decision-making processes and led to a dramatic expansion in the literature detailing student mobility. This chapter systematically analyzes this information, detailing how students choose an international education on the basis of economically focused factors (such as the improved job prospects that potentially come with international mobility) and how these go hand-in-hand with the sociocultural aspects of overseas study (such as the

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improved intercultural communication skills), to offer an overview of the complexity of overseas students' decision-making practices. To conclude, it suggests some key areas for consideration in emerging research and how this is advancing our current understandings of student mobility further – such as work by Carlson (*Popul Space Place*, 19(2), 168–180, 2013), who suggested that a greater understanding of mobility as “proessional,” rather than at a single point in time, was critical as we move forward.

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**Keywords**

Academic imperialism • Higher education • International student mobility • Globalization • Language skills and intercultural skills • Personal development • Social and cultural benefits • Neoliberal reform • Transnational education (TNE)

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## 1 Introduction

This chapter will address the changing policies and processes which have led to the development of higher education into a key export industry in many industrialized countries. As it will show, this is in no small part the result of increased competition for students which operates on a global rather than a local, regional, or national scale. It should be noted from the outset that an international student is broadly defined as someone who studies for either part or the duration of their education outside of their country of residence, however, Raghuram (2013) has discussed at length how the boundaries between international students and other categories of migrants are increasingly blurred. She draws attention to how international students at any one time have multiple different identities as students, workers, family members, and political activists. The presence of international students on campus is one which can be considered positive (in terms of generating income and increasing the cultural capital of host students) while at the same time can be considered negative. Peacock and Harrison (2009) noted that when the international student presence on campus reached a certain level, perceptions from host students ceased to be positive and interactions between them and international students became more infrequent. Instead there became a heightened sense of competition between both student groups.

The particular focus for this piece will be on tertiary education students and their university choices. For the most part, these international students are often considered to be elites, those with the necessary finances to invest considerable money and time overseas, but the growth of transnational education (TNE) programs or policies has muddied further this definition. It is now increasingly common for universities to offer courses, programs of study, or even build entire campuses outside of their national boundaries. This is, of course, in order to maximize profits – indeed many branch campuses focus their offering on business and technology courses which tend to be more popular with international students (Geddie 2012). What this does mean, however, is that an “international student,” in some senses, does not even have to leave their home country to study “elsewhere” as many study

locally and are awarded degrees by foreign universities. However, Waters and Leung (2014) note that in contrast to other international students who study abroad for their education, those learning through such partnerships are often not the “elites” of society, both in terms of their financial situation and their academic abilities and have often been unsuccessful in obtaining places on degree programs offered by local institutions. Engaging in higher education through partnership programs therefore offered them the opportunity to study in a way which was both cheaper than other options and considered easier in terms of academic rigor and personal upheaval (*ibid*).

While international student numbers have grown of late – and this trend is particularly pronounced over the last 30 years – universities have always been an arena for mobility. Teichler (2004) has suggested that perhaps as much as ten percent of medieval scholars traveled throughout Europe to pursue their learning, thus they have been a feature of even the earliest higher education institutions. This recent growth is, however, the result of changing policies particularly the adoption of neoliberal principles and practices which have transformed not only higher education, but the wider public sector more generally. This has combined with greater globalization and interconnectedness which have opened up tertiary education students’ opportunities. No longer is the focus solely on the local, there are now greater opportunities for those who have the financial support and the personal attributes needed to embark on a period of time spent overseas. This is not for the fainthearted as such – overseas study involves possibly three or even more years spent living away from home, often at a comparatively young age.

This chapter will look in depth at the changing policies which have influenced this growth in international student numbers through the greater marketization and internationalization of universities. In particular it offers an in depth analysis of the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s which are considered as one of the key motivations for these changes within higher education. Implemented initially by the Thatcher government in the UK and the Reagan administration in the USA, they were mirrored throughout much of the Western World through the mass privatization of public assets, causing universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to seek out alternative funding sources. This has occurred alongside greater globalization, leading to increased interconnectedness between societies and normalizing the travel process.

These two processes have therefore provided students with the opportunities for overseas study. However policy reform has also influenced how a higher education is perceived by students – who are increasingly considered consumers, rather than participants in the education system. This chapter will therefore also show the different dimensions to student decision making and identifies the key factors which influence them in their decision to study overseas and also where to study abroad. These influences – the pursuit of better job prospects, a better education, and greater social and cultural capital (to name but a few) are also an attempt by the students to make themselves more well-rounded individuals, who will be able to compete more effectively in the employment market on graduation. Thus higher education mobility is often conceived by students as a step toward their own

neoliberal project. This chapter draws on a wide range of literature from across the social sciences, but there is a particular focus on the work of geographers over the last 6 years, primarily because of the growth of the geographies of international student mobility during this timeframe. Literature of note includes that of Francis Collins (2008, 2009, 2012) with his focus on student networks and lifeworlds and Rachel Brooks and Johanna Waters' (2009, 2010, 2011) work in terms of the importance of social and cultural capital accumulation in student mobility.

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## 2 Neoliberal Reform

Neoliberal reform refers to the transformation of the public sector away from the Progressive-Era Public Administration (PPA) model toward a New-Public Management (NPM) alternative. The traditional model of service provision had drawn clear, distinct boundaries between the public and the private sector (Wallis et al. 2007). However, throughout the 1960s and 1970s it became increasingly apparent that this did little to encourage competition and led to a sea change in terms of governmental strategies. The NPM model was developed which encouraged greater privatization, marketization, and commercialization of public services – either through full scale privatization or the application of private sector techniques and practices (Deem 2001).

Higher education and universities were by no means immune to this practice. Indeed, both within the USA and the UK the social and cultural objectives of tertiary education were replaced – to some extent – by aims of improving competitiveness and service provision (Barnett 2011). Within the UK, the 1980s and 1990s were a period of flux in the higher education system. Both the Education Reform Act of 1988 and the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 altered funding for universities and HEIs, with the latter removing the binary divide between universities and polytechnic colleges. This allowed polytechnics to apply for university status provided 55% of their enrolled, full-time students were on higher education courses (Stevenson and Bell 2009; HEFCE 2004). The consequence being that the higher education provision grew considerably in a comparatively short period of time, causing greater competition between HEIs for students than in the past and leading to more intensive marketing. Increasingly, HEIs needed to become more and more commercialized and began to take on the properties and characteristics of other money-making enterprises leading to greater self-promotion through branding strategies such as mission statements and strategic plans (Chapleo 2011). It is also important to note that this is not just a feature of the UK and the USA, while most common here Barnett (2011) states that there is increasing evidence that continental Europe is also adopting similar methods, while China also allows some universities to generate their own income as well.

In part, the adoption of these marketing principles were in relation to these changing funding regimes, but they also came about through the growth of the higher education system more generally. By 2000, there were some 100 million students enrolled in higher education courses, compared to around 500,000 at the

beginning of the twentieth century when tertiary education remained the preserve of the elite (Guri-Rosenbilt et al. 2007). These 100 million students represented around 20% of the world's relevant age cohort and have normalized the process of taking part in tertiary education for many students. Consequently students are becoming more selective in terms of where they want to study and seeking out more specialized courses in order to get the best value from their studies and maintain a competitive advantage over their peers when they graduate. Brooks and Everett (2009) emphasized this change by stating that an undergraduate degree has effectively become a "basic minimum" for many students which needs to be supported by extracurricular activities, work experience, or postgraduate qualifications to become more useful. While Hall and Appleyard (2011) stated that the growth of the higher education system had increased labor market competition through an oversupply of university-educated graduates which requires students to do more to show how they stand out from the crowd.

As a consequence, university students are increasingly considered consumers of higher education. The adoption of league tables and rankings, as well as other performance indicators, and the introduction of these marketing principles into the higher education system has changed how they consider their education and the choices that they make. The two major global indices compiled by Shanghai Jiao Tong University and the Times Higher World University Ranking have been published since the beginning of the twenty-first century (2003 and 2004, respectively). Both receive extensive media coverage and feed into national and local debates on the quality of the university system (Saisana et al. 2011). However, these are not without their controversy. Much has been written regarding how league tables and rankings are unreliable features of the higher education system – an overly simplistic method to evaluate what is a highly complex process. Jöns and Hoyler (2013) showed that ranking systems produced distinct clusters of world class universities with clear disparities between the Global North and South, stating that in both the Shanghai and Times Higher rankings there was a strong representation of US and British universities.

Furthermore, they tend to favor research-focused universities to the detriment of those which are more teaching-focused. The Shanghai ranking in particular has been criticized for its research focus, the importance it places on the history of the universities, and its preference for technical and social sciences at the expense of the arts and humanities. Thus it favors institutions with a long history of academic achievement (Jöns and Hoyler 2013). However, both systems have been criticized for their reliance on bibliometric indicators which are biased toward English-speaking and hard-science oriented institutions (Saisana et al. 2011). A glance at other national league tables suggests similar biases. The league tables and rankings for UK universities points to a bias toward older, pre-1992 universities, with a clear dominance of those considered "ancient" institutions. Bowden (2000) noted that it was not until 1998 that the *Times* league table of UK universities placed a former polytechnic (Oxford Brookes) – that is to say a university which was formed after the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act – above more traditional universities, but it was even later before such an HEI was placed in the top 50 of a UK league table.

Consequently there is the real possibility that the pursuit of higher education becomes one in which a student will seek out educational “products” and services, with degrees considered as a means of improving human capital (Nordensvärd 2011). The result of this being that higher education becomes simply a step in the process of finding employment, rather than an opportunity to engage with higher level knowledge or experience personal development – so say Molesworth et al. (2009). Furthermore, the tuition fees charged to students and how their demands shape revenue strategies has led to postcompulsory education becoming more and more akin to a commodity (see Levin 2005; Maringe 2011). This was highlighted further by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), put in place by the World Trade Organization (WTO) which cited higher education as a tradable good (Maringe 2011; Robertson 2003).

These changes and neoliberal reforms have blurred further the boundaries between the public and the private. Stauntson and Morrish (2011) write that neoliberal reform was “imposed by the Thatcher government on institutions that had hitherto not prioritized issues of profitability or capital accumulation” (p. 73). They state that this had led to greater accountability and benchmarking – assessment of teaching practice, research “quality control” such as exercised by the Research Excellent Framework (REF) in the UK, as well as the privatization of university spaces through chain bookstores and external catering. In their analysis of university mission statements – virtually unheard of during the 1980s and yet now common practice – Stauntson and Morrish (2011) believe that they have found some of the most overt examples of how universities have embraced neoliberal discourses, championing programs of marketization and commodification. Mission statements are the corporate image of universities where “students...knowledge, research and teaching/learning are all offered as products of the university” (p. 83). They note that the students are both considered consumers but also as methods of generating revenue and as products of the university system.

Universities, therefore, are now often considered as money-making and marketized enterprises. Their role is to provide opportunities for education, but this tends to be at a cost – universities in England and Wales can now charge up to £9,000 per annum for local students, academics are encouraged to compete for research funding, and universities are frequently renowned for their diverse marketing efforts. This is alongside more contrived marketing strategies such as the *That's Why I Chose Yale* video uploaded to YouTube in 2010 and undeniably an attempt to open the university up to more diverse markets than in the past. International students too are often considered a key revenue stream for many universities providing an additional funding source by encouraging new “markets” to apply for their courses.

This is not to say that governmental policy is always universally in favor of promoting international student mobility. Indeed policies introduced by the UK government to change the poststudy work visa regulations for international students have proved detrimental in some respects. As of 2012 it was decided to remove the option of staying in the UK to work, without the need of a sponsor, after graduation. This was a popular scheme with many Masters students and in particular those from

the subcontinent. Mavroudi and Warren (2013) suggested that this was likely to have a detrimental impact on incoming students to the UK who often considered the ability to stay after graduating as one of the key factors in choosing it as a study destination. Since, there has been a notable decrease in student numbers to the UK from certain countries like India and Pakistan according to a report published by Universities UK (2014). It showed that in comparison to the levels of growth experienced prior to 2010 there had been a decline in the numbers of international students coming from outside of the EU to the UK in 2010–2011 and 2012–2013. However, the report also showed that the top five study destinations for international students had all experienced some decline in recruitment since 2000 due to competition from emerging destinations such as China, Malaysia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The ability to recruit students is therefore not a “given” as such, but rather fluctuates and varies according to policy at the time and the opportunities which are available for mobility. Students, as consumers of higher education, are able to effectively shop around for their provider with greater interconnectedness facilitating this movement. This neoliberal reform of the higher education system therefore goes hand-in-hand with the wider globalization of higher education as well, while the two are by no means mutually exclusive they do represent two very different processes.

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### 3 Globalization and Normalizing Travel

This expanding neoliberalism has developed alongside increased opportunities for globalization, which has allowed for greater interconnectedness between places and peoples. Sparke (2009) describes globalization as an “unstoppable process of integration” (p. 308) which simultaneously drives market capitalism and requires greater neoliberalism. This has enabled universities greater access to alternative markets than in the past. Indeed a recent UNESCO report highlighted that between 1990 and 2009 there was an increase of 2 million international students worldwide, from 1.3 million to 3.4 million (Chien and Kot 2012). This is primarily a consequence of the higher education reforms detailed previously which has opened up new opportunities for overseas study for those that have the necessary funds to do so.

Gribble (2008) attributed this growth to four factors. First, a lack of university places in developing countries effectively forcing many students to consider their options elsewhere. Second, the belief that study abroad has numerous professional advantages and greater job opportunities. Third, that transport costs have made travel easier so that distance is less of an issue. Fourth (and finally), that developed countries are keen to recruit international students as a method of filling various skill shortages, thus supporting research and development. In addition to this, evidence of greater interconnectedness and globalization has normalized the processes of travel and mobility as well as making travel more accessible to a greater number of people and this too could be considered as a factor driving international student growth alongside the four aforementioned. Indeed, Urry (2007) notes that



the Internet is the fastest growing technology ever, and this combined with more affordable telephone communications has led to an incredible uptake of virtual communication. Since then, we have witnessed the development of numerous social networking sites which enable people to easily maintain contact with others distributed (potentially) around the world. In his article on the connections between South Koreans at home and overseas, Francis Collins (2009) has written of the key role that the internet and online social networks play in maintaining contact and finding out information about home. He does note, however, that as their length of time overseas increases, their online social networks tended to be used more and more to maintain local connections as well. Despite this they are clearly an important means of communicating with a wide range of people, spread over geographically distant areas.

Maintaining connection is easier but so too has it become normal to travel. Cresswell (2006) writes that in the past mobility and travel was a luxury or associated with those on the margins of society. In comparison, today it is an activity of the masses whether as a method of career development, travel, to trial a more permanent move, or for study (see Raghuram 2013). Similarly, Conradson and Latham (2005) stated that their study of New Zealanders in London showed that for many individuals mobility has become a “normal and almost taken-for-granted part of the lifecycle” (p. 228). As mobility becomes more commonplace, networks of travelers and sojourners develop. The decision to travel is therefore not necessarily an individual one, but it is situated within social networks and structures (Waters and Brooks 2012). This has resulted in what Urry (2007) has termed a mobilities paradigm where it is increasingly common both to be mobile and also to maintain relationships across distance.

These changes have contributed to the growth in international student numbers that has been witnessed of late. This is both from students taking part in vertical mobility – from a place which somehow lacking in higher education opportunities and often takes place from East to West – but also from students engaging in horizontal mobility – where there is not necessarily an issue with accessing higher education in their home countries and choose to study overseas in spite of this. Brooks and Waters (2010) in particular have looked at the advent of outgoing student mobility from the UK. Considered a place of relatively little movement, both in terms of degree seeking and short term mobility, it is now increasingly popular among the elites to send or encourage their children to study overseas for their higher education. Findlay et al. (2012) suggested that as many as 33,000 UK students are choosing to study internationally whether for their undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications. Admittedly, this is a rather small minority both given the number of students that choose to remain in the UK, and when compared to the numbers of incoming students as well, however it is still a significant part of the student body and the equivalent of “two medium-sized universities” (Findlay et al. 2012, p. 119). Clearly, the motivations for such mobility, whether vertical or horizontal, need to be understood. As the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, the motivations and influences for international students when considering overseas study are diverse (see Raghuram (2013) for a discussion of some of these

motivations and the complexities of international student identities). Students will be influenced by a range of different factors in what is a highly complex and often somewhat messy process.

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## 4 Choosing Overseas Study

The rise of neoliberalism and progression of globalization have led to the greater opportunities for mobility. This is often evident when considering why international students choose to study overseas. As eluded above, international student decision making is a highly complex process and there are numerous different factors implicated in their mobility. These can be broadly considered from two perspectives. The first in terms of “economic” factors closely aligned to how international students perceive a sojourn overseas as beneficial to their future career outcomes (see Findlay et al. 2012 for how this continues to be the case even if the higher education infrastructure becomes more established in the sending country). The second in terms of the social and cultural benefits of overseas study and how international students believe that a period of time overseas and an international “experience” will lead to their self-development, or improve their intercultural communication skills (Brown 2009; Dunne 2009). Elsewhere, it has also suggested that international students are motivated by another set of factors – those that are related to place (Beech 2014). However, this is perhaps less in terms of deciding what they wish to study overseas and more in terms of where exactly they wish to study. It is also important to note that the motivations for overseas study are likely to vary between a diploma-seeking period of study – when a student studies toward the whole of their degree overseas – and a temporary, short term sojourn abroad away from a home institution elsewhere – when the period of time abroad may contribute to their final degree classification but is not awarded by a foreign institution.

### 4.1 Economic Factors

One of the key aims of an international student in pursuing mobility is to gain some sort of economic advantage and thus improve their job prospects. Frequently this manifests itself as a desire to gain a better degree than they would otherwise receive in their home country. As Gribble (2008) suggests, this can be due to a lack of provision and an underdeveloped higher education infrastructure encouraging those who are so able to pursue opportunities elsewhere rather than at home. However, of late the tertiary education provision in many of the largest international student markets (like East Asia and India) has improved considerably. Nonetheless, demand continues to outstrip supply in many of these locations – a report compiled for UNESCO (Tan 2013) which looked at student mobility in Asia and the Pacific suggested that the financial power of the middle classes has expanded at such a rate that many of them choose to leave their home countries and study for a higher

education overseas. This may seem counterintuitive given the growth of the higher education sector in these countries, but to put it into perspective the report stated that 50% of students who passed their Hong Kong Advanced Level Examinations which qualified them for higher education study were unable to secure a place in a local, publicly funded university (Tan 2013).

Supply and demand issues are therefore *part* of the motivation for going overseas; it is joined by the perception that “West is best” both for the qualifications received and the experiences gained during a period of time overseas. This is evident in the top five destinations for outgoing Chinese students – the USA, Japan, Australia, UK, and Korea, a combination of neighboring countries and those that are English speaking (Yue 2013). Choosing an overseas education is also about differentiating oneself from others in your academic cohort, an attempt to stand out from the crowd and hopefully gain a competitive edge in the process. Therefore even though many “sending” countries have expanded their own higher education offering, the “value” of these degree programs – particularly for the emerging middle classes – has diminished. They instead will often choose to send their young people overseas in the pursuit of scarcity and to differentiate themselves from their peer groups who have chosen to remain at home (Findlay et al. 2012; Waters 2009).

International students also tend to believe that their future career trajectory and job prospects will be dependent on the quality of their qualifications and the reputation of the education in the particular country or at the particular institution in which they choose to study. This will then reflect positively on institutions which rank highly in league tables or those places which are considered to offer a high quality education – those that are “the best” will be able to attract international students (although it should be noted that the reliability of league tables and rankings is debatable). As discussed earlier, students and in particular international students can now be considered consumers of their higher education and so they will be concerned that the education they do receive will be the best possible that they can afford. Therefore, in spite of the possible issues associated with them, league tables are likely to play an important role in deciding where to study.

Of late, increasing consideration has been given to the use of social capital among international students when they spend time overseas. A sojourn abroad is an opportunity for all kinds of self-development and intercultural communication which would not normally be open to them. Brooks and Waters (2011) have dedicated considerable attention to understanding how this social capital can be directly transferred to economic capital on graduation. This, in particular, revolves around the development of social networks which provide international students with the chance to learn about prospective job opportunities. Similarly, the language skills gained and the intercultural skills developed will be increasingly important in a job market which operates on a global scale. English is a global language thanks to the spread of the British Empire and subsequent economic dominance of the USA (see Crystal 2003). It is also the *Lingua Franca* of academia and the majority of academic journals are published in English, therefore in order to publish to the widest possible audience a firm grasp of the language is necessary

(Kirkgöz 2009). This influences international students in their decision of where to study and causing them to prioritize English-speaking destinations. Brooks and Waters (2009) have noted the growth in international student numbers will lead to the development of a global elite. Studying overseas can provide access to the English language skills needed to become a part of this elite and, indeed, Collins (2008) noted that many South Korean businesses require their employees to have the best qualifications in English possible in order to acquire the most desirable jobs.

## 4.2 Personal Development

In addition to the pursuit of these economic or career-focused objectives, there is also greater recognition of the social and cultural objectives of overseas study. That going overseas is as much about personal development and experience as it is about improving your job prospects. Spending time abroad whether for travel or education is often considered to be a transformative experience, leading to a questioning of attitudes and beliefs on the part of the individuals involved (Hudson and Inkson 2006). Furthermore, with the normalization of traveling, more and more individuals know others who have had these or similar experiences. This allows them to build up romanticized notions of what their own time overseas will be, as spending time overseas becomes mythicized through the telling and retelling of peoples' foreign adventures, encouraging others to reenact these "myths" by traveling themselves (O'Reilly 2006).

In particular, one of the aims of many international students is to become confident in cross-cultural communication, with studying overseas an opportunity to meet with, speak to, and befriend people from a range of different communities and backgrounds. The hope being that such opportunities and experiences would lead to greater tolerance and understanding of different cultures and societies (Brown 2009). However, these personal development objectives also have a second role, namely that this social and cultural capital developed through such intercultural communication skills, but also through the strategic networks developed can be almost immediately converted into economic capital on graduation. The skills gained become key in a global job market, while the networks can provide, at least potentially, routes to employment that would perhaps otherwise have been closed to them.

However, various studies have noted the difficulties associated with forming cross-cultural friendships, drawing attention to how rare communication can be between international students and host students, or even between international students of different nationalities. Dunne (2009), in his study of a university in Ireland, noted that contact international and Irish students rarely spoke to each other citing a range of different factors as impeding communication. He drew attention to evidence that often the local student communities perceived international students as too culturally distinct to form meaningful friendships, suggesting that issues of age (international students often older than their local counterparts), different

family commitments (it is not unheard of for international students to come with their spouse and family), and a greater commitment to academic engagement within the international community as inhibiting relationships. Dunne (2009) also suggested that institutional factors can be to blame, particularly if international students are housed in separate accommodation. This reflects work by Leask (2009) which noted similar issues but also highlighted the role of the university in creating greater engagement between groups and encouraging them to socialize outside of the classroom. Leask (2009) suggested that schemes at the University of South Australia which promoted mentoring between students and organized cross-cultural events seemed to have proven successful at bridging divides.

The difficulties that many students face in making friends and gaining the cross-cultural experiences and associated social capital which they crave are not unsurprising, it is perhaps more surprising that students believe mobility is enough to lead to intercultural communication. The tendency for people to group together in similar groups (those that share a language, religion, or nationality) is well documented. Known as homophily, McCroskey et al. (2006) suggest that it occurs because the more similar two people are, the more likely that they are to speak to each other and find things in common. Bednar et al. (2010) state that clustering together in this manner is a common experience, as people from the same culture will also share the same cultural signatures (like methods of greeting, for example) so this will help individuals feel more comfortable in each other's presence. Furthermore, the more people communicate, the more similar they become (Centola et al. 2007) and so the cycle becomes self-perpetuating.

### 4.3 The Role of Academic Imperialism

These understandings of the economic, social, and cultural capital associated with spending time overseas are not a recent invention but rather come from an underlying and entrenched academic imperialism which imbues a Western education with different cultural, social, and emotional values in comparison to that available elsewhere. This has much to do with Edward Said's (1985) work on imaginative geographies, concerned with representation and stereotyping it showed how the West created an exotic and imagined East which was considered to be dangerous and irrational, poorly educated, and so on. In comparison, they viewed themselves as a powerful and highly articulate place – creating a dichotomy between the two. To some extent this appears to have continued on until the present day and we can see this in terms of how eager some students are to leave their home countries and pursue their education overseas. Madge et al. (2009) state that past colonial ties and a desire to gain qualifications from the “mother country” are often central to this, with the connections between the former colonized and colonizers acting as key routes along which international student mobility takes place often in spite of the physical distance which separates them and other, perhaps closer, options.

These concepts of academic imperialism are reinforced by a variety of different institutions. In the UK these include the likes of the British Council and their

Education UK branch, charged with advertising the UK's education offering. Their website and promotional videos often sell the UK as a place where you can study toward a top class education, while also enjoying the diverse culture and heritage that the country has to offer (see Beech 2014). Waters (2006) demonstrates how the British Council and Education UK, as well as other institutions which are charged with marketing higher education worldwide have pushed to create recognizable international education "brands" which can then be marketed to prospective incoming students. Selling their education as distinctive and world class, this arguably reinforces the ideas and concepts of a "West is best" attitude to higher education and prolongs the imaginative geographies of academic imperialism. This is likely to have an important impact on students considering coming to the UK in the future as the imaginative geographies involved become more and more entrenched over time. Furthermore, with the improved interconnectedness discussed earlier, these ideas can be shared among a wide range of friends and family who are likely to pass this attitude on to other people in their social circle.

#### 4.4 Gathering Mobility Capital

It would be wrong, however, to assume that international students are not also influenced by their wider networks. Carlson (2013) has called for a need to address what he terms the processual perspectives of higher education mobility. He suggests that there is a need to consider mobility on longer terms, rather than at a single, distinct point in time and also to reflect upon whether or how mobility throughout the life course has influenced them in becoming mobile students (see also Findlay et al. 2012). Using life history interviews, as opposed to methods which are employed more widely such as semistructured interviews and surveys and which are less able to gain insight into the features and minutiae of their lives that influence mobility (Collins 2012), Carlson identified how the decision to study overseas is one which has developed over a long period of time. It showed that mobility is often inspired by past mobility whether as a family or with and through friends. This partly echoes concepts and theories regarding migration streams and how mobility occurs along these predefined pathways. Those considering an overseas education do not do so in a vacuum. Rather an understanding of these processual perspectives shows how mobility throughout the life course can act as a gateway into an international education. Carlson (2013) notes that it was not uncommon for international students to have international family backgrounds allowing them to develop a certain degree of mobility capital which presents them with options for study overseas which would otherwise not be so readily available, in effect setting them on the path to mobility. He drew attention to evidence that the children of transnational mobile professionals, who had themselves attended international schools, often had a much more cosmopolitan outlook on life and were therefore more inclined to be mobile themselves in the future. Questions can therefore be raised regarding just how much personal agency exists in terms of choosing to study overseas. If Carlson (2013) is correct in saying that

international student mobility should be considered as the outcome of a series of events over time which make travel more or less likely, then this would suggest that the students themselves have very little control over the matter.

The experiences of friendship and kinship networks therefore act as a direct influence on whether a student will choose to go overseas (Beech 2015). Brooks and Waters (2010) indicated that international students are often influenced by those around them and seldom decide to study overseas without these key “influencers.” Working with students from western nations who had chosen to pursue higher education abroad (so-called horizontal mobility) they demonstrated the importance of these connections in their decision to study overseas. However, they noted that frequently their influence was rather more implicit in nature. Their friends, family, and those in their wider social circle are involved in their decision but not because they tell them directly that they ought to choose overseas study, rather because they normalize the process of doing so. This instills within students a confidence that, having seen those around them go overseas and act as pioneers of student mobility, they too will be able to have the same experience as well, to survive alone in, what is for many, a completely different social and cultural context.

These findings are in stark contrast to work which has emphasized the independent traveler free from family ties. Instead the influence of family is often present in their decision to study overseas, but in a variety of different guises which can include having become accustomed to travel by spending considerable time abroad with their family due to their parent’s work commitments. Equally, friendships which normalized travel as part of youth culture and romantic relationships where one of the partners was from overseas also often played an important role in facilitating mobility (Brooks and Waters 2010). Evidence from both Carlson (2013) and Brooks and Waters (2010) suggests that these students are not in fact “free-floating individuals, but are usually firmly grounded within networks of family and friends” (p. 154). This suggests that we need to reconsider how we view international student mobility in terms of the networks that have developed.

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## 5 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can safely be argued that higher education mobility has been framed and shaped by changes in policy. This is marked by the adoption of neoliberal reform within education during the 1980s and 1990s in particular and replicated throughout most of the Western world. It has led to the greater marketization and internationalization of the higher education system, where students are able to become more obvious consumers of education and able to travel easily between destinations thanks to the globalization which has gone hand in hand with these changes. These processes still continue today. In May 2014, the *Times Higher Education* reported that the Australian government had recently announced plans to remove the cap on student fees. The article stated that the motivation for this change in policy was to better enable Australian universities to compete in the global higher education market (Morgan 2014).



Neoliberal reform and globalization have provided the opportunities for greater internationalization and mobility. The greater interconnectedness of our higher education systems means that universities are recruiting students not only on a local scale but also on a global one. Indeed, the development of our transport and communications infrastructure have facilitated this greater travel – it is not only easier to physically move between places with quicker connections and the relative affordability of travel and airfares, it is also easier to communicate across these distances. Therefore the choice to study abroad is one which has less emotional costs perhaps than in the past as students are able to make greater connections with home through the internet and various social media. The research shows that students are willing to travel for a vast number of reasons ranging from those which have a more explicit, economic focus, to those which are focused on self-development and a desire to experience something different from the status quo. However, questions do arise regarding how successful these pursuits are likely to be given that research has also shown how rarely students interact with those from other nationalities and cultures outside of the confines of the classroom (see Dunne 2009).

The crux of this matter is that neoliberal reform and the associated marketization of higher education has transformed many students (both international and those studying in their home countries) into consumers. This changes how they view education and causes them to choose between university and study alternatives on the basis of their perceived suitability in relation to their own personal goals (Brown 2011). Due to their willingness to move, international students often have greater choice available to them and are able to seek out the best higher education opportunities which they can find (Nielsen 2011). Although it would be worth noting that they are restrained by a variety of factors imposed upon them and which are outside of their control, such as university entry requirements. Neilson (2011), from a decidedly economist discourse, notes that the main influences in their choice of HEI and program include the location, cost, academic quality, employment prospects, and social life. However, in conjunction with the wider aims of mobility, including self-development and greater intercultural awareness, it becomes clearer that for many international students to be mobile is essentially part of a wider, personal neoliberal project, in which they aim to make themselves as desirable as possible to future employers.

It is important to note that, despite moves toward a marketized and commercialized higher education system, not all policies made by governments are going to promote international student mobility, nor does it mean that students are going to be universally accepted by the wider public. Stories of bogus universities and people posing as students to gain access to the UK have been rife in recent years. While changing visa reforms have also appeared to be, to an extent, discouraging international student mobility (Mavroudi and Warren 2013). Such changes have had an influence on patterns of student mobility and this serves to highlight how international students are genuine consumers of higher education and able to move around with their decision of where to study dependent upon many of these factors which are external to them. Therefore, while much work considers the role of the



student in deciding why and where to study overseas it is equally important to consider how different organizations are central to their decision to become mobile.

Collins (2008) went some way toward addressing this shortcoming by looking at the role of education agencies in facilitating and promoting international student mobility alongside the students own personal networks. Collins (*ibid.*) identifies that student mobility is an inherently transnational process, that is to say it is not a singular movement from one place to another, but instead involves numerous connections between places. Student mobility is therefore defined by the relationships between people and places, as well as by policies and reforms. In his study of South Korean students choosing to study in New Zealand, he discusses how changing visa regulations have made immigration to New Zealand easier for many South Koreans. This in turn has led to the development of the necessary infrastructure to support a large South Korean student community with education agencies able to offer information on courses and specific universities, visa requirements, accommodation, and so on, but also the growth of various South Korean services – including grocery stores, hairdressers, and internet cafes.

In sum, becoming an international student is a complex process. The decision to study overseas is one which is influenced by policy change and personal desire as well as the financial security needed to enroll in higher education abroad. Nonetheless, it continues to prove to be a goal for a huge number of students with 4.3 million students enrolled for higher education courses outside of their country of citizenship in 2011, an increase of 3 million from 1990 (OECD 2013). This interesting and highly diverse group of the student body is one which merits continued research particularly in terms of the external forces and organizations which influence mobility.

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# Learning Skills, Building Social Capital, and Getting an Education: Actual and Potential Advantages of Child Domestic Work in Bangladesh

# 15

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## Abstract

When analyzing child domestic work, should one focus on the potential and actual exploitation and abuse due to the difference in age, wealth, status, and power between the child and the employer, or should one focus on the potential and actual provision of shelter, food, clothing, salary, skills, social capital, and maybe even an education? Policies on child domestic work are based on potential risks, resonating with and building upon an ideal middle-class childhood of the minority world. In this critical chapter, it is argued that without thoroughly analyzing the geographical context of child domestic work, i.e., the

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local cultures and living standards of children and youth who are recruited into domestic work, policies will not be relevant for the people they are meant to help. As long as children's basic needs are not fulfilled in the household of their parent(s) or other guardians, one should not deny children the opportunity to seek better conditions in someone else's household. However, academics and policy makers have a responsibility to ensure effective regulation and monitoring of child domestic workers' work conditions. Much can also be done by NGOs and employers to further expand access for child workers to schools and alternative spaces of learning, such as drop-in centers for child domestic workers, where not only literacy and numeracy but also health, life skills, and vocational skills are being taught.

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**Keywords**

Child domestic work • Bangladesh • Early marriage • Skills • Social capital • Education

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## 1 Introduction

For the purpose of this chapter, child domestic work is defined as any work carried out by a person under the age of 18 in a household that is not her own. The accurate number of child domestic workers worldwide is not known, because reliable data on this type of work remain limited (ILO-IPEC 2013a, p. 1). However, of a total of nearly 265 million children aged 5–17 years in employment in the world in 2012 (ILO-IPEC 2013b, p. 3), “[i]t is estimated that 17.2 million children were engaged in domestic work, representing 6.5% of all children in economic activity in this age group.” (ibid.: 2) In absolute numbers, at least 11.5 million girls and 5.6 million boys aged 5–17 years are involved in domestic work (ibid.: 2). In Bangladesh, a country of 160 million people, the number of child domestic workers is estimated at more than 273,000, and 78% of them are girls (ILO 2006). Close to 148,000 of the child domestic workers work in Dhaka, the capital city (ibid.).

Despite its scale and pervasiveness, relatively limited research has focused on child domestic work. The studies on child domestic workers in Bangladesh that have been published the last two decades have pinpointed prevailing problems for the child workers, such as too much work and poor treatment in a work relationship totally controlled by the adult employer (Blanchet 1996; Hoque 1995; ILO 2006; IREWOC 2010; Khair 2004; Momen 1993; Rahman 1995; RCS 1999; Save the Children 2010; Shoishab 1999, 2001; UNICEF 2004). Most of this literature presents the situation for child domestic workers in their employers' home as hazardous and exploitative and states – sometimes indirectly – that the child's living conditions would unquestionably be better in the home of their parents. There is a gap in the literature when it comes to realistic alternatives for the children. In order to facilitate an unbiased debate on these issues, it is imperative to distinguish between realistic and idealistic alternatives for child workers, a distinction that requires knowledge of the place-specific social, cultural, and economic context.

Merely refusing a child to work in someone else's household is not giving the child an alternative means of income or a possibility of going to school full time. More realistically the child's (especially the female child's) likelihood of getting married very early is increased, resulting in risks of poor mental and physical health. This will be discussed more in detail later in the chapter.

Economic globalization, neoliberal policies, and feminization of labor markets have led to a significant increase of the female middle-class workforce in Bangladesh and a steady demand for domestic workers in their homes. Many employers prefer children and young people to do the work in their homes, as they can be paid less than adults and are seen as easier to control. Children are furthermore considered to be faithful, obedient, hardworking, and not complaining. It is worth noting, however, that these views are based on a perception of children as victims of their circumstances and not as agents in their own lives who can make informed decisions (with or without assistance of adults). Many child domestic workers both in Bangladesh (Jensen 2014) and other countries such as the Philippines (Camacho 1999) and Zimbabwe (Bourdillon 2006b) have stated that it was their own decision to work. However, many child domestic workers do not know that they have rights, that these rights are being violated, and that their situation could be better (Pflug 2002), although even if they did, many lack the option of being able to choose a safer or better-paid type of work or to go to school full time.

The literacy rate for female adults in Bangladesh is estimated at only 54%; however, the *youth* literacy rate gives room for some optimism, as 82% of females aged 15–24 are estimated to be literate (UNESCO 2014). For comparison, the literacy rate for adult males is estimated at 62%; for males aged 15–24, the level is 77%, i.e., slightly lower than for adolescent girls (UNESCO 2014). Wealth distribution in Bangladesh is very unequal, with 31.5% of the population living in poverty (UNDP 2014). Since 1996 Bangladesh' GDP has grown at a steady rate of an average of 6% per year – largely due to its garment industry, which is the most important source of foreign exchange earnings (CIA 2014). Remittances from workers in the Middle East and Southeast Asia are another significant foreign exchange earnings (ibid.). In addition to the extensive international migration, many people have migrated from rural to urban areas for jobs and to escape desperate poverty often caused by loss of land due to flooding and river erosion. Politically the country has been intermittently unstable since its independence in 1971, exemplified by a period of almost 2 years with three different caretaker governments in the time period 2006–2008, and by the ongoing political turmoil resulting from a disputed general election in January 2014 that was boycotted by the political opposition.

The economic liberalization that has gradually taken place in Bangladesh since the mid-1980s has resulted in many new work opportunities for women outside the home. Middle-class women in Dhaka who used to be homemakers have increasingly found jobs in both the private and public sector over the last 30 years. However, childcare facilities and nursing homes barely exist, and appliances such as washers and driers are not common in middle-class homes – neither is fast food nor semifinished frozen or canned meals. The point here is not to portray this as a

lack of Western cultural practices, but rather as an explanation of how this has led to a continued and steady demand for low-paid domestic workers in private homes to carry out time-consuming and physically demanding work (Jensen 2014). The majority of domestic workers are girls and women from low-income households. They have received new opportunities for employment due to the country's economic liberalization. Since many young women prefer garment factory work to domestic work (Ward et al. 2004), it has become increasingly difficult for middle-class people to find domestic workers. The job opportunities in factories may have created a somewhat better negotiating position vis-à-vis potential employers who want young women and girls for domestic work, as indicated by Ward et al. (2004), and it has become less common that domestic workers work without monetary compensation (Jensen 2014).

There is a potentially discriminatory and exploitative aspect to the fact that people hire someone to do their least appealing work tasks at home so that they themselves can do something more rewarding with their time (Anderson 2000; Duffy 2007; Keklik 2006; Mattingly 2001; Pratt 2012; Radcliffe 1990). Some domestic work tasks – such as taking care of young children – may be enjoyable albeit demanding but still fail to bring significant economic reward or societal status. As pointed out by Anderson (2000), housework used to be seen as the “leveler” of women's issues as it was something all women had to do. However, that is no longer the case as not only elite but also middle-class women to a large extent pay somebody to do domestic chores, thereby devaluing such chores. Access to very cheap and unregulated labor for domestic chores, childcare, and elderly care, combined with changes of gender norms, has made it possible for middle-class women in Bangladesh to leave the private sphere of home and enter jobs in the public sphere. Since the nuclear family is increasingly becoming the most common family type in urban Bangladesh, there is a growing need for someone to take care of the preschool children when their mothers now work outside the home. Many stay-at-home mothers also prefer to have domestic workers on hand (Jensen 2014).

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## **2 Children's Domestic and Reproductive Work in the Discipline of Geography**

Very few geographers have conducted research on child domestic work. However, when widening the scope to include children's reproductive work more broadly, there are quite a few geographers who have contributed to the academic discourse. Katz (2004) has conducted longitudinal research on everyday lives and reproductive work of children in Sudan, Robson (2004) has studied reproductive work of children who are caring for sick relatives in Zimbabwe, Klocker (2011) has conducted research with female child domestic workers and their employers in Tanzania, and Radcliffe (1990) has published an article on female domestic workers of different ages in Peru. Several geographers have published research specifically on children's domestic and reproductive work in South Asia: Dyson



(2014) has conducted ethnographic research on children's and youth's family-based work and daily rural life in the Indian Himalayas, Heissler (2013) has conducted research with children migrating for different kinds of jobs in Bangladesh, McKinney (2014) has studied children's migratory agricultural work in Western India, Nieuwenhuys (2000) has conducted ethnographic research with children making coir yarn in a village in Kerala, and Gamlin et al. (2015) have published a comparative study of child domestic workers focused on India and five other countries (Philippines, Tanzania, Togo, Peru, and Costa Rica). Other geographical research on domestic work have focused on adult immigrant women working for employers in the USA and Canada (England and Stiehl 1997; Mattingly 2001; Pratt 2012). The geographic literature on child domestic work and children's reproductive work gives room for children's agency. Geographers explore the role played by children themselves in decisions about work and in coping with economic, social, and cultural challenges in their local environments.

The aim of this chapter is to explicate challenges of female live-in child domestic work in Bangladesh while at the same time convey a realistic view on viable alternatives, thereby answering a call in children's geographies for more studies analyzing the specific geographical context of the type of childhood one seeks to understand (Abebe 2007; Aitken 2001; Aitken et al. 2007; Ansell 2009; Jennings et al. 2006; Kesby et al. 2006; Kjærholt 2007; Lund 2007; Robson 2004; Skelton 2007; see also Bourdillon 2006a). The life and work of child domestic workers in Bangladesh should not be compared to an idealized, Western-inspired universal childhood because it is neither realistic nor relevant. It makes more sense to compare the domestic work of children and youth in Dhaka to their realistic alternative livelihoods, such as early marriage and early parenthood in their rural villages or full-time labor in urban garment factories. This chapter will mostly draw on qualitative research from Bangladesh with child domestic workers, most of them female, as well as with their employers and parents (Jensen 2007, 2014), but other literature will also be consulted. It will be argued that a realistic analysis needs to focus on all aspects of the life of the worker, including the provision of shelter, food, clothing, salary, social capital, skills, and access to education, rather than a one-sided focus on exploitation and abuse due to the difference in age, wealth, status, and power between the child and the employer. The latter focus on risks is usually the basis of international conventions on the issue of child work.

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### 3 International Conventions on Child Work

Two international conventions of crucial importance to working children, in addition to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, are the ILO Convention 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and the ILO Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. The ILO Convention 138, passed in 1973, establishes a minimum age for different kinds of work and suggests 14 as the minimum age for work in developing countries (vs. 15 in developed countries),

although some light work were to be allowed from the age of 12. The ILO Convention 182, passed in 1999, declares that certain kinds of work are hazardous for children and should be abolished. ILO regards child domestic work as one of the worst forms of child work, and therefore ILO/IPEC literature on child domestic work focuses on risks attached to the work and ways to prevent recruitment and combat this type of work, usually regardless of the different geographical and cultural settings of different types of work in different parts of the world. It is worth noting that many of the risks in the ILO analysis are *potential* risks, and their analysis resonates with and builds on a popularized ideal of a middle-class childhood. For many working children, a risk-free childhood is not really an option though, and it can be argued that like many other children, child domestic workers need to learn risk in order to be able to survive in the prevailing social and economic realities of their surroundings. The abovementioned study by Gamlin et al. (2015) concludes that classification of child domestic work as hazardous is not appropriate and could be counterproductive, since work that is prohibited cannot be regulated (ibid.: 223). Instead they argue that more emphasis needs to be given to some of the protective factors of child domestic work and the overriding advantages to impoverished children and their families, such as access to education and social support – advantages that international legislation seems to ignore.

One of the main goals of the international conventions on child work is to allow for a minority-world childhood where children go to school instead of work. However, several studies from different countries in Africa and Asia have revealed that in the majority world, children's employment may enable their schooling, because of the employment being located in a place where physical access to a school is more feasible (Tambo 2014) or because children become able to pay their own school fees with the salaries they make (Bourdillon 2006a; Camacho 1999). Tambo (2014) found that for the majority of a sample of 65 child domestic workers, the main motive for migrating to the city had been to get an education. The work that a child domestic worker carries out in the home of the employer can also be seen in itself as a way of learning skills (Thanh Mai 2010) and becoming socialized into adult society (Rubenson et al. 2004). In Bangladesh, this is especially the case for female child domestic workers, who are often perceived by themselves and others as spending a few years learning valuable skills for their future lives as wives and mothers.

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## 4 Pros and Cons of Child Domestic Work in Bangladesh

Child domestic workers in Dhaka said that if they were to be sent back to their families in the village, they would be worse off, especially materially and, in some cases, also emotionally. Some felt they would be worse off in terms of general well-being because of a stepparent or relative who was not supportive or outright hostile or because their parents wanted to marry them off at a very early age (Jensen 2014). Rural Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage worldwide: 64% of all women aged 20–24 were married before the legal age of

18 (Plan and ICDDR, B. 2013). When looking at the percentage of girls married before age 15, Bangladesh has the largest prevalence in the world (UNICEF 2014a). According to Gita Chakraborty (2008, personal communication), the NGO Ain o Salish Kendra has seen several examples of former female child domestic workers who had married early and then been divorced after a short time due to difficulties adjusting to a significantly poorer environment than what they had become used to in their employers' homes. Some girls went back to work for their former employers, because they had gotten used to eating quite good food three times a day and their husbands – in most cases rickshaw pullers, day laborers, or shop assistants – could not keep up with that standard.

#### 4.1 Perceived Advantages of Child Domestic Work in Bangladesh

Most child domestic workers in Bangladesh have access to a material life standard in their employers' home that is far better than that in their parents' or relatives' home. Several child domestic workers uttered this without being asked, and when they were asked to compare the two homes, they all gave similar answers: Materially, their life is better in the employers' home than in their own home. They mentioned the following reasons: better and/or more food, better and/or more clothes, and better housing. Some of the children used to live in houses that were subjected to flood and river erosion. One girl's family had repeatedly lost everything, including their house and land, because the only place they could afford to live was on a riverbank prone to flooding and soil erosion (Jensen 2014). Since child domestic workers are recruited from some of the poorest families in Bangladesh, the employers perceive themselves as benevolent – that they are aiding poor rural families by employing their children. It may sound that the employers are exaggeratingly self-righteous, but when taking the socioeconomic context into account, they may not be. A large proportion of the population in Bangladesh lives in desperate poverty. Having visited many families in rural villages from where child domestic workers have been recruited, it has become clear that in a material sense, it is progress for the children to have a clean place to eat and sleep, a place where they don't get wet when indoors even in the rainy season, and except for in abusive work relationships, they do not have to go hungry or cold (Jensen 2014). Without knowing the socioeconomic and cultural context of their place of origin, our assessment of their situation in the home of their employers may be close to irrelevant.

When child domestic workers were asked what they liked about their current work, most of the girls mentioned concrete skills they have learned, such as grinding spices, cutting different types of meat and fish, and taking care of a baby. Some also appreciate the chance of learning not only vocational skills but manners. Being well versed in the way of life of people higher up on the social ladder is seen as favorable for later in life, both when on the "marriage market" and when one is married and in charge of a family of one's own (Jensen 2014). As mentioned, some girls said that they appreciated having learned how to take

care of an infant. This may sound trivial, but in Bangladesh, it may in fact be a matter of life or death. The infant mortality rate (IMR) for Bangladesh is extremely high, at 33/1,000 infants dying before reaching 1 year of age (UNICEF 2013a). One of the main reasons behind this is malnutrition of pregnant women and infants. Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child malnutrition in the world. Forty-one percent of children under the age of 5 in Bangladesh suffer from moderate to severe stunting, an indicator of chronic malnutrition. Only 16 countries in the world have a higher rate (UNICEF 2013b). Many parents are ignorant about what their infants should eat in order to gain strength and need to learn the importance of breastfeeding and varied nutrition (*ibid.*). Taking care of the baby of an employer gives opportunities for future parents to gain relevant knowledge and skills.

The relationship between an employer and a child domestic worker is more of a patron-client relationship than a formal employer-employee relationship. On the negative side, it means that it is harder to regulate and monitor such a relationship, but on the positive side, it means that the child may gain crucial social capital. Many employers feel it is a huge responsibility to have someone else's child staying with them. The employers provide their workers with food, clothing, and shelter, and in the cases where a salary was paid, it usually ranged from 500 to 1,000 taka (USD 6–12) per month. However, often the main compensation for the work of female child domestic workers is the payment of their future dowry – usually tens of thousands of taka (Jensen 2014). In a survey of over 5,000 child domestic workers in Dhaka city, 58% of the female workers expected their employers to pay their future dowries (Khair 2004, p. 32).

Living in the home of the employer may bring protection from parents who do not always realize what is in the best interest of their children. Several girls shared a concern that their parents wanted to marry them off too early – before the legal age and before they felt ready themselves. Some girls do not even want to reveal their employers' address to their parents because of a fear of suddenly being brought back to the village to get married (Jensen 2014). It is usually the girls from the poorest families who marry the earliest. Many parents from low-income households have traditional attitudes on gender roles, wanting to marry off their daughters before or at the age of reaching puberty. They explain this with a wish to protect their daughters' reputation and prevent any premarital affairs, harassment, and assaults. Dowry requirements – money or material items given to the groom and his family by the bride's family, a practice that is outlawed but widely practiced – is also a reason to marry off a daughter early, as the dowry requirements are usually lower the lower the age of the girl. For some poor families, it is also a matter of getting rid of another mouth to feed, as the daughter will live with her husband and in-laws after marriage (Plan and IDDR, B. 2013). The social norm for middle-class and upper-class people on the other hand is quite different: They usually want their daughters to have started and preferably completed a university degree before getting married. The high percentage of early marriages among poor girls in rural Bangladesh means that early marriage is an important, and maybe the most important, alternative to being a female child domestic worker.

In order to comprehend the importance of live-in domestic work's ability to postpone girls' marriages, one has to realize that there are many risks involved in early marriages. Young girls – whose husbands are often many years older than themselves – can more easily be manipulated and subordinated by their husband and his family members, and they often suffer both mental and physical distress in their new role as wife and daughter-in-law (Plan and ICDDR, B. 2013). Many girls marry before their bodies are mature enough for successful, healthy pregnancies and childbirths, and as a result many suffer obstructed labor and health problems such as fistula – an injury leading to incontinence that usually can be fixed through surgery but requires more money than most are able to pay (Fistula Foundation 2014a). The taboo around such injuries is also significant, so even if money is available, the social stigma of seeking help is often too high. As a result, many young women end up abandoned by their husbands, and their parents may not necessarily welcome them back to stay with them due to desperate poverty (Fistula Foundation 2014b). Taking into account the reality and prevalence of early marriages among girls from low-income households, it may be argued that an advantage of child domestic work is that early marriages are prevented or at least postponed.

## **4.2 Perceived Disadvantages of Child Domestic Work in Bangladesh**

Several domestic workers when asked about the largest disadvantage of their work answered being away from their families. Many children miss playing with siblings and friends back in their village. According to a survey published by ILO (2006), 94% of child domestic workers in Bangladesh stay with their employers. The fact that their work space is their employers' private home space makes for a setup which yields very limited power to the worker, who is usually confined to the employers' home. (More about the implications of this can be found in the chapter by Jensen in volume 12 of this book series.) However, agency for child domestic workers in Bangladesh is constrained not only by discursive factors of a rigid employer-employee power dynamic in the home of the employer but also by structural factors of poverty, inequality, a strict social hierarchy, rigid gender norms, and insufficient and ineffective legislation.

There are no written or verbal contracts to regulate the time and location of child domestic work in Bangladesh. For the child domestic workers, this means there are no distinct sleeping periods or breaks, and the work takes place 7 days a week (Jensen 2014). Many child domestic workers work long hours. Save the Children (2010, p. 60) found that of the 450 child domestic workers they interviewed, 36% worked 9–12 h per day, 30% worked 13–15 h per day, and 16% worked 16–18 h per day. Long work hours are often combined with short nights, which may have detrimental health effects. Some children mentioned that they have to work even when they are sick.

In a survey of 3,841 child domestic workers in Bangladesh, less than half of the workers were found to receive any salary (ILO 2006), and the salaries were usually

very low. There are many frustrations around salaries, such as not getting any, the salary being paid directly to a parent or recruiter, and verbal promises of more regular or higher salaries being repeated but seldom realized (Jensen 2014). Some employers deduct from salaries if the child domestic worker accidentally breaks anything (ILO 2006).

From media coverage and NGO reports, it has been made clear that it is not unusual that child domestic workers in Bangladesh are victims of violence at the hands of the employers – violence spanning the whole spectrum from slapping to torture, rape, and even murder. Some domestic workers complain about the derogative words the employers use when talking about them and to them (Jensen 2014) and about being scolded for minor mistakes (Save the Children 2010). The risk of violence at the hands of the employers should not be overlooked. However, from media and NGO coverage, one may get the impression that these risks are higher than they actually are, since such coverage tends to focus exclusively on negative aspects of child domestic work.

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## 5 Is Child Domestic Work Slavery?

Given the restricted mobility and limited power of child domestic workers, the risk of abuse, and the unreliable payment of salaries, does such a work situation amount to slavery? In order to answer this question, an analysis of the place-specific context, such as cultural attitudes and practices regarding children and youth in general, is needed. What is also needed is to keep in mind that many authors write with a minority-world, work-free childhood ideal in their mind, which tends to make local childhood constructions in the majority world seem deficit and abnormal in comparison.

Several authors have described the situation for child domestic workers in Bangladesh as slavery or a “slavery-like situation” that should be abolished (Blagbrough and Glynn 1999; Blagbrough 2008; Blanchet 1996, p. 114; Pelham 2014; Rahman 1995, p. 20; Seabrook 2001, p. 103; Sur 2003, p. 238). Blagbrough (2008), for instance, argues that live-in domestic labor in Bangladesh certainly is slavery, because of the exploitation, vulnerability to abuse, and lack of freedom. However, in his 2012 publication, he takes a more nuanced stance and argues that not all child domestic work is slavery.

Bales (2005) defines slavery as a work relation where the worker is paid nothing or only enough for her upkeep, is held by violence or the threat of violence, and lacks freedom of movement. According to this definition, some child domestic workers in Dhaka are slaves. However, there are also employers who pay their child domestic workers a relatively decent salary and treat them with respect. Some child domestic workers are controlled by the use of violence, others are not, and this is hard to observe and verify. When it comes to the last part of Bales’ slavery definition, freedom of movement, a more thorough analysis is required, which will be provided in the next few paragraphs.

In Dhaka, it is common practice to keep the child domestic workers locked inside the house when the employer's family leaves for work and school. Seen from the employers' viewpoint, the locking of the entrance door from the outside, without giving the worker a key to enable her to open it from the inside, is done both for the purpose of control and protection of the child domestic worker. Many employers of child domestic workers fear that their worker would grasp any opportunity to escape from their job in order to obtain a job in one of the many export garment factories in Dhaka. A beginner job in a garment factory pays better than most child domestic jobs. However, taking into consideration the need to pay for house rent, clothes, and food, it is not necessarily a better option economically. On the other hand, an industry job provides more freedom than being a domestic worker. Employers' fear of domestic workers escaping to obtain a factory job is just one reason for confining them to private space. Some employers lock in their child domestic workers because they fear burglary (Jensen 2014). Their fear stems from stories that swirl around in the unofficial discourse among child domestic workers' employers. According to these stories, child and adult domestic workers sometimes cooperate with criminals who help them empty the apartment of valuables while the employers are away. Some of the stories have been spread through the news media, such as a short newspaper article in the *Daily Star*, entitled "Domestic Help Steals Valuables Worth Tk 8 lakh" (Staff Correspondent 2005). ("Lakh" means "one hundred thousand." "Tk" is the abbreviation for "taka," the Bangladeshi currency. In October 2014, Tk 8 lakh was equivalent to approximately 10,340 US dollars.) This is just one of the many examples of how the media discourse influences employers' attitudes and behavior toward their child domestic workers.

According to Blanchet (1996, p. 115), the two main reasons cited by employers for locking in domestics are (1) to prevent theft and (2) "to prolong an unquestioning acceptance of the employers' rule and authority." Employers isolate their domestic workers to prevent them from contact with other people who may help them realize their exploitation. Blanchet conducted a study of child domestic workers in Dhaka that involved several visits with households. Here is her explanation of how employers controlled their domestics:

Young maid servants and rural women newly arrived in the city are purposely confined and isolated to prevent their 'eyes opening' (chok phutano). Employers will do anything so that the stage of unquestioning acceptance of their authority and control is prolonged. For employers, the ideal servant should be grown up enough to understand work, but innocent enough not to challenge orders, rebuke and punishment. Many children are forbidden to talk to other servants so that they will not compare their working conditions and find that they are disadvantaged in relation to others. They are prevented from developing any alternative support network so that they remain totally dependent on their employers. Employers do not want servants to spread tales about what goes on inside the four walls of their homes. (Blanchet 1996, p. 115)

However, the employers do lock in their own biological children as well. Since they do the same with their own biological children, it is probably more accurate to interpret the locking of the door as a protection measure than as a sign of slavery. Several employers stated that they were concerned that someone might come to



their apartment when they are absent and either kidnap their child domestic worker or lure her away with false promises of love and/or work (Jensen 2007, 2014).

After a thorough analysis of all aspects of the children's work conditions, some of the children may end up being characterized as slaves, but it is impossible and counterproductive to generalize. Ultimately, what is most important is not what we label the children or their work, but the consequences of such labeling. If we label their work slavery, then it has to be abolished no matter what – as soon as possible. Raids of private homes and “saving” kids by leaving them without any viable means of sustaining themselves will not solve anything. What about the children who are better off – mentally and materially – in their employers' home? Research from many countries has found that child domestic workers are often recruited from homes with dysfunctional family constellations, drug abuse and/or alcoholism, and violence (Blagbrough 2012; Camacho 1999). In Bangladesh, it is common that children from low-income households run away or willingly get recruited into different types of work in order to escape a violent stepparent, an abusive and/or alcoholic parent, or another danger at home (Jensen 2013). Instead of automatically labeling the work they end up doing in the home they arrive at as slavery, it would be more efficient to aim for more monitoring of *all* homes in which *children* live. One way of doing this would be for the government to start enforcing children's right to an education.

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## 6 Education's Role and Accessibility

Five years of primary school education from age 6 to 10 has been compulsory in Bangladesh since 1993, but the law is not being strictly enforced. In the primary school age group of 6–10, 16.2% of children are not in school. In the 11–13 age group, the percentage of out-of-school children is 30.7%. For both groups the majority of out-of-school children live in rural areas, and school exclusion is clearly correlated with household wealth. The percentage of out-of-school children is slightly larger for boys than girls in both age groups (UNICEF 2014b). If all children went to school – regardless of whether they live with their own parents or someone else – the government would most probably be in a better situation to judge the home life of the children. Schoolteachers may be able to pick up on warning signs in children's behavior and report it to relevant institutions (Jensen 2007). Education thus has an additional value, especially for female child domestic workers, because it gives them access to semipublic or public spaces, so at least for a part of the day they can spend time outside the home of the employer. For child domestic workers, schools have the potential to be a place where teachers can indirectly monitor the employers.

Spaces of education may function as sites of liberation, empowerment, and agency. In the short term, however, it seems unrealistic that most employers would agree to send their domestic workers to the same schools as their own children or even to a free school demanding regular attendance. For this reason, there are many alternative school programs that child domestic workers can attend. Examples of these in Bangladesh are Ain o Salish Kendra's “drop-in centers.” The name reveals



the relaxed attendance policy of the program: Children are allowed to drop in whenever their work schedule allows it. This is not an ideal educational setup, but it is far better than not having access to a program that is realistic for them to attend. The drop-in centers are open 5 days a week for 2 h in the afternoon. Several social workers in Bangladesh have shared stories of how they have been able to help child domestic workers gain primary education and later be admitted to vocational training centers, still while living and working in their employers' home.

Female child domestic workers want to go to school, and/or they want to learn vocational skills (Jensen 2014). Working children's desire for education must be taken seriously, which requires an increased focus on access to school while working, and on vocational skills training. Several NGOs in Bangladesh offer nonformal education for working children. An important ingredient in their curriculum, in addition to literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills such as sewing, is life skills training, which aims at increasing the working children's self-esteem by teaching strategies for decision-making and problem solving. One of the aims of Save the Children, for instance, is to teach the children about their rights and about laws such as the legal age for marriage and enable children to negotiate with their parents and employers when needed (Jensen 2007).

Many child domestic workers are recruited from remote, rural villages where school attendance is a challenge due to the long distance from home to school, especially in combination with responsibility for a variety of household chores or other work tasks. Rural parents therefore tend to perceive child domestic work in the city as advantageous because of an expectation that it will be possible to combine with schooling. According to Gita Chakraborty (2011, personal communication) in the human rights NGO Ain o Salish Kendra, some parents who send their children to Dhaka for domestic work expect not only that their child will be put in school but that she will receive a high-quality education. There have been instances where parents have withdrawn their children from domestic work because they were disappointed that the employers sent their children to nonformal drop-in centers for child domestic workers instead of regular school. Among parents there is increased awareness of the importance of education and of the importance of the quality of education. According to ILO's 2011 convention on domestic work, education should not be impaired due to domestic work. This notion reveals a minority-world-based ideal of education always trumping work – an ideal that is unrealistic for many children in the majority world. In Bangladesh, only between 11% (ILO 2006) and 21% (Khair 2004) of live-in child domestic workers attend school.

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## **7 Discourses, Cultural and Material Context, and Potential Areas of Action**

The work conditions of child domestic workers in Bangladesh are socially framed by different discourses. The human rights discourse, represented by NGOs such as Save the Children and intergovernmental organizations such as UNICEF,

constitutes children as social actors and potential protagonists who can and should participate in finding solutions to their own problems, and solutions are usually seen as acts conforming to a minority-world notion of childhood. In the employers' discourse, however, there is usually little room for children's agency. Employers of child domestic workers generally dismiss the universal notion of childhood, as can be seen in the totally different treatment of their own biological children and their child domestic workers. The child domestic workers' own discourse is tied to their identity as servants and to feelings of inferiority and a desire for respect. Their parents' discourse constitutes children as duty bearers, since both parents and children are seen as responsible for the well-being of the family. Although sometimes acting without being fully informed, parents think they know what is best for their children, and the children are not usually supposed to exercise agency.

With these different discourses come different views on education. The human rights discourse focuses on education as a key to children's attainment of agency and more specifically to their learning about human rights and skills that will give them a chance to proceed to more fulfilling work in the future. Many employers on the other hand are skeptical toward education because of a fear of their docile, dependent, submissive workers becoming too self-confident and not paying enough attention to their duties as workers. Child domestic workers and their parents often share a desire for education but at the same time a sense of realism that has instilled in them a limited expectation of its fulfillment. Sometimes parents facilitate their children's education merely by placing them in the home of employers who promise access to education; other times they ruin their daughters' chance of getting an education by calling them back to the village to get married long before their education has been completed.

The academic discourse shares some aspects with the human rights discourse in that it is mostly based on a minority-world understanding/ideal of childhood. However, the academic discourse also shares some aspects with the child workers and parents' discourse, as it sees the necessity for many children to work and have an income. In other words the academic discourse is more critical and varied than the human rights discourse and sees the issue from more angles. The distinctions between all of these discourses are blurred though, and there will always be some degree of overlap. For instance, some employers are situated in the human rights discourse as they try their best to fulfill their workers' right to an education.

According to middle-class people and NGO workers in Dhaka, it has gradually become more difficult to find domestic workers willing to stay with the employer. One former employer who lives in Dhaka but belongs to a rural landowning family said that in her ancestral village – from where she used to recruit her live-in domestic workers – there is no longer anyone who is interested in moving to the city to work as a domestic worker, as many young people would rather work as day laborers in construction or get a job in one of the many export-oriented garment factories. This contradicts IREWOC (2010)'s finding that due to semifeudal relationships, poor rural families cannot refuse if a member of a landholding family tells them to provide a child domestic worker. It seems that the practice of live-in

child domestic work is slowly fading away. Until then, there needs to be a focus on interventions to protect child domestic workers as well as to hinder recruitment into potentially exploitative and abusive work relationships.

As mentioned, most literature presents the situation for child domestic workers in their employers' home as hazardous and exploitative and is, indirectly, conveying that the children's lives are better and more protected in the home of their parents. There is a need to convey a more nuanced picture of the life of child domestic workers. The literature often ignores situations where children do not have parents or have been directly or indirectly expelled by parents, stepparents, or relatives. Live-in child domestic workers in Dhaka are recruited from households that suffer extreme poverty, and they have experienced one or more of the following: going without food or with very little food for extended periods of time; getting wet indoors in the rainy season due to extremely dilapidated housing; losing property, house, and all belongings due to flood; suffering from a lack of decent clothing; and never going to school or only attending school infrequently due to temporary day labor or the duty of looking after younger siblings (Jensen 2014). It is not a solution to ban child domestic work but rather to work with the children to find ways to improve their everyday lives and protect them from potential harm due to the space-time geography of their work.

More cooperation and research with employers is also needed (Klocker 2011; Blagbrough 2012), to work out specific ways to ensure the best interest of their child domestic worker is prioritized. Possible arenas for action in addition to access to education would be worker and employer registration, labor monitoring, and access to health services and legal services for the working children. "Children working in an employer's house can only be reached with difficulty by trade unionists, individuals, and NGOs." (Tenorio 1998 quoted in Pflug 2002, p. 28) To make it safer for children to work in the private spaces of the employers' homes, there needs to be a much stronger focus on monitoring. Social workers could have designated neighborhoods where they would be responsible for paying frequent visits to any household where children are employed. Child domestic workers could also be involved in this work. If they are informed of where to call if there is a problem, they can report on issues both in their own work relationships and in those of peers that they talk with in semipublic spaces such as the stairways and rooftops of apartment buildings. For such monitoring and reporting to be effective, it would require penalties for those employers who do not register their child domestic workers and for those who do not let them attend school. Great care has to be taken to ensure that the employers understand that the social worker is there to create sound, legal working conditions, which should be in the best interest of both employer and employee.

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## **8 Recognizing Their Work Rather than "Saving" Them from Work**

The existing labor laws in Bangladesh do not recognize domestic workers as workers (Jensen 2014). The first step in making life and work better for child domestic workers should therefore be to change that part of the labor law.

“A radical approach to young people’s labor would recognize their work, support their right to work, and campaign for that work to be fair and not exploitative” (Aitken 2001, p. 165). According to several children’s geographers and other scholars writing on child work, access to work should be a right as long as the work is not exploitative (Aitken 2001; Bourdillon 2006a, 2009; Invernizzi 2003; Jennings et al. 2006; Jensen 2014; Liebel 2004; Robson 2004). As mentioned earlier, in order to draw any conclusions about the situation for female live-in child domestic workers in Bangladesh, one has to know their realistic alternative livelihoods, which means that the analysis must include the cultural, social, and economic context both at the place in which they live and in the places of those alternative livelihoods. Socially accepted alternatives to domestic work for adolescent girls from low-income families in Bangladesh are either to get married at a young age to a man in their village and have children while still very young or maybe – depending on how conservative their parents are – work in a garment factory in the city before getting married. Some parents feel that living and working in an employer’s home is acceptable, whereas living independently and working in a factory would be considered a risk for the daughter’s premarital reputation.

Since ILO has defined child domestic work as one of the worst forms of child labor and Bangladesh has ratified ILO C182, child domestic work may eventually become a target for elimination. Aitken (2001, p. 163) states that “young workers need support rather than any complicated ILO agenda to remove them from the workforce.” Children should have a right not to be saved unless they partake in exploitative work (Aitken et al. 2007; Bourdillon 2009). Domestic work may not be a long-term solution to the economic problems of poor children and youth, but it is an important way for many of them to attain higher living standards than in their parents’ homes, and it may also contribute to income and/or well-being for their family members. A ban on child domestic work without any alternative income-generating activities or stipends in place would probably result in the children ending up in other vulnerable work situations such as street vending, prostitution, and begging, which was the experience with the firing of children in large numbers from garment factories in Bangladesh in 1993 (Ansell 2005; Bissell 2001; Delap 2001; Myers 2001). NGOs’ focus on income-generating activities for parents of potential or former child domestic workers cannot completely remove children’s need to work because some of the children do not have parents, or their parents/guardians are not able to work, or their parents/guardians have expelled them from the family. Therefore, children should have a right to work, but obviously also have a right to protection from abuse and exploitation.

The “ritualistic celebrations of children’s rights” (Nieuwenhuys 2007, p. 155) have established a false universalization of childhood by the human rights discourse (Kjørholt 2007). Often times, by focusing too much on certain rights, such as the right to get an education, one sacrifices other, more basic rights, such as the right to food and shelter (Myers 2001). However, even if children of Bangladesh were provided for in terms of food, clothing, and shelter, the incentives for working would not wither. As pointed out above in the description of the patron-client relationship between employers and domestic workers in Bangladesh, there is

more to attain from the work in the homes of the middle- and upper-class employers than just shelter, salaries, clothing, and meals. It is common that the work relationship forges a bond between worker and employer that makes the latter feel responsible for helping out with major expenditures such as dowry when the female worker is getting married and sometimes also medical expenses for the worker and the worker's family members. This aspect of gaining social capital is an important incentive for doing domestic work (Jensen 2014). Sarah White, who has conducted research in Bangladesh for many years, stated it this way: "For the poor, fostering particular links with a wealthier household is the most likely avenue towards upward mobility" (White 1992, p. 37).

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## 9 Conclusion

Maybe the most important lesson from listening to the experiences and opinions of female live-in child domestic workers in Bangladesh is that there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all solution. Banning all work that may potentially be harmful is not in the best interest of children from low-income families as long as the poverty is severe. Children may learn valuable skills in the home of their employers, although the work conditions may be demanding and constraining. Food, clothing, shelter, remuneration, as well as the opportunity of building a relationship with someone who will potentially pay the future dowry and other personal expenses are strong incentives for carrying out domestic work for several years. Some children's chances of getting an education are also better when staying with employers in the city rather than in a remote rural village with parents/guardians, and they may be able to escape dysfunctional family constellations and early marriages. For some children it is in their best interest to be away from their parents or other guardians; others have parents/guardians who may be able to provide for and protect them better than what their employers currently do. However, as long as there are children who suffer from extreme poverty and insecurity in their parents' homes, and others who do not even have parents or other close relatives who care for them, it might be in their best interest to have the opportunity to work as live-in child domestic workers in someone else's home. While unjust social structures must change and eventually poverty should be eliminated so that no child would need to work full time in another person's home, it is important in the meantime to ensure that the children are recognized as workers and that they are protected in this uniquely vulnerable work relationship (Jensen 2014).

Since most female child domestic workers are either never or very seldom allowed to go outside of the home in which they work, they have few opportunities to meet other domestic workers or other people with whom they can share their thoughts and experiences. Child domestic workers' access to educational programs is therefore important not only because of the intrinsic value of education but also because education is a collective activity that usually takes place in public space. It is crucial for children who work and live in their employers' homes to have access to a meeting place where they can discuss experiences and problems with peers and

adults who may be in a position to offer assistance in difficult work and life relationships. Therefore, for female child domestic workers living in hidden spaces behind the closed doors of their employers, an important function of schooling is the spatial element of access to potentially liberating and empowering spaces.

It does not make sense to ban child domestic work under a certain age and then carry out raids to “rescue” underage children. Most probably the children will end up in similar work situations, since full-time education is no alternative for children who have to provide for themselves and maybe also for family members. This chapter has demonstrated the importance of focusing on the provision of shelter, food, clothing, salary, skills, social capital, and access to education that results from the migration of poor children into the cities for domestic work. Only when the full, place-specific realities of the children’s lives are taken into consideration can effective conventions, policies, and laws be made.

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# Homeless Youth Labor Continuum: Working in Formal and Informal Economies from Highland Guatemala to San Francisco, California

# 16

Amy Donovan Blondell

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### Abstract

Homeless youth are seldom understood as workers, but documented and undocumented homeless young people are working continuously in multiple economies to meet essential needs. This chapter draws on original ethnographic, participatory, and mixed methods research conducted in Guatemala, Mexico, western Canada, and the United States including the Labor Memoir Project and Youth Trek study. The first person perspectives of homeless youth as economic actors are at the center, disrupting traditional divisions in the discussion of formal and informal sector work. The Labor Continuum offers an economic rubric through which a range of income-generating practices and types of labor can be evaluated side by side. Despite the limitations of certain aspects of child labor laws, homeless young people participate in multiple economies, often simultaneously, doing volunteer work, transactional labor exchanging for goods and services, wage labor primarily in the low paid service sector, piece work, cottage industries, and work in the informal sector in criminalized, quasi-legal, and legal forms of work. Income-generating activities include a wide range of employment: work in restaurants and retail; day labor construction; migrant and transnational work transporting produce and sewing clothes for garment manufacturers; seasonal agricultural work (such as fruit or marijuana picking); busking, selling crafts, selling drugs, and reselling merchandise over the internet; domestic and relational labor including working as a caregiver, providing sexual services or companionship; and housecleaning or janitorial services. This testimony of youth workers about a wide variety of jobs offers insight into the challenges homeless young people face, allowing for a reevaluation of assumptions regarding levels of exploitation in formal and informal sectors and casting light on the economic decision making of youth.

### Keywords

Migration • Youth employment • Income-generating activities • Labor trajectories • Criminalization • Dumpster diving • Expressive work • Geography of return • Homeless youth • Labor Continuum • Labor Memoir Project • Youth Trek study • Travelogueing • Formal and informal economies • Day labor construction • Seasonal agricultural work and cannabis/marijuana growers • Caregiving, carers, and domestic work

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 International Debates on the Welfare of Youth Workers

Homeless youth are a highly mobile population – and between dislocation and relocation are often in a constant state of movement. In search of needed resources, income, and a safe place to settle, many homeless young people are migratory and regularly cross county, state, and sometimes national borders. In evaluating the economic challenges and activities of youth on their own, it is therefore useful to adopt a global approach to understanding the legal and political factors that shape the lives and opportunities of homeless youth, as they cross borders and sometimes work transnationally.

Among organizations of youth workers, Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and scholars who do research with working children worldwide, there have been real and meaningful debates addressing the issue of child labor. Virginia Morrow has emphasize the importance of youth participation in the formulation of campaigns, policies, and laws that affect them as expressed by the enumerated goals in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). (Morrow 2010, p. 438)

There is a growing call to move away from a strict abolitionist position in favor of an approach that combines decriminalization of youth work (at an earlier, more realistic age), increased enforcement of criminal sanctions against abusive employers, and making labor protections and benefits accessible to working children. If youth have legal standing, they can seek redress when exposed to dangerous and/or illegal labor practices. Youth workers' organizations are advocating for the ability to participate in negotiations to improve terms of work, including safer work environments, minimum and maximum numbers of hours on work shifts, and higher wages, as they are often not commensurate with those of adult co-workers for similar work performed.

Scholars have documented the effects of creating new prohibitions and restrictions on child labor in the formal sector, by showing the impact that such pressures have on the informal sector. For example, in a UNICEF report, Victoria Rialp and Jo Boyden addressed the immediate effects of an international boycott on garment manufacturers in Bangladesh. When the manufacturers, fearing an import ban in the USA, fired their youth workers, youth workers immediately secured employment in underground markets to locate needed income. In many of these economies, the working conditions were even less visible than in the garment manufacturing industry, and many of these jobs posed increased hazards to the youth workers (Boyden and Rialp 1996).

In the USA there are an estimated five million homeless youth (Ringwalt et al. 1998), and in San Francisco, which is situated on the West Coast of the country, estimates of homeless youth on the streets each night are as high as 5700 homeless young people (TAYSF 2014). The infrastructure of support that exists for homeless

youth, both immigrant youth who come mostly from Central America and Mexico as well as homeless youth who are U.S. citizens, is completely inadequate, with just 350 available shelter beds for youth (Knight 2014).

Although San Francisco is one of the wealthiest cities in the country, it provides shelter for only about 6–18% of its homeless youth population (Knight 2014). Without adequate formal shelter services, homeless young people must find accommodations in the informal sector, staying in “unofficial places” such as sleeping in shop doorways, in park encampments, on the sidewalk, in abandoned buildings (squats), or staying with friends, acquaintances, or short- or long-term romantic partners. They may also find places to stay through Internet sites like [www.couchsurf.com](http://www.couchsurf.com). In the absence of an adequate government-provided safety net, generating needed resources falls largely to the youth themselves, and the struggle to secure income, accommodations, and other resources is a continuous challenge. Homeless young people, both citizen and undocumented, are often working side by side in many of the same economies attempting to meet their essential needs.

This chapter addresses the work lives of homeless youth drawing upon research carried out over two decades with between 700 and 750 homeless and formerly homeless youth, primarily from the USA, Mexico, and Central America. The youngest was aged 12 and the oldest was 22, but the majority of youth were between the ages of 16 and 19.

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## **2 Collaborating with Homeless Youth to Document Their Lives, Employment, and Income-Generating Activities**

The chapter relies on foundational ethnographic research and participant observation carried out in a San Francisco drop-in center for homeless youth as street-based research and as part of the research in the drop-in center, a material culture study was conducted in which the social service agency running the drop-in center shared many objects that had been abandoned and left behind by youth who had traveled through the drop-in center.

Several participatory research projects also inform this chapter in which currently and recently homeless youth were research collaborators. The first was a juried museum exhibition, “Refuse and Refuge: Youth at the Edge of Consumer Society,” hosted by the Cesar Chavez Gallery at San Francisco State University and supported by a grant from the San Francisco Bay Area Homelessness Project. As part of this exhibition lengthy videotaped oral histories were conducted with several young people including a young person who migrated from Highland Guatemala to Mexico to California. This videotaped oral history constituted about 12 hours of footage, recorded during five separate sessions over the period of a year. A portion of this oral history is included in this chapter. The Labor Memoir Project was a year-long weekly writing workshop in which homeless and formerly homeless youth wrote about their jobs and other income-generating activities. The Labor Memoir Project was supported in part by a grant from the San Francisco Arts Commission and was carried out in conjunction with the New School for Social Research in New York

City. The symbolic map shown in this chapter and many of the resource and income-generating activities included on the chart of homeless youth's economic activities are derived from writings and drawings produced during The Labor Memoir Project. One of the most significant sources of data presented in this chapter was drawn from the Youth Trek study, an NIH-funded longitudinal study launched in 2011 at the University of California, San Francisco, which extended through 2016. In the Youth Trek study, the researcher kept in touch and conducted interviews with participants through the use of mobile phones for up to 2 years, assisting young people in documenting their lives through "travelogueing," a combination of making maps, doing interviews, taking documentary photographs, recording geo-narratives, and creating photo essays. Youth Trek participants also responded to quarterly online surveys and weekly questionnaires. For a more elaborated description of the methods and findings of the Youth Trek study please see two additional chapters in Vols. 4 and 12 of *Geographies of Children and Young People* (Blondell 2016; Blondell et al. 2016).

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### **3 The Labor Continuum: Homeless Youth Working in a Wide Range of Economies**

Homeless young people generate needed income and resources by participating in multiple economies. Historian David Eltis has explained that in evaluating different labor contexts it may be useful to address different aspects of freedom and coercion.

Mainstream Western culture has viewed slave labour on the one hand and free or wage labour on the other as polar opposites since at least the eighteenth century, from the time that abolitionism became a major political force. If the legal distinction between slave and non-slave status has usually been clear, differences in the day-to-day experiences of workers under different labour regimes are often less obvious. . . . It is more useful to regard slave and non-slave labour as part of a continuum than as polar opposites. . . . (Eltis 1993, pp. 207–208)

Thus, Eltis offers a lens evaluating labor conditions on a continuum, which is quite useful for analyzing the work lives of homeless youth who tend to find employment in a range of economic activities and participate in multiple economies.

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### **4 Understanding Homeless Youth as Part of the Labor Force**

The insights that homeless youth have in traveling are informed by their labor experiences. In 2011, a homeless young traveler described her experience visiting an amusement park in the US state of Wisconsin. After befriending a number of the international employees at the amusement park, she discovered that they had been provided with substandard housing. She was shocked to learn how little they were being paid and informed them that they were receiving far less than the legal minimum wage. She described what she saw at this Midwestern amusement park

as a “kind of modern slavery,” a set of labor practices that were later critically depicted in the press (Luhn 2010). As a homeless traveler, she finds common cause with those who are displaced and have been economically marginalized and is able to identify exploitation when she encounters it. More privileged young people might not see or respond to such labor conditions.

In other situations, a homeless young person, because of circumstances, might feel less able to band together with other youth to confront exploitive employers. In one Southern US city, a young homeless woman was cleaning the home of her employer, the owner of an antique store, for needed income. The store owner had also recommended her for housecleaning to several of his wealthy friends and clients from the antique store, and she reported that these were “good-paying jobs.” After she finished cleaning his house one day, he sexually harassed her. She explained that when she refused him, she was fired not only from her job at his antique store but she also lost all of the housecleaning jobs, as the homeowners had been informed that “she was not to be trusted.” She later learned from other young women she knew that they had also been sexually harassed by this employer. She reported that none of these young women workers believed that there was anything that they could do to confront or get redress for this on the job sexual harassment because of his wealth and influence in the community. For a more elaborated discussion of the first person perspective and photographic work of a traveling homeless young woman, please see “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” in Vol. 4 of this series (Blondell 2016).

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## **5 “No Getting Ready for Work in the Drop-in Center”: Recollections from Participant Observation in a Drop-In Center**

“No getting ready for work in the drop-in center” was a common refrain in the San Francisco drop-in center as counselors attempted to stop homeless young people from getting dressed up to do sex work. The idea behind the rule “No getting ready for work in the drop in-center” was that the center was to be an avenue away from the streets, not a resource to help young people make a living on the streets, even though the social service agency published in its annual report the figure that 68% of client youth were involved in prostitution. Agency staff efforts to stop young people from doing a host of jobs were futile. At the time, there were fewer than 100 shelter beds for between 1,700 and 5,000 youth on the streets ratio that has not significantly changed, so young people had to rely on informal mechanisms of different kinds to meet most of their basic essential needs. It was common for a young person to “turn a few tricks” – enough to rent a room in a rundown single occupancy hotel and then share that room with their friends. Not all homeless young people do sex work, just like not all homeless young people panhandle, but both ways of generating income are discussed as work by the young people themselves. Marjorie Robertson’s early

study of homeless youth in Hollywood found that many of the young people who did sex work also held other kinds of jobs, often reporting more income than other homeless young people in the study (Robertson 1989). A subsequent study of homeless youth in Los Angeles, California found that the majority of young people who did sex work for money tended to receive assistance only until they were making enough money to provide for themselves (De Rosa et al. 1999).

What was clear from the ethnographic research is that homeless young people were working all of the time in one income-generating activity or another (Donovan 2002). Understandably, social service agencies and other homeless youth advocates often downplay work in informal and illegal economies because they are eager to distance the young people from the stigma that often attaches to these types of work. They do not want to risk the chance that the reader, and possible donor to the organization, will stereotype the young person, be prejudiced against them as a group, and lose concern about their homelessness. As a result, little of the literature that does focus on the economic life of youth addresses the range of jobs and income-generating activities in which they engage.


Inspired by David Eltis' concept of a labor continuum, the chart below includes some different categories, characterizing different kinds of work. Not all categories of work are included, and not all jobs fit in a single category. When there was a choice about where to place a particular job, it was put in the category that most closely matched the way the young person characterized the income or resource-generating activity.

Figure 1, entitled *The Labor Continuum*, is not an exhaustive chart but includes a sample of jobs, resource and income-generating activities that homeless young people, primarily between the ages of 16 and 21, have described during several of the author's studies. The information was drawn from two primary sources: the writings of homeless youth during the Labor Memoir Project, field work in a drop-in center for homeless youth, the most recent Youth Trek Study which included survey and questionnaire responses, in person oral history, telephone interviews, and mapping workshops focused on employment and income-generating activities.

Jobs, resource generating activities, and other income-generating activities often fit in several different categories on the Labor Continuum Chart. For example, a caregiver/carer might be working "on the books"/officially for an agency, and this would put the job under the heading of formal wage labor. If the caregiver were working as an independent contractor, this would put the work under worker-owned business/cottage industry. The caregiver may be working in exchange for room and board, which would characterize the work as exchange/transactional labor. The caregiver might be paid wages in cash "under the table"/off the record, and in that sense be doing a legal type of work, caregiving, in an informal context, so it would be listed under informal labor (legal). The same individual might have several caregiving jobs, each compensated, and therefore categorized, in a different way. For a more extensive discussion of some of the coercive elements that often obtain in caregiving work, please see ► [Chap. 24, "Undocumented and Documented Homeless Youth in the US Labor Force: Economically Useful and Politically Disenfranchised"](#).



**Labor Continuum**



Coerced Labor	Unpaid Labor & Volunteer Work	Exchange Economy / Transactional	Informal Work For Monetary Compensation: Illegal work off the books	Informal Work For Monetary Compensation: Legal work off the books	Cottage Industry / Worker-Owned Business Informal or Formal	Piece Work: Paid by a business for each item produced	Wage Labor Formal	Salaried Work or Contract Work P/T or F/T
Sexual services provided by a drug addicted person in exchange for drugs	Participating in research without pay	Receiving part of a harvest in exchange for labor	Seasonal agricultural work trimming marijuana in a state where it is illegal	Seasonal agricultural work picking apples in Washington state	Reselling free goods for cash or pawning found items (vending without a license)	Putting together gift baskets for a bath products company	Working in a factory sewing clothes	
	Reading tarot cards for someone	Assisting an auto mechanic in exchange for sleeping in one of the cars	Panhandling / Spanging where it is criminalized	Panhandling / Spanging where it is legal	Purchasing goods online & reselling them at a profit through eBay	Participating in clinical trials / medical research	Working in an antique store	
	Fixing up a squat or collective living space	Fixing a car broken down on the road in exchange for a ride	Flying a sign in a location where it is criminalized	Flying a sign in a location where it is legal	Making and selling jewelry, crafts, or artwork	Paid for completion of research activities	Working as a prep cook in a restaurant	
	Helping to organize a memorial	Designing and giving someone a customized tattoo for resources	Selling sexual services for cash (in a state besides Nevada)	Working on a construction site, long term	Busking (playing music for monetary contributions)	Selling blood plasma	Working in a shoe store	
	Writing for a literary magazine like <i>Roadrunner</i> or a zine in memory of a deceased friend	Caregiving for children or disabled, sick, or elderly people in exchange for room and/or board	Selling drugs	Day Labor or short term construction work (painting, landscaping, pg, tiling, hauling, masonry, etc.)	selling food stamps for cash	Paid for participating in focus groups or other market research	Working in the photography dept. at a community college as a work study student	
	Helping to flyer for an Occupy Movement protest against	Participating in Research in exchange for a smartphone & service	Being a lookout, runner, or a connector in drug sales	Caregiving for children or disabled, sick, or elderly people	Collecting recyclables and redeeming for money	Paid for testing video games or other consumer products	Working in a coffee shop as a barrista	
	Making tiles for a public art project in the subway, sponsored by a social service agency	Giving (romantic) companionship to someone who provides a place to stay	Gambling	Assisting a trucker moving produce from Guatemala to Mexico; selling produce in a store in Mexico	Tutoring/giving music lessons		Canvassing (going door to door educating & promoting) for environmental & social justice organizations	
	Making a mural	Cleaning houses for a place to stay	Shoplifting	Flying for raves and other parties and festivals	Putting on a magic show or card tricks		Working at an ice cream shop	
		Participating in an alternative / bartering economy	Selling stolen goods	Cleaning houses (under the table)	Loaning money for profit		Paid for attending a training program	
				Cleaning mini-buses			Working in a drug store	
				Doing Odd Jobs			Working in a bakery	
				Gas-juggling				
				Delivering				

**Fig. 1** The Labor Continuum (© 2016 Amy Donovan Blondell. Rights reserved by the author)

In one case, an 18-year-old homeless woman reported that she was investigating the possibility of receiving payment as an official caregiver for her romantic partner who was HIV positive, with whom she lived. This young woman's labor might best be characterized as transactional labor in that she gave caregiving services and received room and board, an exchange of services for needed resources. However, if she were paid formally as a caregiver, the job would be recategorized into formal wage labor and possibly as transactional labor as well. Some might also place this job in the coerced labor category, in the sense that she stood to lose her housing and might once again become homeless, should the caregiving and/or romantic relationship go awry. Still others might categorize this caregiving work as volunteer work, in the sense that she may have chosen to do this work regardless of whether she was deriving any benefit from the workplace/domestic context. There are those that would argue that a person living with extreme material stresses, such as homelessness, cannot be sufficiently free of duress to choose to do something for another person in a purely voluntary way, when that individual stands to gain something needed from the context. The question of homeless youth voluntarism, agency, and the extent to which constraints weigh upon that agency and decision-making capacity will continue to be a matter for debate, a debate that changes shape when homeless young people are included in the conversation.

The labor continuum is an analytical tool helpful in evaluating economic exchanges in which compensation is conferred for effects, with recognition that different contexts have different elements of freedom and coercion. While the labor continuum can be used to simultaneously evaluate different categories and aspects of work, it is important to recognize that these categories may be overlapping. Furthermore, working conditions may be influenced by the worker's status or other factors including: physical ability, mental health, age, gender, possession or not of a work permit, language facility, education, possession of independent resources, and marketable skills including technological and information gathering skills.

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## 6 Comparative Law: Different Approaches to Law Enforcement

Laws and law enforcement practices can further criminalize youth who are doing sex work, keeping them on carceral routes between juvenile hall and the streets rather than connecting them with services. An example of an alternative legal approach is offered by The Home Affairs Office in the United Kingdom (UK) that resolved that youth should no longer be charged with juvenile prostitution, and arrested as criminals, but rather would be treated as "victims." According to the new protocol outlined by this law, police were no longer to arrest sex working youth but were instructed to bring them to social service agencies where they could obtain different forms of assistance (Hansard 1998). Although the term "victim" may be problematic to some, this change in law and the law enforcement practices of police effectively decreases the criminalization of youth (Donovan 2002).

In the USA, unlike the UK, young people are charged with juvenile prostitution, and, although authorities at Juvenile Hall may not always comply, they are supposed to take fingerprints, creating a criminal record for the youth.

In San Francisco, the former County Supervisor and District Attorney, Terence Hallinan convened the San Francisco Task Force on Prostitution. As part of this task force many people, including young people, were able to offer testimony. The Task Force then offered recommendations based on their data collection. The findings of this Task Force were published in the Hastings Women's Law Review Report, written by Carol Leigh (Harlot and Leigh 2004; Leigh 1996, 1999).

One of the young people who testified before the Task Force was the late Nellie Velasco. Below is a portion of Ms. Velasco's testimony. She not only addresses the limited legal work options available to youth living on their own, but she also addresses the mistreatment that sex working youth sometimes encounter when they attempt to seek medical treatment. She explains that when she is open about her work, she sometimes receives criticism and condemnation. When her male friends are not open with clinicians about their same-gender sex activities with male clients, perhaps because of a concern about being judged, they receive inadequate healthcare services. With incomplete information, clinicians are unable to accurately assess a patient's risks in providing prevention, testing, and care. For a discussion of the health problems and healthcare challenges of homeless youth and facilitators to improved healthcare, please see chapter in Vol. 12 of Geographies of Children and Young People (Blondell et al. 2016).

### **The San Francisco Task Force on Prostitution**

#### **Sex Workers' Issues Testimony Meeting-Nellie Velasco**

I am 18 years old, and I'm an outreach worker and peer educator at Street Survival Project. . . I thought that being in San Francisco, I would be able to come out about liking girls, but that wasn't the case. . .

There was very much limitation, aside from all the other stigmatism, there is also being under age, not being able to get a job because you have to have your parent's signature on the permit saying you are in school and living with your folks, and I didn't have that.

I couldn't get a job, and I couldn't get a place. I was just stuck. And that's how it is right now for a lot of youth that are on their own . . . having the choice is a lot harder if you legally can't get a job without having your family involved in it. So I was living on the streets in the Haight [Haight Ashbury District], and getting propositioned when I decided to do it because I didn't feel like there was any other choice at that time.

I didn't mind that much. It was kind of like the guys at school and everything, so it wasn't that big of a deal.... I was just living on the sidewalk, and once in a while I would meet somebody, but for the most part I was on my own as a kid.

When I would go to these [clinic] appointments for check ups, . . . I would get yelled at for what I was doing more so than an adult. It's like along with all these other things that are supposed to be morally wrong, being a youth and even having sex at all, is such a taboo. . .

A lot of the things that bothered me when I started meeting people was that there was a lot of guys who didn't consider themselves to be bisexual or gay or questioning, but they were, once in a while when they needed money, doing survival sex. And they wouldn't go to a clinic and say, "yeah, I'm having sex with guys too." They would say, "No, I'm straight." So most of the time the doctors wouldn't educate them on how STDs and HIV takes place with a man and a man because they didn't say they were having sex with men. . .

Ms. Velasco also described the often misguided approach that some social service agencies take in prioritizing family reunification, when this may not be a viable alternative.

It feels like a lot of the youth programs out there send you back to your mom and dad. They seem to presume that it's better with your family than it is out in the streets, and a lot of times it's not better. A lot of times it's worse what's going on in your family, than it is no matter what you're doing. . . .

After meeting for three years and hearing testimony from a diverse group of community members, including current and former sex workers, the San Francisco Task Force on Prostitution recommended that the city take certain actions, several of which related directly to evaluating some of the laws and policies that shape and inform youth labor options and safety, and among them were the following:

- Provision of services, not detention, should be the first priority for youth.
- Establish a mandate to preserve and expand youth employment. Young people need to be paid a living wage. . . and have opportunities to develop job skills beyond the service economy. Equal opportunity programs should also include youth.
- Ensure that services available for adults are also available for youth. . . These should include housing, health care including prenatal care and abortions, rape and abuse counseling, drug treatment and detox programs, methadone programs, needle exchange, and self-defense training. Accessibility of services should not be dependent on parental consent.
- Increase funding for peer-run support groups for youth in the sex industry, including transitional services and programs to provide alternatives.
- The San Francisco Youth Commission [which is in the San Francisco City Hall and advises the Board of Supervisors/City Council (San Francisco Youth Commission 2016)] should investigate the efficacy of child labor laws, age of consent laws, and emancipation. Youth with experience in sex work should be included in the commission. City departments need to be responsive to the recommendations of this board (Leigh 1999).

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## **7 The Production of Homeless Youth as Displaced Subjects and Flexible, Migrating Workers**

There is a shortage of shelter beds in the US cities where homeless youth migrate, and many shelters operate at capacity. Nevertheless, in some locations the shelters are not full, and in these locations only a minority of homeless youth are willing to access the shelter system. In part, this is because youth do not have the right to consent independently to shelter services, a minor right that varies from state to state. These laws dictate that parents or guardians, or caseworkers from Child Protective Services, must be contacted after a certain period of time has passed since the young

person arrived seeking shelter. This notification time period varies dramatically from location to location, from a matter of hours to a full month. In addition, shelters in some states require notification in order to offer shelter to a young person in need, while others require both notification and the consent from parents/guardians/case-workers to house that youth. Even when state law allows for minors to consent to shelter on their own for an extended period, the policies of individual shelters may severely limit the exercise of this state-given right. Consequently, when the number of days that a minor can consent independently to shelter services runs out, parents and guardians must be contacted, and rather than risk detection of their whereabouts, young people often move on from the shelter without backup accommodations in place. In this way, state laws and agency policies can be instrumental in a kind of eviction or expulsion of homeless youth, contributing to their constant state of movement and displacement (Donovan and Scandlyn 2008; Donovan 2002).

Minors (under the age of 18) are limited in the number of hours they can work, legally (State of California 2013). Therefore, if a young person living on her or his own needs to work more hours, or wants to work but does not want to have her or his identity detected, then s/he has to secure false identity papers to use in formal sector jobs or obtain needed resources and money by “working off the books,” through income-generating activities outside of the formal economy. The only legal way that a minor can legally work full time is for that minor to achieve “emancipated” status through the courts. This judicial process for achieving status as a legal adult, “emancipation,” is not widely known to homeless youth. It is also a difficult status to achieve given court requirements, among them that the young person, with the support of an attorney, must be able to demonstrate that s/he is economically self-supporting through legal means. Even for the few young people who could meet this requirement of emancipation, few homeless youth who have been living on their own are willing to go before a court voluntarily (Miller et al. 1980).

Describing the lives of runaways who are US citizens, Homelessness scholar Dorothy Miller explained that runaway youth are living largely as “fugitives,” quasi-criminalized as status offenders, “illegal aliens in their own land” (Miller et al. 1980). When young people have run away from their original households, or from Child Protective Services (from group homes, institutional facilities, or foster placements), they are often unwilling to use their legal names. These young people do not therefore work in the formal economy, unless they are able to secure false papers. Even if they are willing to risk using their legal names, state laws limit the number of hours they can work based upon their age (State of California 2013). Therefore, even youth who risk using their legal names and work limited hours in the formal economy must also work in the informal economy to secure sufficient income and resources. Consequently, both homeless youth who are US citizens, living and working “under the radar” and youth without work permits, and who have migrated from Mexico or Central America are often working “off the books” and side by side in informal economies.

While day labor offers work on a daily and sometimes weekly basis, highly mobile homeless youth also seek out other forms of work that are also considered seasonal or temporary. In the classic 1930s text by hobo and sociologist Nels

Andersen, entitled *The Hobo*, Andersen writes in response do the age old distinction that the tramp moves but does not work, the hobo moves and works, and the bum neither moves nor works (Andersen 1923). While there is debate over the word's origins, the word hobo is often thought to have been a reference to a homeless man. Many mobile homeless young people do not refer to themselves as homeless; although they may address their homelessness in conversation, they tend to refer to themselves as travelers or hobo kids.

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## 8 The “Trimmigrants”: Homeless Youth, Seasonal Agricultural Work, and the Informal Cannabis Economy

Income-generating activities often fall into more than one category of work, and many factors influence the character of the work, including state and federal laws, working conditions, and the status of the individual worker. It is not uncommon for undocumented homeless young people from Central America and Mexico to be traveling side by side on freight trains with American homeless and runaway youth headed for Washington State to participate in seasonal agricultural work, including picking apples during the harvest season.

Those traveling to Northern California to work for marijuana growers as trimmers are sometimes referred to by local residents as “trimmigrants.” In the state of California, the employer might be a legal grower, who provides marijuana for a licensed medical dispensary or cannabis club, or has a legal number of plants for medicinal use. For a more detailed discussion of the Cannabis industry, please see Chap. 24 in this volume entitled “► [Undocumented and Documented Homeless Youth in the US Labor Force: Economically Useful and Politically Disenfranchised](#)” (Blondell 2015).

The employer may be an illegal grower or a group of growers who band together to creatively navigate the legal limitations on individual growers, and in that sense may be growing in a quasi-legal way, conforming to some if not all of the laws. During one of the two to three harvest seasons per year, a trimmer may work for different kinds of growers. Typically, growers provide trimmers with bed and board and pay approximately twenty-five dollars per hour in cash. Skilled trimmers can negotiate a higher rate.

As a bonus, which might be considered part of their earnings, the trimmer is often given a portion of the crop. Doing work in exchange for material goods or services is referred to as transactional labor, being paid “in kind.” Receiving a portion of the crop as part of payment for work gives the trimmer the option of pursuing another kind of work, selling the marijuana.

During harvest time, marijuana growing areas in Northern California are flooded with homeless traveling young people, hobo youth who are moving and working. For nomadic homeless youth, this form of payment may create new opportunities for income generation, but being paid in marijuana also can present greater risks than for trimmers who have a permanent residence. Since homeless young people do not have a home where it is easy for them to store this part of their earnings, they are

more likely to carry the marijuana on their persons, making them more vulnerable to receiving drug possession charges if stopped by authorities (Blondell 2015). As homeless young people often travel from state to state, they may travel through states with much stricter enforcement against the possession of marijuana, increasing the risk of incarceration. In the recent November 2016 election, voters in California, Nevada, Massachusetts, and Maine legalized marijuana for recreational use (TheNewYorkTimes, 2016), joining Oregon, Colorado, Alaska, and Washington states. Another 19 states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana for medicinal use (Governing, 2016), which means that nearly 60% of the US has some form of legal cannabis industry (Berliner, 2016). This legalization marks a shift in the cannabis economy from an informal to a formal economy in these locations. The current legal market for marijuana is estimated at about \$7 billion, compared with the “overall \$50 billion U.S. market, most of which remains illegal” (Berliner, 2016). It is not clear how this legalization will affect wage rates and working opportunities for youth who often feel they must work “off the books”.

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## 9 Migratory Populations and Informal Economies

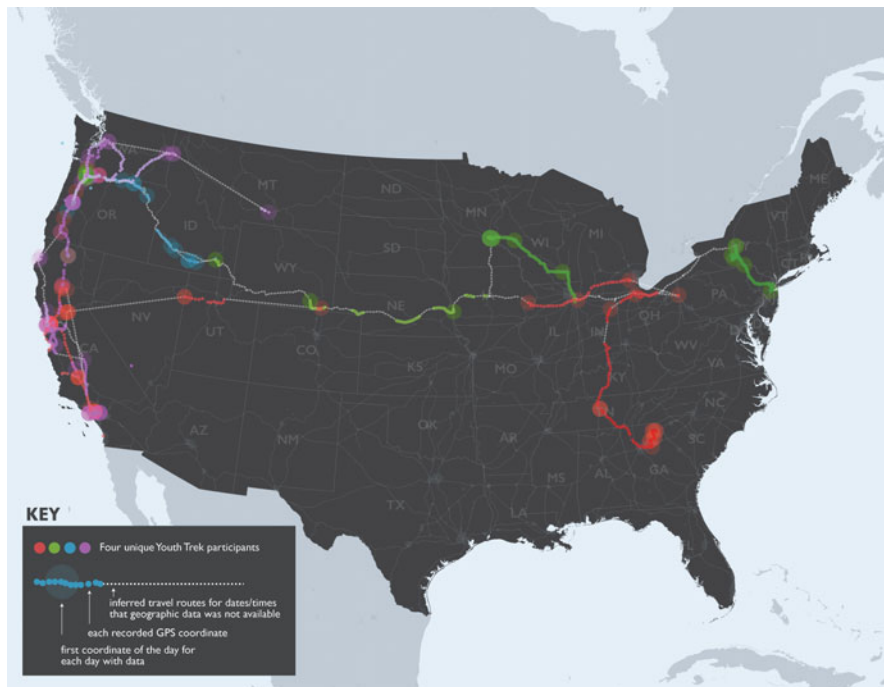
The homeless young people who participated in the Youth Trek Project joined the study in Northern California and traveled from the West/Pacific Coast eastward. As shown in the map, see Fig. 2, the dots represent groups of GPS coordinates that the original four youth participants transmitted to the research team using their mobile phones between the months of June and August, 2011. The dots were aggregated to create geo-tracks of each travel route from June through August 2011. Although the Youth Trek Study was a study with a small number of participants, the map indicates the extent and rapidity with which homeless youth often travel, especially considering that they are doing so with few financial resources, relying largely on freight train hopping, hitchhiking, and walking for transportation.

The colored lines show the exact recorded GPS coordinates of each of the four original Youth Trek Participants. White dotted lines indicate missing geographical data. Where interview data was available to explain the method of transportation – by train or by car – the dotted lines were matched with either the train tracks or roads. Absent this data, a straight line was drawn to connect GPS data points.

The larger, low opacity circles represent the first GPS coordinate recorded for each day for which there was GPS data. When the color on the dots is more concentrated, it shows that the participant remained in that location for multiple days. These more concentrated dots tend to be in urban areas, and the less concentrated dots seem to be in more rural areas, along an extended travel route. Absence of GPS data was also influenced (as in the state of Montana) by the reliability of cell phone service in rural areas.

The distance between the large circles indicates rate of travel. For example, while the participant with Green tracks is moving rapidly across the country, the participant with Blue tracks is traveling at a far slower pace. The direction of the geo-tracks can be explained as follows: the Purple tracks went up and down the state of California





**Fig. 2** Youth Trek transcontinental travel routes for June through August 2011 (© 2016 Amy Donovan Blondell. Rights reserved by the author). The geo-tracks (generated using Instamapper© software) that are pictured on this map were assembled from GPS coordinates transmitted by Youth Trek participants using their mobile phones. This map was developed, utilizing QGIS© software, by designer, Colleen McGinnis, with foundational work completed by geographic consultant Daniel Swick. It shows an overview of the migration trajectories of the four original Youth Trek participants

as far north as Washington State in the Northwest, and then East to Montana. During this 3-month period, the Blue tracks went from Northern California to Oregon and Washington State and then headed toward the Midwest. The Green track extend from the West/Pacific Coast across the country to the East/Atlantic Coast, as far as Massachusetts and New York. Like the Green tracks, the Red tracks begin in Northern California, extended to Southern California, then turned back up North through California, Oregon, and Washington, back down to Northern California and then east across the country to arrive in the state of Georgia, which is in the southeastern region of the USA. The longest tracks represents over 3,500 miles / 5,400 kilometers of travel during the three month period.

Along these travel routes, young people described a number of ways that they made money. These methods included, gas-juggling (asking for a fill up of a five gallon gas jug at a gas station along the route), busking (playing music for money) in San Francisco, panhandling (asking for money), bartering in Mendocino County in Northern California, trimming marijuana plants in Northern California, picking



apples in Washington State, cleaning houses in the southeast region, working in an antique store, washing dishes in a restaurant, and playing an extra in a movie in New York City. Other jobs that were referenced at different times included: participating in market research and medical studies, selling plasma, selling goods received for free on Craigslist electronic bulletin board, buying and selling items on eBay internet market for a profit, selling found objects, sewing clothes in a factory, selling drugs or sexual services, making coffee drinks in a café, working in retail venues, and doing day labor construction work. For a more elaborated discussion of day labor please see ► [Chap. 24, “Undocumented and Documented Homeless Youth in the US Labor Force: Economically Useful and Politically Disenfranchised”](#) by Blondell in this volume.

One type of work not represented on this chart is a resource generating activity from which many homeless young people derive nourishment. “Dumpster diving” involves opening dumpsters, large refuse bins that are often behind restaurants and grocery stores in order to find discarded food, including food past the sell by date or too close to the expiration date for sale. Dumpster diving is not represented on the homeless youth labor continuum chart, because, as a type of foraging, there is no express transaction. Another way that some homeless young people get food is by sitting down at benches or tables where food has been left behind by shoppers in the open eating areas of shopping malls, often called “picnic courts” or “food courts.” Eating discarded or left behind food, is often treated as an offence and is often met with physically abusive treatment by the private security guards who are employed by malls.

Hitchhiking also might be understood as a form of work, as it involves making the effort to reach out to the general public. However, unlike gas-juggling, flying a sign, panhandling, and spanging (asking for spare change), homeless youth do not refer to hitchhiking as work. Susana Narotzky has discussed informal modes of generating needed income or resources under the rubric of what she terms “provisioning.” She explains that provisioning happens in a wide variety of ways beyond accessing the commercial market and underscores that different groups of people are better positioned to access different provisioning pathways, whether through social networks, governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations or nongovernmental organizations, or through informal mechanisms like “foraging” (Narotzky 2005). For a more elaborated discussion of “provisioning pathways” please see ► [Chap. 24, “Undocumented and Documented Homeless Youth in the US Labor Force: Economically Useful and Politically Disenfranchised”](#) Blondell, this volume.

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## **10 The Labor Memoir Project: Homeless Youth Describing and Illustrating Their Work Experiences**

The Labor Memoir Project was a participatory research study in which homeless and formerly homeless youth met weekly for a year to write about their work experiences in multiple economies. As part of this workshop, the young people sometimes drew



**Fig. 3** The state of embodied geography, California as an experiential terrain (© 2016 Amy Donovan Blondell. Rights reserved by the author)

symbolic maps, one of which is discussed here. The young man who created the symbolic map, see Fig. 3, had recently turned 18.

As a young man, who had moved many times, the young artist drew his own body in the shape of the state of California pictured along the Pacific Coast. The body was complete with a broken heart, showing many beautiful environmental elements of sun and sea. Scattered throughout the body were clusters of houses showing a number of places he had lived. He drew a small monster-like figure in the bottom right corner, which he explained was “Mr. Ugly,” who he said traveled with him always (Donovan 2002).

In his labor memoirs, this young man wrote about working in a shoe store while he was homeless. He explained that he slept in the doorway so that he would be there in the morning when the store opened and not be late for work. When he reached the age of 18, as a US citizen, he was not limited in the number of hours he was able to work and was able to secure one of the few studio apartments available in a semi-subsidized apartment complex managed by a local social service agency. He later found a job, once again working in a retail chain store that catered to youth and young adults. In one of the writing sessions during the Labor Memoir Project, he wrote about how insulting it was for his co-workers and him to have their bags checked for stolen merchandise at the end of their work shifts. After writing about

this indignity, he later reported that he organized with other workers to contest this practice. After the year-long Labor Memoir Project writing workshop officially ended, as a group convened by the Principal Investigator, this young man led the group of young writers, holding weekly writing workshops on their own for an additional 6 months. In this way, homeless and formerly homeless youth continued to write, read aloud, and make sense of their labor memoirs in the context of a supportive group of peers.

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## **11 A Tale of Two Youth: From Highland Guatemala and Los Angeles to San Francisco**

The remainder of this chapter focuses primarily on the lives and labor trajectories of two homeless youth, an unaccompanied minor who migrated from Guatemala to Mexico to the USA (San Francisco, California) and a Jewish youth, a US citizen, who ran away from the Southern California city of Los Angeles to the northern California city of San Francisco. Although the backgrounds of these two youth differ dramatically, there are critical points of convergence in both the emotional and work lives of the young men.

Although their names are pseudonyms, Vicente Perez and Daniel Dreyfus were real young people who went to a San Francisco drop-in center for homeless youth in the early 1990s. Ostensibly the two had little in common, save being handsome, well put together young men of about 17 years. Vicente was from Quetzaltenango, an area of upheaval in Highland Guatemala, and Daniel was from Van Nuys, a working to middle class area of Los Angeles, where the last auto assembly plant in Southern California was closed in 1992. Whether the young men ever met or knew one another is not clear, but at roughly the same time they were both seeking services in the same drop-in center, where food was always available, and there was a lounge area, television, computers, and a pool table. There was also a walk-in clinic managed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health next door and an adjacent counseling center for those who wanted counseling. In this drop-in center, a year of participant observation and an extensive material culture study were conducted, and interviews were carried out informally with youth and formally with counselors, street outreach workers, and clinicians (Donovan 2002). Vicente was not interviewed at age 17, while he was receiving services at this drop-in center, but at age 19, when he was no longer homeless and could speak retrospectively about his life.

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## **12 The Study of Material Culture and Street Survival in a Drop-In Center for Homeless Youth**

The spiral notebook was one of many abandoned objects that were studied as part of a material culture study at the drop-in center. These artifacts of everyday life offered insight into the challenges faced by the homeless youth who passed through the

center. Many of these issues might not have surfaced through other modes of research such as interviews or participatory observation. Some of the other objects left behind in the drop-in center that related to the work of securing shelter were the many screwdrivers, hammers, wrenches, crowbars, and bolt cutters that were used to open boarded-up, abandoned buildings for squatting. Other kinds of objects often left behind in the center were implements of self-protection. In addition to knives of every size, there were a number of makeshift weapons: a sock containing a billiard ball, a police night stick, and a plastic ball point pen with a nail stuck where the ink cartridge would be. Self-defense takes work, and these were some of the crude instruments of young people who have to be vigilant on the streets.

In addition to music, books, magazines, and a sketch pad, there was a spiral notebook which contained important information about the work trajectory of its author, who will be referred to as Daniel Dreyfus, an American Jewish teenager close to the age of 18 who came from the Los Angeles Area of Southern California. In the spiral notebook was an ornately decorated page entitled “Self-Contract,” which was signed and dated. On the side of the self-contract the author wrote: “From Day 1 that I start, I plan to follow myself drawn up contract and abide by all 10 principles that I laid down. To refer to on a regular basis. . . .” The ten principles were then enumerated.

1. Try my product myself before I start to sell. This insures me that it is good, and it’s not bunk. Allowing me to guarantee it good, or give you your money back (selected few).
2. To be true and honest at all times no matter what the cost.
3. Have all my merchandise weighed out to the right amount before I start to sell.
4. To refrain from ever borrowing anything from anyone so that no one can wrongfully accuse me of being in their debt for this and that.
5. With any success that I may achieve, that I don’t get greedy with the product or the money and forget how I started, that got me to where I am.
6. To share whenever possible with my fellow brothers in need. Not only to help my own, but others in need as well.
7. Often give a kick to a well deserving individual, someone who will go out of their way to help someone else.
8. Not to ever let it take control of my life.
9. Never put it up against friendship. Friendship always comes 1<sup>st</sup>.
10. To always continue and never lose my beliefs and trust in something so strong and powerful, that it can constantly look after me and reward and punish on my actions. I call it . . . K A R M A.

(Donovan 2002)

This drug seller’s code of ethics is designed to assure quality control, fair trade practices, and business good will. Daniel sets up a hierarchy where social relations rank higher than mercantile trade, writing that “friendship comes first,” and emphasizing honesty and integrity in his dealings with others. On the other hand, Daniel states that social relations have to be managed, and for this reason he states that as a seller, he will not take loans so he will not be in the lender’s debt. He emphasizes the importance of mental health, writing down the conviction that he should not let the drugs take control of his life. He states the importance of testing the product before selling, which will underscore his reputation with respect to the quality of the drugs he

is distributing. In the case of illegal drugs, there is an absence of standards set and enforced by regulatory institutions such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Each year many people die accidentally because they use drugs of substandard quality. The drugs may contain dangerous bacteria, they may be much more pure than usual such that unaware consumers inadvertently overdose, or the drugs can be cut or replaced with other substances, benign or toxic. He refers to this as making sure that the product is not “bunk.” He promotes business good will by sometimes giving away the product to people who watch out for others. In this way, he establishes good relations with a friendly group of customers, who will recommend him to their friends, thereby improving his reputation and expanding his scope of business. He states that he will make sure that the product is weighed accurately so that customers receive the amount that they expect and the amount for which they are paying. He cautions against egotism and greed, both of which might result in cheating customers.

Daniel shows his commitment to carrying out the work of selling drugs in a principled way by crafting and signing a self-contract. The ten principles represent a code of ethics, which is underscored by his belief in “karma,” in which failure to act responsibly toward others will be punished, while doing right by them will be rewarded.

In an essay entitled “Youth’s Right to Work,” sociologists William Kornblum and Terry Williams address the numerous responsibilities involved in the informal sector work “of the low level drug dealer,” emphasizing that some of the same business practices, many of which are referenced by Daniel in his self-contract, underpin success in both formal and informal sector work (Kornblum and Williams 1981).

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## 13 Work in Both Informal and Formal Economies

In addition to this illegal work in the informal economy, Daniel also addresses his work in the formal economy.

Daniel writes in the notebook that he has found a job in Berkeley, which at the time was a \$3.60 roundtrip train ride from San Francisco. The menu for the Italian restaurant, where he is a prep cook and dishwasher, is wedged into the notebook. He has copied the menu verbatim into the pages of the spiral notebook as if to memorize it. This recopying of the entire menu in his notebook is not entirely unlike his creation of the ethical self-contract for drug dealing. In both cases, he takes the work seriously and applies himself by putting forth extra effort. Just as the self-contract can be understood as a method of formalizing informal labor with a code of ethics, his rewriting of the menu also is an act of dedication and formalization, though the prep cook job is in the formal economy. It is perhaps because of his own precarious position with respect to these jobs that he attempts to study and prepare for them by codifying and concretizing them into his own writing.

... Today was my first day on my new job. It’s a good job and seems pretty easy. I’m going to be the prep cook and dishwasher. My responsibilities include making the pasta’s, and sauces so the cook doesn’t have to do everything. When I’m not cooking, I do the dishes.

For \$5.00 hr. that is not bad. It's a pretty fancy restaurant. The only draw-back is that it costs me \$3.60 to get to and from work every day by BART [the rapid transit train line]. \$15 – \$20 of my paycheck a week will be going for transportation. But at least I have a job. So, I'll only be squatting for a couple of weeks. Just until I can save enough money for a hotel or move into an apartment with someone. I get my first check Tuesday. From that check I'm only going to keep \$10.00 and with the rest of my money I'm going to open a Savings Account.

Daniel expresses the desire to rent an apartment, but his calculations on another page betray the problem. He is earning five dollars an hour and is working nine and a half hours a week spread out over a few days. His commute by BART, rapid area train, takes \$10.80 out of his weekly income. After the commute is deducted, he is making less than \$40 per week. Although he states his desire to move out of the squat and rent a hotel room or room in a shared apartment, there is no way his weekly wage even comes close to being able to cover any rent. At this time, the cost of an SRO (single resident occupancy) hotel room was about \$120 per week in a dangerous downtown area of San Francisco, and the cost of a two-bedroom apartment, which could potentially be shared by at least three people, was \$990 (San Francisco Rent Board 2001; Donovan 2002). Daniel states that he will only keep ten dollars for spending money and that he will put the remaining thirty in the savings account. Unfortunately, there is a significant gap between his will to work and generate income and the insufficiency of the wage to cover expenses.

In a presentation of her 2001 book *Nickel and Dime: On (Not) Getting By in America*, Barbara Ehrenreich, stressed, “There has to be at least a pay ethic to match the work ethic” (Ehrenreich 2002). Nowhere do we see this more in evidence than when someone calculates the number of hours they worked and their hourly wage, only to find that the “take home” income is insufficient to cover basic needs like transportation, food, and rent.

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## 14 Transnational Migration, Work, and the Search for a Better Life

In the early 1990s, about a fifth of the young people coming to the homeless youth drop-in center were from Mexico and Central America, most particularly from countries bordering Mexico and from the war torn countries of El Salvador and Guatemala (Larkin Street Youth Services 1992).

Vicente originally left home at the age of 11, but between the ages of 17 and 18, he sought political asylum through the courts, eventually securing legal residency and a work permit (a green card) in the USA. From this point forward, he had the ability to work legally.

Conditions of war often create economic instability, and it has been argued that many who flee wartime conditions also seek to escape the economic conditions which accompany war torn areas. As Samuel Schmidt has argued economic refugees are also political refugees (Schmidt 1993). Vicente was from Quetzaltenango, in highland Guatemala, an area that was hard hit by the war. In accordance with US

foreign policy, military aid was supplied to the Guatemalan government, and military-supported death squads were responsible for many deaths and disappearances. The economy suffered terribly, and Guatemalans fled the country in large numbers, many of them arriving in the USA (Schmidt 1993).

At 11, Vicente left his home in Highland Guatemala for the first time. He went to work for a neighbor of his sister, who lived in Guatemala City. Vicente assisted this man as he traveled back and forth to Mexico delivering produce. He reported that he had hurt his leg and his back carrying a hundred pounds of pineapple on his back. This burdensome and injurious work falls under the “worst forms of child labor” designation, as defined by the ILO, since it “. . . involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads” (Save the Children 2013).

Vicente also worked in a store that the man owned in Mexico. The storeowner used what he knew about Vicente’s father’s failings to exploit and degrade him.

I worked with him for three months. The man knew that my father was an alcoholic. He knew that my father never gave us enough attention. He thought that we were mean kids, because he wasn’t with us. So he took me to Mexico, and I started to work with him. But he always punished me because he said I wasn’t a good salesperson. He was always calling me stupid. I worked from five o’clock in the morning to five p.m. and he will pay me like five dollars for that. He was always screaming at me saying bad things to me. He would say, ‘Just cause you didn’t have a father who. . . I’m going to show you how to respect people even if your father didn’t taught you how to do that. I’m going to make you respect – respect me.’ And I never said anything. Always I was a quiet person. I never liked to say anything back, because I needed the job. (Donovan 2002)

As the degradation became physical, Vicente eventually fought back, and the storeowner fired him and took him back to Guatemala City, 120 miles (190 km) south of his hometown. There, Vicente’s sister had a sewing workshop where jackets were made. Vicente learned to sew, a skill that would serve him later in life, when he would migrate to the USA. Vicente explained that his sister did not acknowledge that he was a family member. She made him eat with the other workers, rather than sharing meals with him, and insisted that he use formal address when speaking with her, which he suggested was because she wanted to demonstrate that she was a better person. Discouraged, he returned to his native Quetzaltenango where he worked for one year as a helper in a minibus company, sweeping out and cleaning the vehicles when they were not in use.

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## 15 Deciding to Leave Home for Good

Between ages 11 and 14, Vicente had worked: transporting produce; as a shopkeeper’s assistant; sewing clothes; and as a janitor for a transportation company. When he left Guatemala for the second time at age 14, he never returned to live



permanently, though he periodically returned for month-long visits. One ration able offers for leaving is the desire to relieve his mother of the burden of supporting him.

I left my house to look for work outside my city. Didn't tell my mom. . . I just wanted to make some money and help my family. I didn't want her to work a lot. And then I thought that'll be one person less. My mom wouldn't have to support me because I was gone. (Donovan 2002)

Vicente went to Mexico City, where he sought work in a factory sewing clothes. As he approached the factory, he was stopped by a police officer who accused him of trying to steal a purse from one of the factory workers. When Vicente said that he was not stealing, the officer told him to give him some money. Vicente showed him that he had only small change, and the police officer demanded that he give him his sunglasses. It was only then that the police officer let him go. Police harassment of homeless youth on the streets is a well-documented phenomenon in many countries (Alcara del Castillo 1993).

Vicente described his time in Mexico City as one of the most difficult of his life.

I had no friends, I had nobody in Mexico City, and then I couldn't pay the shelter anymore. So they kicked me out of that place. There was a man, he had a body shop close. I was always with him doing some little work, and when they kicked me out of the Salvation Army I said, 'Will you do me a favor, will you let me sleep in one of the cars?' But he said, 'I don't have any blankets for you.' I said, 'Okay, that's fine. I don't think it's going to be that cold anyway.' . . . I was shaking at midnight, I couldn't sleep because I was cold. . . The next day, I woke up. I tried to find a job, but I couldn't find a job because I'm not from Mexico. They wanted to see my documents. I didn't have any, so I didn't work. I used to go to this bakery. I'm not sure if I stole any bread from them, and that's all I had for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and the next day the same. I always cried, when I was in Mexico City. . . (Donovan 2002)

Things improved when Vicente was able to get a job working on a construction site. He said that he was happy because he could afford to eat regularly and buy new shoes and clothes. He was once again able to afford staying in the shelter, and he was able to stay clean. Vicente explained that he worked very hard on the job, because he did not want to lose it, but this hard work backfired when the foreman pointed out his effort as the example for other workers to follow. The other workers became resentful and accused him of being an undocumented Guatemalan. When he insisted he was Mexican, they focused on his accent. During lunch, one of the other workers told the woman who was providing lunch that she should not feed him because he would eat and leave for Guatemala without paying her. The insult led to a fistfight between Vicente and the other worker. Later that day he was run off the job site by a group of workers who were friends of the worker with whom he had fought. They threatened to beat him up with their tools, calling him an illegal Guatemalan. Vicente noted that one of the assailants was a Salvadoran, who was also working without papers.



After this experience of being expelled by the other workers from the construction site, Vicente resolved to migrate to the USA. He traveled from Mexico City to Mexicali by train.

Those three days, sometimes there is no way I can explain it how I make it. All these people were eating on the trains [there] wasn't enough money to buy something, to try to eat at least five tortillas, and go to the bathroom and eat some water. There was no water in the bathroom and I was thirsty. Then the policemen and the Immigration come on and they start to ask for documents. (Donovan 2002)

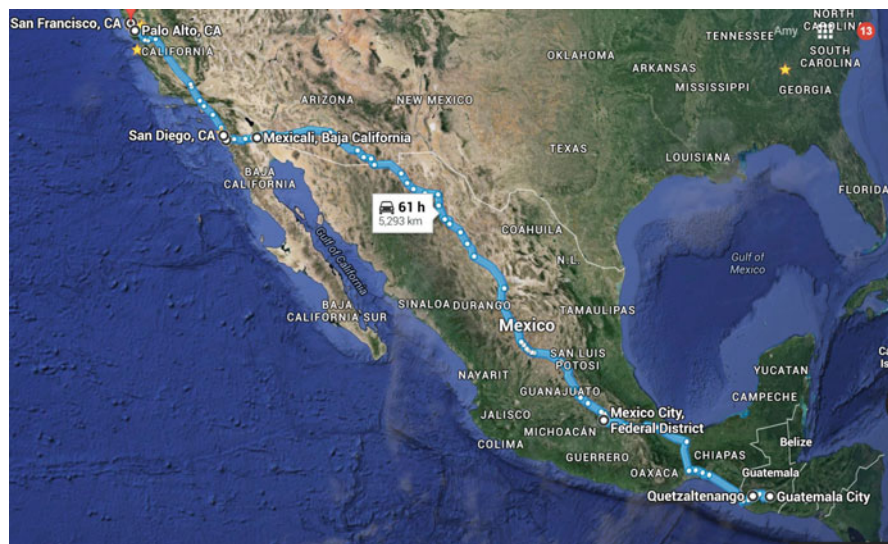
Fortunately, Vicente had befriended a group of soldiers who vouched for him when the immigration officials approached them on the train. When he arrived in Mexicali, Vicente assisted a tourist woman in purchasing her bus ticket and got his at the same time. After traveling approximately 1,755 miles (2,824 km), he had reached Tijuana, and went to the shelter, only to find that there was no room. The shelter worker told him about an organization that helped Central American refugees.

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## **16 From Undocumented Working Child to Refugee with Work Papers**

When Vicente arrived at the refugee organization, an American woman gave him the equivalent of five dollars for lunch and gave him a number to call when he reached San Diego. On his second attempt, Vicente crossed the Mexico–US border successfully and contacted the organization. A priest met him and drove him to a refugee house in San Diego, which is the closest large city in California to the US border with Mexico. From there, Vicente was transferred to a different refugee house in Palo Alto, a Northern California city, south of San Francisco. There, he joined other refugees, who were mostly from El Salvador. He reported that, in the refugee center, there was significant anxiety about who would and would not be allowed to stay. Vicente explained that there was resentment among the Salvadorans who felt that the Guatemalans were “taking their spot.” In the USA as in Mexico, Vicente experienced tense relations with a Salvadoran migrant. In both Mexico and the USA, the migrant workers from Central America have heightened vulnerabilities. Under conditions of scarcity, and when confronted by prejudiced natives, competition can arise between migrant groups who recognize that they may be competing for limited resources in the new country.

Vincente reported that the house where he was staying in Palo Alto was more luxurious than any he had seen before and explained that he felt disoriented there, giving the example that he did not know how to work the electric stove, which he had never seen before. Vicente reported that the six months he spent in the Palo Alto refugee house were very depressing for him because he did not know what his future would be and because he was confined to the house, neither working nor going to school. In their research on the experiences of youth detained at the Mexico–US



**Fig. 4** Vicente's Migration map from Highland Guatemala to San Francisco, California (© 2016 Amy Donovan Blondell. Rights reserved by the author)

border and in group homes thereafter, Sarah Blue and Rebecca Torres have addressed this anxiety, frustration, and malaise (Blue et al. 2015).

The director of the refugee organization informed Vicente that they were waiting to see if the violence in Quetzaltenango had subsided, and if he could be sent back to Guatemala. Thinking back, Vicente said that, at this time, he had wished that he had stayed in Mexico (Fig. 4).

Although the number of unaccompanied youth who cross the US border today cannot be precisely estimated, the fraction of those young people who are stopped by border patrol offers an indication of what the total numbers might be. Latin American Studies Scholars, Swanson, Torres, Thompson, Blue, and Hernández Hernández are among those researchers documenting the challenges that Central American migrant children encounter in their efforts to emigrate to the USA. Locating some of their research in detention and deportation centers in Mexico, they interview youth and do participatory projects with the youth in order to learn about their migration experiences, from the impetus for their leaving home to the challenges they encounter attempting to cross the Mexico–US border through Texas, Arizona, and California (Swanson et al. 2015). Using Border Patrol statistics, they estimate that “by the end of 2014, the U.S. had apprehended over 68,000 children at the border. . .” (Swanson et al. 2015, p. 2). According to Border Patrol statistics, the majority of Central American youth come from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Between 2009 and 2014, the number of Guatemalan youth apprehended at the Mexico–US border increased from approximately 2,000 to 13,000 (Dibble 2014). Border Patrol reports for the period of 2013–2014, indicated that there was an increase in the percentage of unaccompanied minors who were 12 years old and

younger attempting to cross the border without parents from 9% to 16%, while the percentage of 13–17 year olds increased by 12%, and the number of female unaccompanied minors increasing from 7,339 to 13,008, a 77% increase (Blue et al. 2015).

While some unaccompanied minors have family members, who may be settled, with or without official documentation, in the USA, many unaccompanied minors do not have homes waiting for them when they arrive. Like Vicente, these migrant young people are homeless both as they journey and when they arrive at their destination locations in the USA, having to work and develop creative ways to generate needed income while on the way. In Vicente's case, he was able to benefit from the support organizations that had developed in Mexico and California to help Central American refugees during the Salvadoran revolution and civil war in Guatemala. While some of these organizations still exist to help refugees today, young migrants are largely on their own as they make their journeys north.

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## 17 Destination San Francisco

By the time Vicente arrived in San Francisco, where he would make his final home, Vicente had traveled as an unaccompanied minor and child worker approximately 3,300 miles or 5,300 km. His migration began at age 11, and he arrived in San Francisco at 15. The map, 4, is simplified and measures distance as if it were traveled from origin to destination. This underestimated 3,300 mile journey does not include either indirect routes taken or the frequent trips between Guatemala and Mexico that Vicente took while he was transporting produce or moving between jobs, nor does it include occasional return trips to visit family in Quetzaltenango.

Throughout his journey, Vicente developed relationships with people who made pivotal differences in his life. On the train in Mexico, the soldiers covered for him and kept him from being deported back to Guatemala. When he arrived at the border, the shelter worker connected him with an organization whose purpose was to assist Central Americans once in the USA. When he arrived in San Francisco, an elderly woman befriended him and became like a surrogate mother, and a Chilean volunteer working with refugees found him a room to share in an apartment.

Upon arriving in San Francisco, Vicente sought work in one of the sewing factories in the Bayview District. Initially, no one would hire him because they thought he was too young and because he had a refugee card but no work papers. The refugee organization assigned him a lawyer, who helped him get political asylum, through which he received a green card, which he needed to begin working legally. His social worker signed permission in lieu of a parent, and he was eventually hired at the sewing factory. This sewing job allowed him to cover rent, transportation, and food costs, and to send money home to his mother. He also continued to attend English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the local community college in the evening. After a year, he was laid off without notice, and as he explained, his English

was “at about 50%.” He paid his last \$200 for rent. When the month ran out he moved in with an older girlfriend in her early twenties, but after a few months the relationship with this older woman dissolved, and, homeless, he went to a youth shelter. There he met other young people who were working in the underground economy.

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## 18 Illegal Work in the Informal Sector

In the park, Vicente began connecting people looking to purchase drugs with drug dealers, and in this way made tips. Eventually, the dealers trusted him enough to give him drugs to sell for them. He was making \$100 a day and felt that for the first time he was “running his own business.” This might be compared with the \$40 dollars a day (minus taxes), that Daniel would have received per day if he had been working not part time but full time as a prep cook during the same time period.

Crack and weed. I didn’t do it for long cause I know I was killing someone else.

Researcher: How did you get hooked up, and how did other kids you knew get hooked up with this money making scheme?

Nobody told me anything. One day, I was in the park, and I saw this guy selling drugs, and I pretended that I was selling drugs too. Every time they came to me I’d tell them, “Yes, I do.” And I’d go to those guys and tell them, “Hey” and they will give me some money for it. And all I do is bring the clients for them, and they give me some tips for them. And then this guy told me, “I’m going to give you some today.” And I sold a lot that day, and I made a lot of money. I was running my own business.

Researcher: Did the police pick you up?

Once. I’d never been to jail before, and I was like crying. I was there for twenty-four hours, I felt it was one year. It was too long to be in jail. They found one bag of weed, and some money. I wasn’t carrying any documents with me. I was between seventeen and eighteen, but they took me to 800 Bryant. I forgot the number of that [850 Bryant, the San Francisco Jail, not the Youth Guidance Center, the juvenile hall]. The next day they let me go. They didn’t find me guilty; they dropped my case. I was lucky. From then, I stopped doing that. I preferred to be homeless than selling drugs. Because selling drugs is not good.

Researcher: You never went back to it even when you were desperate?

No I didn’t.

(Donovan 2002)

After he was released from jail, Vicente again found the value of supportive social relationships when he was invited to join an existing social network, a small group of youth who were in a Cambodian gang. He was watching them eat at McDonalds, and they invited him to join them. Despite his different ethnicity, they asked him if he wanted to get jumped into the gang but respected his decision not to join. They told him about a transitional housing facility through which he eventually secured permanent housing. When he got permanent housing, he maintained his friendship with the youths, continued in school, and began studying Asian cultures and martial arts. Some years later, he became a professional baker.

## 19 Convergent and Divergent Labor Trajectories

For youth whose work in one form or another is inextricably linked to survival, the disappearance of one form of work or source of needed funds creates a personal crisis and potential desperation that leads to a willingness to take work that pays immediately but may well involve dangers or compromise safety. In Daniel's case, he struggles to calculate a way to save money working in the legal economy in a restaurant that did not offer him sufficient work hours or a living wage. In Vicente's case, when he was in Mexico City, he was forced to trade labor as a mechanic's helper for staying in the car (exchange economy). When he was laid off without notice from his sewing job in a San Francisco factory, he had no way to sustain himself beyond 2 weeks. As he became more and more desperate, his entrepreneurial effort, bringing clients to drug dealers, resulted in his being trusted by them and allowed him to deal drugs which was his most lucrative job. His short experience in jail, however, made him fear continuing in this line of work.

Just as American, Mexican, and Central American youth are together in the shelters and the drop-in centers, they often work in similar jobs and together constitute a workforce, supplying a labor pool for certain industries and areas of work in the formal and informal sectors. Each individual homeless youth has a different experience, and, as this chapter demonstrates, while labor experiences differ somewhat, youth at the margins, both citizen and migrant, share conditions of uncertainty and precariousness.

Although the City of San Francisco has wonderful indigent healthcare, a temperate climate, and great physical beauty, the housing landscape of San Francisco is characterized by scarcity. Low cost housing is largely unavailable, and housing opportunities for homeless youth often take the form of encampments or hazardous squats, like buildings boarded-up from fire or earthquake damage. Bands of youth team up to locate these structures, which, with the tech boom, are increasingly few in number. The cost of housing continues to ensure the vulnerability of low income earners (Kuchar 2014; Said 2014).

Although Vicente held his sewing job for a year, he was only able to pay his rent, of \$200 a month, once after he was laid off. Similarly, there was no chance that Daniel's job, at those limited hours and relatively low wages, would be adequate to support, even shared housing. Even at that time, nine and a half hours at five dollars an hour would not have even come close to covering rent. Even if his income were being calculated at 40 hours per week, the amount would barely be sufficient to pay for food, transportation, and rent.

While Vicente and Daniel both worked in the drug trade, and had ethical concerns, they differ in their fundamental orientations toward drug use. Whereas Daniel was focused on fair business practices, generosity, and product quality and safety, Vicente said that drugs were "killing" people. Vicente gave up his drug sales job when he was frightened by his arrest. When Daniel got the restaurant job, he was very excited to share the news, in spite of limited hours, low wages, and a long and expensive commute. Both young men put in extra effort, Daniel rewriting the

menu and Vicente working so hard he was driven off a worksite by other workers. It seems that in both Vicente's and Daniel's labor trajectories, they worked in both formal and informal economies, and in Vicente's case he was also arguably involved in a transactional economy, in the sense that his housing was provided for several months by a romantic partner, a woman who was significantly older than he. Like many homeless young people, both Daniel and Vicente worked in different kinds of economies, formal, informal, and transactional, sequentially if not simultaneously.

While undocumented workers from Mexico and Central America often work in restaurant kitchens, it was Daniel, not Vicente, who held this position. Vicente worked in construction, produce delivery, shop keeping, janitorial work, and garment manufacture. In working in the textile industry, he performed the same kind of textile work in different geographical locations, Guatemala City and San Francisco. As a migrating child worker in garment manufacturing, who did the same kind of work in Guatemala City and San Francisco, his labor trajectory might be understood as part of a greater transnational labor flow.

With his work-related travels delivering produce and shop keeping between Guatemala and Mexico not included, the total number of miles he had migrated between the ages of 11 and 15 exceeded 3,300 miles/5,300 km. This child's migration was undertaken almost entirely alone, with critical help from acquaintances he met along the way. The duration and frequency of his journeys reflect not only the hardships that precipitated his departures but also his internal drive and fortitude. This youth's successful migration, through three countries, resulting eventually in a secure career and stable housing, underscore his personal strength, resourcefulness, and resilience.

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## 20 Emotional Geographies and Expressive Work

Also compelling is the geography of return. As psychologist and liberation theologian Martín-Baró has described, the individual never fully escapes events that have been traumatizing, as they leave a residual trace on the psyche to which one always returns (Martín-Baró 1989). Also compelling is fidelity and gratitude to one's loved ones. Although Vicente left a family that was sometimes abusive, he remains compassionate about his mother's financial burden. He sent financial support to his family from the age of 15 and later returned, running the risk of losing his legal residency, for visits to his hometown. Vicente suffered extreme isolation; he was nevertheless able to make strong connections with people he met. Although a quiet and reserved individual, and a newcomer without friends or family in several foreign lands, Vicente managed to create relationships with compassionate individuals who help him to survive: a baker who allowed him to take bread; a mechanic who gave him odd jobs and let him sleep in the car; a group of Mexican soldiers who vouched for him to Immigration police; a priest who led him to his first refugee home



where he was assisted by other volunteers; and a group of Cambodian gang members who fed him and introduced him to drop-in center services and institutional housing.

In Daniel's case, the spiral notebook was a location to which he returned, a repository for his thoughts and intentions, and a creative place where he could work things out. Here, he crafted a code of ethics and signed a binding contract with himself. In the pages of the notebook, he also copied to the last detail the restaurant menu where he works, as if to memorize it by rote. He used the notebook to calculate his wages and deduct his expenses, trying to figure out how he could plan to secure housing, pay for transportation, and save money in his new prep cook position.

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## **21 The Criminalization of Homelessness and the Need for Employment Opportunities and Wages that Can Support the Cost of Housing**

In San Francisco, an improved minimum wage increase was voted into law with inflationary increases effective in 2000. The San Francisco minimum wage rose to \$13 per hour as of July 1, 2016, and will rise to \$15 per hour by 2018 (Bay City News 2016), compared with the current California minimum wage of \$10 per hour, effective January 1, 2016 (State of California, 2016), and the Federal minimum wage of \$7.75 per hour, which has not increased since 2009 (United States, 2016). Nevertheless, wages have not kept pace with housing and other costs. Like the dotcom boom before it, the rise of the tech industry has exacerbated an ongoing housing shortage. While two bedroom apartments (that can be shared) are renting for \$3,800, there are even fewer abandoned buildings that can be used as squats (Said 2014). Public spaces, where many homeless individuals are forced to reside, have been increasingly restricted since 2010 by the passage of so called "Quality of life" laws. For example, one of these laws required police to cite and dislocate homeless people who are sitting or lying down on public sidewalks (San Francisco Police Code 2010; Ballotpedia, 2010), and in November 2016, San Francisco voters approved a ballot measure to allow the City to remove unauthorized tents from public sidewalks upon 24-hour notice, with a requirement to offer temporary shelter to all tent residents and/or transportation to friends or family outside of San Francisco (Ballotpedia, 2016b), while at the same time voting to create and fund a new Homeless Housing and Services Fund (Ballotpedia, 2016a).

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## **22 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the labor trajectories of a number of homeless youth were addressed within a labor continuum which begins to map a landscape of diverse economic activity. In addition to transactional exchange as a way of securing housing in areas with little affordable housing, the chapter referenced a number of income and

resource generating activities including dumpster diving, panhandling, gas-juggling, and hitchhiking. These activities, often minimized under the rubric of survival strategies and criminalized by municipal ordinances, are addressed alongside a wide range of employment. As workers, young people are performing a variety of jobs: working in seasonal agricultural work, day labor construction, domestic work, tertiary sector work in retail and restaurants, piecework, sale of crafts and other merchandise (legal and illegal), busking and other forms of street performance, domestic work, and other types of relational labor, criminalized and legal. The chapter underscores that homeless young people, whether documented or undocumented, constitute a workforce, often working side by side in both the formal and informal economies where they locate employment.

Laws and policies that limit children's rights often reduce their options. As homeless young people must generate needed income and resources, legal restrictions on their right to work reduces their access to formal economies and increases their reliance on informal economies, both legal and illegal. Denying minors the right to consent to their own shelter disrupts the ability of homeless youth to access formal structures of support, including shelter, transitional and long-term residential options. In places where parental consent is a barrier to housing, homeless young people are more reliant on informal relationships to locate a needed place to sleep, and while some of these relationships may be empowering, others may be exploitative, as there are those that will take advantage of vulnerability in others. Even in states where young people have more ability to consent to their own shelter, there is often an insufficient infrastructure to house them. Providing sufficient shelter and longer term housing options for homeless young people, and improving their ability as minors to consent to shelter and housing services on their own without parental consent in all US states, would go a long way toward helping homeless young people stabilize and improve their lives.

Unaccompanied minors in the USA must be given asylum as refugees, complete with the right to education and the right to work. Allowing minor youth, especially older adolescents, to consent to more work hours would enable young people to support themselves more effectively in legal jobs where there is often more accountability with respect to labor conditions.

Fundamentally, it is critical that employment opportunities be developed at wages that can adequately sustain housing. Until then, homeless young people, both documented and undocumented, will continue to be employed in sometimes dangerous and often low-paying informal sector work, economically useful but socially marginalized.

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# Social Reproduction Through Citizenship Education: Performing the Habitus of Pragmatic Compliance

# 17

Roger Baars

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## Abstract

Schools stand for an important institutional space through which youth identity is performed and social order is reproduced (Aitken, *Geographies of young people: the morally contested spaces of identity*. Routledge, London/New York, 2001). The focus of this chapter is interactions between resistance and subjection to official discourses of good citizenship. According to Holt (*Prog Hum Geogr* 32(2):227–246, 2008), conceiving multifaceted identity locations, such as citizenship, as embodied social capital opens up the opportunity to synthesize Butler’s performativity theory with Bourdieu’s habitus concept. In Bourdieu’s conceptualizations habitus represents the internalization of the social order, which in turn reproduces this order. Bourdieu attempts to

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delineate how agents have dispositions that often serve to reproduce particular structures of common sense which produce and are produced by the relatively powerful in society. Butler (*Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of "sex."* Routledge, New York, 1993) contends that subjects cannot pre-exist their performance, and the performed reproduction does not necessarily result in an exact copy of the original. In contrast to Bourdieu, she insists that repetitions of performances serve not always to reproduce social order but have the power to transform them. Identity performances, however, are often done without consciously realizing the processes. It is suggested in this chapter that neither approach can satisfactorily explain why social norms of good citizenship, which are seemingly internalized, relatively uncritically, by youths in Singapore, can also be expressions of resistance that cover deep resentments. The concept of pragmatic compliance as performed subjection to social norms is brought forward as both partially resisted and partly internalized *effects* of official discourses mobilized through formal education.

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**Keywords**

Habitus • Performativity • Bourdieu • Butler • Power • Agency • Education • Resistance • Compliance • Citizenship

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## 1 Introduction

In the context of globalization, national governments have been under considerable pressure to maintain their influence on individuals' identification with national identity and good citizenship and have recognized the potential impact of citizenship education on youths' forms of belonging. This link between social reproduction and formal education has been increasingly recognized within current scholarship (e.g., Gagen 2015; Moser 2015; Webb and Radcliffe 2015). The focus of this chapter is the interactions between resistance and subjection to official discourses of good citizenship to suggest that, rather than constructing a false dichotomy of subjection and resistance, both processes take place at the same time. It is argued that the good citizen subject is performed rather than always internalized by youth. Common displays of good citizenship resemble pragmatic compliances with social norms and expectations rather than necessarily demonstrating individuals' submission to discourse. Young peoples' expressions of citizenship fundamentally remain contained within adult-defined and adult-regulated notions of acceptable action.

The chapter is divided into five key sections. In the following section, the (aspired) effects of citizenship education on processes of social reproduction are outlined, before then some accounts of power play in education are reviewed. The subsequent section engages with critical debates in the social sciences to synthesize Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus and Butler's performativity theory. This is followed by a critical discussion of the concept resistance and consent within the

particular setting of formal education, before, more specifically, the empirical example of national education in Singapore is deployed to illustrate how national identities are constituted and performed with particular attention given to everyday practices and processes of internalizing and resisting the good citizen ideal communicated in citizenship education. Finally, a brief conclusion is offered.

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## 2 Citizenship Education

Schools have been recognized as important spaces of citizenship education to foster an active and engaged citizenry and to maintain social order (cf. Annette 2009; Brooks and Holford 2009; O'Toole 2003). Education represents a powerful tool of social reproduction to instill particular perspectives of citizenship into youths. Its main purpose is arguably to (re)create an appropriate citizenry that has to some extent internalized certain desired values and behaviors to stabilize a current political status (Apple 2003). Citizenship education encompasses not only efforts to create a literate and well-trained population but also involves the constitution of a particular kind of subject: the national citizen. Spaces of citizenship education are seen today as arenas of highly politicized and complex processes that constitute the state subject of a good citizen. Cultivating good citizens is a fundamental goal and basic educational requirement of the state. National governments use schools and the curriculum to convey ideal images of good citizenship to students.

Citizenship education infused into social studies' and other subjects' syllabi communicates both explicit and implicit common expectations, restrictions, and norms to youths and enunciates the ideal of the good citizen. Pupils' societal views and their different social subject positions are, at least partly, constituted by these societal messages. The underlying assumption that formal education contributes to the development of good citizenship is crucial to the introduction of citizenship objectives into school curricula (Geboers et al. 2013). Socialization effects of schools can lead to pupils' differentiated educational experiences and, as a consequence, impact on their development as citizens. However, there are controversies about how much the state can and should socialize citizens, and how much these socialization processes allow for acts of counter-socialization. The interplay of acts of resistance and compliance to official discourses of good citizenship, thus, can offer deeper insights into socialization processes in education. From a liberal point of view, some contend that citizens should critically and also rationally consider their position toward the state rather than acting loyal by default or as a result of socialization processes. Schools equip youths with different forms of social capital and influence their access to capabilities and official knowledge (Apple 2000). Knowledge, however, is never apolitical or exclusive of affective and embodied influences. It is saturated with ideology and political views of a current social order, which regularly results in the ingestion of specific bodies of knowledge, values, and norms, by all educated citizens (Apple 2004). It follows further that individuals are not autonomous beings that can freely resist and challenge the social reproduction

of values and norms in society, but are citizen *subjects* constructed by their daily experiences.

## 2.1 Subjectivity and Indoctrination

Scholars in the area of education frequently deploy poststructural theories when investigating issues of subjectivity and subject positioning. Poststructuralism, however, involves a broad variety of different perspectives and approaches. Nevertheless, poststructuralists are commonly Foucauldian, when “tracing how discourses shift, and how, different kinds of subjecthood become possible – or impossible” (Davies 2006, p. 425). Arguably, the most important concept within poststructuralist theory is subjectivity. Subjectivity is understood as both “an object of knowledge and as a subject that knows” (Foucault 1971, p. 323). The constitution of particular citizen subjects is a fundamental aspect of education. In schools and through schooling, pupils learn consciously and unconsciously about the sanctioned modes of subjectivity and the lessons of self-control and external control of possible subject positions (Sim and Print 2009). Therefore, in positioning themselves and others, and being positioned by others, students (re)produce certain limitations to subjectivity.

Schools as discursive sites are spaces of pupils’ becoming (of subjects) by taking up individual subject positions. The processes of subject formation and identity construction cannot be considered politically neutral since each way of being and becoming is intersubjectively constituted and oriented in one or another way. The conceptualization of pupils “choosing” from various subject positions offers a good understanding of the complex and diverse social interactions in society. Compared to traditional rather fixed concepts of the self, subject positioning emphasizes multiple ways in which structures can affect students’ behaviors by stressing the (limited) positions available to them within a particular context.

One debated issue in the geographies of education and beyond is the criticism of indoctrination and the imposition of socialization (Sears and Hughes 2006). Consequently, some scholars perceive citizenship education to be more akin to indoctrination than education (Sears and Hughes 2006). Arthur (2003) defines indoctrination as “to teach something that is true or universally accepted regardless of evidence to the contrary or in the absence of evidence at all” (p. 37). The uncritical acceptance of official knowledge and the omission of evidence contradicting these ideas are both encompassed by this definition. Sears and Hughes (2006) argue citizenship education is often more focused on creating true believers rather than critical individuals. To them, discourses of citizenship education often oversimplify problematic situations and conceal alternative solutions to current issues. In a more moderate way, it could be argued that citizenship education today revolves around both practices of education and indoctrination. In modern times, most citizenship education discourses, policies, and programs do not match

the dominant attributes of either indoctrination or education, but can be seen as hybrids at some point along a continuum.

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### 3 Institutional Power Relations

When analyzing processes of subjection and resistance to official discourses of good citizenship communicated in educational institutions, notions of power play come to mind. Studies in organizational geography have focused on the complex correlations of power that take place in organizations (Faulconbridge and Hall 2009). Scholars have investigated such power play in the spatial context of schools as a site constitutive of, and constituted by, social relations of power. Such power plays are complex and the diffusion of power is difficult to define (Allen 2003). Power is not an attribute allocated to specific institutions but something that permeates organizational spaces in temporally and spatially fluctuating configurations (Mathews 2011). Power, in its complex nature, is not simply an all-embracing dominant force that helps to oppress society (Allen 2003), but a relational effect of multilayered and multifaceted social interactions (Holt 2008). Power is constantly in conflict with resistance, which produces multifaceted entanglements of power. Allen (2003) observes “some people and some groups have more power than others, not by accident or by a series of fortunate events, but by virtue of the structure of relations of which they are part” (p. 26). Such dominant power and the discourses that develop in reaction to it can have profound effects. Some power relations in social interactions can be potentially dominating and suppressive, but always allow for resistance (Hodgson 2005). Butler (1997b) offers a helpful account of power in the light of her performativity theory: “Power acts on the subject in at least two ways: first, as what makes the subject possible, the condition of its possibility and its formative occasion, and second, as what is taken up and reiterated in the subject’s ‘own’ acting” (p. 14). Consequently, power is about creating subject positions that are both highly regulated and at the same time encouraged to make their own self-dependent decisions.

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### 4 Performativity Concepts

It has been argued in the introduction of this chapter that good citizenship is not always internalized but can be expressed as reworking disguised as pragmatic compliance: the *performed* subjection to discourse. Such issues of performance and performativity can be theorized in very different ways. The critical discussions of performativity depend on particular, often contrasting, understandings of agency, subjectivity, and power, each of which having different critical effects on the conceptualizations of performativity and performances (Gregson and Rose 2000). Prior to the mid-1990s, there was relatively little interest among human



geographers in the performativity of spatial practices. Over the past decades, however, the level of geographical attention paid to theories of performativity has increased significantly (Sullivan 2012).

One of the first scholars suggesting a connection between social life and the concept of performance was Erving Goffman (1963). Performances, he argued, are critical for the study of societal interactions and social reproduction. For him, interaction encompasses two elements: the performance of the individual and the interpretation by the audience. His concept of interaction, thus, is based on a dynamic, conscious, and performing individual. More recently, several scholars in queer studies, particularly Judith Butler (1993), deployed a linguistic definition of performance and performativity. Important in Butler's conceptualizations is the distinction between performativity and performance. It is performativity as a discursive practice that establishes ontological effects and challenges the notion of the pre-existing subject, but, at the same time, does not reject the existence of the subject or its agency *per se* (Gregson and Rose 2000). Performance, on the other hand, assumes such an existing subject and takes place within the framework only made possible through practices of performativity (Carlson 2004) without necessarily being performative (e.g., theatrical performances). Performances are acts executed by individuals, while performativity stresses the citational practices that repeat and/or undermine discourses and which allow and limit the performances of the subject. Consequently, the performance of the good citizen could also have a performative character. However, Butler (1993) insists that "performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition of the subject" (p. 95).

Butler (1993) contends that identities cannot pre-exist their performance, and the performed reproduction does not necessarily result in an exact copy of the original (Gregson and Rose 2000). Repetitions of performances serve not to reproduce powerful discourses or social orders but have also the power to transform them (Butler 1993). Feminist theorists drawing upon Butler's ideas have emphasized subjects are subconsciously inculcated with norms of performed correct identities. Hence, identity performances are often done without consciously realizing these processes (Nash 2000). "Performative acts are forms of authoritative speech; most performatives, for instance, are statements that, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise a binding power" (Butler 1993, p. 225). The concept of performativity rejects the idea that discourses present an omnipotent and deterministic force, which acts to govern subjects and eliminates all accounts of human agency. It is social constructivism that creates a human agent willfully engaging in construction without any constraint (Butler 1993). Political stakeholders, then, could be considered as being responsible for consciously and deliberately constructing reality. This, however, would suggest that these agents deliberately exercise control over cultural, historic, and identity matters and are situated outside of the domain of reality constitution. But agents are never fully sovereign or independent, and the subject positions that agents (subconsciously) assume are always contextualized within normative definitions of personhood (Holt 2007).

## 4.1 Discursive Agency

Butler (1993) claims that the reiteration and sedimentation of norms lead to the construction of identities. Hence, performative utterances are repetitions of preceding performances, which are institutionalized through reiteration and become sedimented over time. Reiterative practices, according to Hodgson (2005), form linkages between the performative, organizations, and broader social structures. Butler (1993) argues all subject positionings are always in becoming and partial. She insists that sedimented norms of persistent/dominant discourses always hold the possibility that processes of social reproduction are disrupted or changed. Even though this chapter generally concurs with Butler, the concept of performativity cannot sufficiently explain the persistence of dominant discourses in society. Butler (1997a) proclaims that individuals can contest predominant processes of subject constitution through the self-conscious utilization of discursive practices. This statement has substantial implications for the education sector. Davies (2006) claims that in liberal societies both teachers and pupils are commonly seen as independent subjects, however, with changing degrees of autonomy to decide what kind of person to be(come). Butler's performative approach to subjectivation illustrates that labeling students as this or that only appears to describe a pre-existing subject, but that it is this naming or defining of individuals which constitutes the subject as if it was already a student. This has significant impacts on how processes of rejection and subjection can influence processes of social reproduction.

Although the individual might fight and struggle with the dominating power of subjectivation, its own existence is constituted by it (Butler 1997b). No individual can exist without these acts of self-formation or can construct her/his conditions of possibility isolated from such acts (Butler 1993). Every act of subject becoming, however, reiterates and sediments the conditions that make subjects possible. At the same time, subjects are not determined by these discursive practices but have agency. Following Butler (1995a), individuals can reflectively and actively analyze their conditions of possibility. This reflexivity allows them to disrupt and escape the powers that operate on them and which they enact. However, even if pupils possess such reflexive consciousness, any attempt to contest subordination "will necessarily presuppose and reinvolve it" (Butler 1997b, p. 12). The ability to constitute the subject through designation is termed discursive agency (Butler 1997a). Agency is conceptualized as a result of being constituted by and in discourse. Although Butler maintains the rational acting subject in her concept of agency and intent, she rejects an autonomous subject pre-existing its citation. The subject, however, can still utilize discourses performatively that are potentially formative, although discursive effects eventually surmount such will and intent. Consequently, processes of discursive performativity are both constituted by the subject and constituting it. This means "'agency' is to be found in the resignification opened by discourse" (Butler 1995b, p. 135).

Foucault (1997) brings to mind, however, that practices of self-constitution "are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself. They are models

that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, his social group” (p. 291). Davies (2006) concludes processes of subject formation are, thus, not dependent on internal powers of the subject, but on external power relations. In other words, the individual is “not imagined to be an object whose recognition is induced by the mechanisms of truth, power and the self, but rather that the mechanisms of truth, power and the self actually bring about the creation of the subject” (Rasmussen and Harwood 2003, p. 26). This essential dependency on discourses that initiates and sustains subjects’ agency is what constitutes subjection (Butler 1997b). Moreover, a subject with agency ignores or denies her/his dependent position out of necessity and not out of an underdeveloped ability for self-reflection. To achieve one’s accomplishment as a recognizable and existing subject, it is crucial to develop a certain degree of perceived self-autonomy (Davies 2006). Butler (1997b) claims further “to master a set of skills is not simply to accept a set of skills but to reproduce them in and as one’s own activity. This is not simply to act according to a set of rules but to embody rules in the course of action and to reproduce those rules in embodied rituals of action” (p. 119). Hence reiterating a particular terminology and repeating rituals of actions are fundamentally important for reproduction of social norms and the internalization of citizen identities (Hodgson 2005).

In her inspiring paper, Holt (2008) suggests that conceiving multifaceted identity locations, such as race or citizenship, as embodied social capital opens up the opportunity to synthesize Butler’s performativity theory with Bourdieu’s habitus concept. According to Bourdieu (1991), embodied social capital emphasizes how the socio-spatial context within which people live their life, as well as their social relationships and networks affects their becoming of an embodied individual (Holt 2008). The main implication of Bourdieu’s work is the significance and value assigned to different social relations. Individuals being well connected to multiple social networks can utilize this social capital to maintain their advantageous position in society. Youth’s social networks in the field of education, thus, can both support and obstruct their acquirement of institutionalized cultural capital. The engagement between Bourdieu’s theories of habitus and Butler’s performativity approach, thus, can provide a wider understanding of how and why the nonrepresentational frequently (re)constitutes relatively stable socio-spatial and material differences through the embodiment of social identities (Holt 2008).

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## 5 Concept of Habitus

The concept of habitus is employed in a wide range of disciplines, for example, in geographies of education (Waters 2006). Habitus theory aims to elucidate how everyday practices constitute and sustain the persistence of socioeconomic disparities (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979). It is the unconscious background of social relations that are shaped by a multitude of internalized dispositions (Reay 2004). In contrast to Butler’s performativity concept, habitus operates generally at a subconscious level with habitus transformations predominantly occurring through

unconscious reactions to a specific field (Bourdieu 1991). Both objective and subjective perspectives on reality are harmonized in habitus theory; hence, it “enables an intelligible and necessary relationship to be established between practices and a situation, the meaning of which is produced by the habitus through categories of perception and appreciation that are themselves produced by an observable social condition” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 101). According to Bourdieu, the daily subconscious routines of constituting distinct identities are directly connected to the processes of habitus formation.

Habitus places weight on past experiences through unconscious socialization effects of different social groups, to make individuals aspire to possibilities that they think are feasible and seem within reach (Bourdieu 1990a). It is the multitude of internalized dispositions that are constituted and memorized while exerting power to (re)shape everyday behaviors. The habitus is not fixed but responsive to the ongoing dialogue individuals have with their self and others. Strongly related to habitus is the concept of fields. A field constitutes the operational structure of habitus. Fields are designated spaces of contestation over, for example, knowledge or status, while they also characterize the particular distributional organization of these different capitals. Consequently, fields are the structured spaces of capital formation. Several different fields can be distinguished, for example, the field of religion, culture, or education. Habitus reveals itself in everyday practices and actions, in the way how individuals position themselves within particular fields. Hence, actions and interactions cannot be separated from these structures (Bourdieu 1990b). Consequently, Bourdieu sees cognitive structures primarily as internalized and embodied social structures. According to Bourdieu (1984), people acquire knowledge without concepts. Through conditions that differentiate, through exclusions and inclusions, hierarchies and classifications are inscribed in cultural practices, and in institutions such as families and education systems, in the interaction of everyday life, social divisions are inscribed in people’s minds. One can attribute to oneself choices that have actually been predefined by one’s social conditions.

Under close scrutiny, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and Butler’s theorizations of performativity reveal multiple similarities (McNay 2004). Austin’s (1962) speech act theory influences both theories significantly. He distinguishes utterances that seem to create what they declare – speech acts with almost “magical power” (Lovell 2003) – and those whose effects are mediated. Similarly, Bourdieu (1990a) refers to speech acts saturated with some seemingly intrinsic power as “social magic.” However, Bourdieu (1991) contends that it is the social institution and the status of the individual within this organization which influence the effectiveness of speech acts and not the words themselves. Butler (1999) is critical toward such an approach, although she recognizes certain similarities between Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and her theorization of performativity. Habitus is not a deterministic but generative concept that allows for subject’s agency while recognizing the impact of organizational norms on everyday practices, the “embodied rituals of everydayness by which a given culture produces and sustains belief in its own ‘obviousness’” (Butler 1999, p. 114). The individual, hence, internalizes social

norms through habitus. Butler (1993) stresses the habitual and mostly nonreflexive character of everyday practices of citation, which (re)produce social norms. Bourdieu (1990a), however, argues the deeper logic of those (citational) practices exceed the scope of a reflexive consciousness. Butler (1997a) claims that the logic of iterability, which allows for the performative transformation or subversion of social norms, can rework even deep-rooted institutionalized norms, because both those norms and organizations depend for their reproduction on performative acts of (re)iteration.

Similarly to performativity theory, the concept of habitus challenges prevalent dichotomies of structure/agency and objectivity/subjectivity, unconscious and deliberate acts, or society/individual oppositions, by revealing that both conscious and unconscious acts of embodiment constitute socially situated practices of the everyday. Even though agency is crucial to theorizations of habitus, many studies drawing on Bourdieu's work misjudge the power of individual agency to transform common societal structures (Nash 2000). Bourdieu (1991) denies individuals the ability to modify the structures of the field, thereby eventually re-inscribing the agency/structure dualism he initially intended to avoid. In contrast, Butler (1999) conceptualizes agency as subjective, which offers individuals the potential for innovation and resistance. The concept of habitus, however, prevents this opportunity (Butler 1999). In the everyday, the distinctive habitus of the subject who is formed by daily practices within the field is shaped by the field itself. Hence, Butler's and Bourdieu's different concepts of agency are where their commonalities seem to end. Butler (1999) argues that Bourdieu (1991) replaces the power of utterances with the power of social organizations. In her eyes, Bourdieu overvalues the speaker's institutional position and only allows certain individuals to speak with authority and effectiveness. Hence, only those individuals who are qualified to speak authoritatively in a specific institutional field can "do things with words." However, the truth is to be found in between these two perspectives. Rather than creating a structural field (Bourdieu 1991), discourses work together to produce *structural* effects, which then operate as *structuring* effects (Dunn 2010). In other words, the educational field itself does not generate the habitus but the structuring effects of the field frame or limit an otherwise free and limitless formation of and resistance to one's subject positions as good citizens.

Hence, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field do not explain completely why individual subjects or collectives accept their "location within particular fields and embody capitals as habitus" (Holt et al. 2013, p. 3). Butler's concepts of subjugation and appreciation, in contrast, demonstrate the inculcation of habitus into the individual or the collective more clearly, although concerns have been raised about her exaggerated theorization of agency (McNay 2004). Surprisingly, Butler's work on subjection has been rather underexplored in human geography, despite her strong influence on the discipline. It can be argued, though, that subjects' emotional desire for recognition in, for example, formal education helps to explain why students accept and internalize certain habitus in emotionally charged environments (Butler 1997b).

## 5.1 Agency Revisited

Related to the concepts of habitus and performativity, concerns have arisen over how (and whether) agency can be adequately conceptualized (Gregson and Rose 2000). Butler (1990) suggests that individuals are subjects constituted within and through power and are capable agents exercising and transforming power. Various gradations of subjects as a self-conscious, reflexive (albeit not fully conscious) agents and/or a site of power relations are suggested (Butler 1990). Butler insists that the subject can exceed, if not fully escape, the power-knowledge nexus of its origin (Butler 1997b). She argues that individuals do not become positioned by a dominating source of power imposed upon reluctant beings. Rather, individuals become acting agents through subjectification, as they are recognized and recognize themselves (Holt 2007). Butler suggests that agency is not a set of situated actions but rather a characteristic of language.

Agency conceptualized by Bourdieu (1991) results in prevailing relationships of society that are frequently replicated through habitus. Cultural and social relations, however, are not always consciously performed but predominantly just lived (Cresswell 1996). Hence, habitus is an important mechanism to replicate and sustain social orders (of inequity) and enriches the analysis of processes of social reproduction (Cresswell 2002). Nevertheless, Bourdieu's theory of habitus is not without its limitations. Arguably, the autonomous agent is underdeveloped if not rejected in Bourdieu's work (McNay 2004). According to Lovell (2003), it can be reasoned that both Butler's concept of performativity and Bourdieu's habitus theorization recognize agency as not inevitably associated with resistance.

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## 6 Resistances and Consent

The constitution of a subject is a set of ongoing and recursive processes of sedimentation (Hodgson 2005). According to Butler (1990), subjectivity is the result of recurring practices of the subject. Crucially, these performative processes take place in a field of social power, which impacts on subjects' practices and their agency: a constitutive constraint (Butler 1997b). Butler's theorizations propose a convincing subjectivity conception not predetermined, but always already transformed by power involved in its construction. Butler (1997b) states "social categories signify subordination and existence at once. In other words, within subjection the price of existence is subordination" (p. 20). Hence, the subject comes into being by the reiteration of particular performances that, at the same time, constrain its conduct. Moreover, Butler evades the accusation of determinism implied in this statement and clarifies that "social norms are reproduced but may be reproduced awry, or with a difference" (Lovell 2003, p. 2).

At least two potential avenues for such transformation are suggested. First, imperfect reiterations (repetitions) can lead to slippages and a change in how

identities are performed (Gregson and Rose 2000). The moment of repetition is always uncertain, and exactly how identities will become is not predetermined, despite the apparent regularity of how identity positionings are reproduced (Rose 2002). Second, Butler's later work implies that thinking, feeling, and embodied agents, although they are not fully conscious, rational, reflexive, or autonomous, can consciously seek to actively transform subject positions they adopt providing scope for intersubjective recognition, identification, and empathy. The circular and repetitive character of performativity offers a perspective on alignment as a pragmatic but useful form of resistance. In other words, compliance can be seen as one form of subversion (Hodgson 2005), where good citizenship is not always internalized but is expressed as reworking disguised as pragmatic compliance: the *performed* subjection to discourse.

According to Butler (1995a), the contradictions inherent in the parallel acts of mastery and submission are at the heart of becoming a subject. She (Butler 1997b) claims "the more a practice is mastered, the more fully subjection is achieved. Submission and mastery take place simultaneously, and this paradoxical simultaneity constitutes the ambivalence of subjection" (p. 116). The achievement of mastery is, according to Allen (2008), more than just the voluntary submission. Subject positions might be assumed for which the individual might have only little knowledge. The success in achieving mastery encompasses not only socially accepted norms of how the subject should become a good citizen but also the creative ability to constitute herself/himself out of the unknown (Davies 2006). Not everyone has access to mastery, nor is it always available. Pupils, for example, are exposed to the permanent danger of being deemed incompetent in the educational field (Davies et al. 2001). The accomplishment of mastery, hence, is a continuous battle to be accepted and acknowledged by others. Bourdieu (2010) suggests that even those disadvantaged by the system may recognize their legitimacy because the only chance of neutralizing the systems' most negative effects on themselves is "to submit to them in order to make use of them" (Bourdieu 2010, p. 165). This further supports the idea of pragmatic compliances as *performed* subjection to discourse. However, the absence of recognition is not the only situation where a subject is excluded from mastery (Allen 2008); pre-existing categories of subjectification could also result in exclusion (Davies 2006). It is the iterative character of performances that undermines total submission and complete identity internalization (Butler 1995a).

Neither pristine acts of submission nor clear acts of resistance effectively exist. Lovell (2003) acknowledges that evidence of compliance can be found in most oppositional acts just as elements of resistance in numerous acts of habitual subjection. The demonstration of compliance to norms, thus, can conceal deep resentments. Butler (1997a) claims that the impression of submissive speech acts can be disrupted by the body. Bourdieu (1991) states, equally convincing, that subjugated beings agree to more than they know as a result of the persuasive language of habitus. The inconsistency of opposition is reflected in the ambiguity of subjection. The dominated subject may demonstrate submission without fully internalizing it (Lovell 2003). The discrepancy, then, between the consciously



articulated and the bodily expressed is elucidated by both the scholarship of habitus and performativity. The two different approaches, however, analyze these ambivalences from entirely contrary perspectives.

Nevertheless, both theorizations have their weaknesses. Bourdieu's theorization fails to recognize that both the bodily and the habitual are equivocal and may cover deep resentments. At the same time, Butler (1997a) seems to over-interpret the fissure between verbal utterances and the bodily expressed. "What is bodily in speech" (Butler 1997a, p. 142) is only interpreted in one way as acts of resistance. This one-sided perspective ignores the ambivalence of speech acts also inherent in the body (Lovell 2003). Sennett (1980) illustrates that there exists an interdependent relationship between dependence and resistance. It is through acts of resistance that dominating authorities and dominated subjects are bound together (Ball and Olmedo 2013). Porfilio and Carr (2010) argue on a similar account that an idealized purity of resistance can be dismantled by the fact that power plays always impact on the subject constitution as well as the production of agency. Fleming and Sewell (2002, p. 865) have claimed that the concept of a "pristine and romantic space of 'authentic resistance' untainted by conformity and consent" is profoundly deceptive. Parallel acts of domination and potential subjection are the inevitable consequence of power, which affects the constitution of the subject (Hodgson 2005).

Similarly, Valentine and Skelton (2003) problematize resistance as a concept and emphasize the "diverse range of practices, degrees of intentionality, and reflexivity" (p. 314) that could be differentiated in a more effective way. There is the danger of romanticizing resistance and viewing any incidents as deliberate acts of opposition (Cresswell 1996). Ettliger (2011) clarifies that real acts of resistance are relatively scarce despite the fact that a power concept as diffuse offers a multitude of possibilities for resistance. When drawing on Foucault (2007), resistance regarding the efforts to challenge existing mentalities requires individuals' reflexivity. He claims further that developing a consciousness for resistance encourages reflexivity, which is necessary for self-transformation and the constitution of a (new) subjectivity. From this point of view, resistance requires prior knowledge of prevalent power plays at work to challenge and transform the undesired situation constituted and governed by the state. An analytics of reflexivity necessitates individuals' understanding of the external gaze and mechanisms of power by which their everyday practices are governed. In doing so, they are able to critically evaluate these processes of governance to determine whether to continue performing practices of social reproduction and societal conformity or to resist. Targets of resistance, thus, are everyday mind-sets of the social (re)production of norms and discourses rather than institutions (schools) or individuals (students).

## 6.1 Resistance in Education

Theories of performativity emphasize that the becoming of identities is socio-spatially specific and contextual, rather than pre-given and predetermined



(Holt 2008). Context matters to the performative process. Depending on the context, the discourse of good citizenship is interpreted, understood, and internalized in multiple ways and with different intentions and consequences (Westheimer and Kahne 2004). Contexts can be seen as the central component of identity practices beyond a mere condition of identity and meaning. Although the reiteration of identities produces the appearance of a fixed and natural subject position, the norms that subjects (at least partially) reiterate are socio-spatially shifting and fragile (Butler 1997a). Social circumstances can act to replicate or transform dispositions (Reay 2004), changing the way the youth come to view their potential positionings (Pimlott-Wilson 2011). Consequently, context and space are crucial to differential performances of identities (Holt 2007). Practices of youth, thus, are situated in social processes of normativity and convention. Although pupils are themselves the practitioners of a good citizen subject, they do not accomplish this in a social vacuum. Hence, the implementation of identities is always spatially biased. Young people are spatially restricted; they must attend school to satisfy the state and almost always their parents or guardians. They have limited power to challenge adults' restrictions and requirements that demand their bodily placement in school. Thus, schools stand for an especially important institutional space through which youth identity is performed (Aitken 2001). At the same time, pupils do not occupy a distinct, bounded, sociocultural realm (Holt 2007). They learn, (re)produce, accept, and transform norms and expectations through sociocultural exchange with others, both youths and adults. Educational institutions, therefore, are only *one* site of learning that influence, without determining, pupils' performances of citizenship.

According to Massey (2005), it is possible to view schools as specific moments within broader socio-spatial relations, wherein institutional powers are variously interpreted by adults and students as agents, within the specific space of schooling. Within these educational settings, certain values and dispositions, acquired through processes of socialization, continue to be endowed with greater value than others (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2012). Those who possess the appropriate values and dispositions, thus, are more able to navigate their way through the field of education (Bourdieu 1984). A helpful approach to conceptualize resistance in such an educational context is brought forward by Mathews (2011), who suggests the hegemonic discourse of good citizenship is maintained through practices of seduction and inducement. Regarding the former, it is essential to understand subjects as having choice. A fundamental aspect of seduction, then, is the possibility of the individual to decide against a certain action (Allen 2003). The *desired* choices possible to make are limited, however, by the educational system, as it demands compliance with the syllabus to obtain recognition in the form of good marks. Butler (2004) confirms that "desire is always a desire for recognition and that it is only through the experience of recognition that any of us becomes constituted as socially viable beings" (p. 2). Thus, perceiving emotions as vital elements of one's existence provides a better understanding of how subjects – not always consciously – adopt certain subject positions. The inculcation of norms and values through mechanisms of emotional interdependencies illustrates the significance of the

geographies of emotions regarding the multiple challenges of culturally, socially, and politically (re)constituted identities in modern times.

The other educational tactic suggested by Mathews (2011), inducement, becomes implemented with a notion of power, regularly utilizing the plausible necessity to obtain good grades in order to strive in and contribute toward society. Students are being convinced that particular choices are more beneficial than others, which predominantly prompts them to follow the normative line of social reproduction. Mathews (2011) extends the two tactics of seduction and inducement by the instrument of coercion. She argues that the instrument of imposing negative sanctions is utilized where pupils continue to challenge the educational common sense. These negative sanctions can be either explicitly communicated (the risk of failing class) or implicitly infused into the syllabus. All these tactics ultimately result in an internalized self-disciplining among pupils. Skelton (2000) offers one potential pathway of resistance in an educational setting and states that “there are ways in which dominant representations can be resisted, not necessarily by those most marginalized, but by intercedents” (p. 200). Hence, she attributes some (re) constitutive power to the teachers and not to the marginalized: the students. While liberal Western education systems and curricula allocate certain freedom to teachers who attempt to transform their teaching practices, other educational contexts do not allow for these acts of resistance. Here, teachers are regularly prompted to demonstrate their system conformity while risking to be alienated when expressing critique. Some teachers, however, are still undermining official syllabi on an everyday basis and feel committed to liberal teaching practices. Nevertheless, assuming that pupils do possess critical reflexivity toward their own actions and are also aware of the normative saturation of formal education, their *pragmatic compliance* with prescribed behaviors could be seen as satisfying as resistance itself (Ettlinger 2011).

## 6.2 Citizenship Education in Singapore

This section presents some empirical findings of a recent doctoral research project (Baars 2015) to contextualize the foregoing theoretical debates of citizenship and citizenship education and elaborates on how these themes have played out in Singapore. To understand the internalization and contestation of official discourses that are mobilized through citizenship education in the city-state, the study investigated appearances of subjection and resistance to good citizenship discourses through discourse analysis of Social Studies textbooks and semi-structured interviews. The findings demonstrate that Social Studies, the main tool of citizenship education, not only echoes norms and expectations of Singapore’s society but can also be seen as an instrument for governing citizen subjects by aiming to enact specific subjectivities of good citizenship among them. While Social Studies can seek the continuity of society’s status quo, the research did not confirm the

assumption that the nation's official views on values and behavior were uncritically internalized by the youth. Instead, findings illustrated that the dissemination of official knowledge through education does not always inculcate the status quo of society onto the next generation.

The results of this research suggest a more complex and multifaceted interplay between processes of subjection and resistance to discourses of good citizenship. While some aspects of good citizenship were reproduced by youths according to the ideals articulated in the textbooks, other aspects of the same discourse were rejected and in some cases alternative perspectives enacted. This acknowledges Butler's concept of performativity which successfully theorizes both processes of reiteration and transformation of discourses. The findings suggest further that the expressed compliance with some aspects of a discourse was not completely internalized but rather performed to create the impression of an uncritical subjection to the good citizen ideal, thereby supporting the argument made in this chapter that neither approach (performativity or habitus) is sufficient to satisfactorily explain why official discourses of good citizenship are seemingly internalized relatively uncritically by youths in Singapore. Bourdieu's theorization fails to recognize that both the bodily and the habitual are equivocal and may cover deep resentments. At the same time, Butler seems to over-interpret the fissure between verbal utterances and the bodily expressed. The demonstration of compliance to norms, thus, can conceal deep resentments. The research confirms a notion of pragmatic compliance as partially resisted and partially internalized *effects* of discourses mobilized through education out of pragmatic reasons and concurs with Butler's concept of discursive effects of the performative. These effects of official discourses on youth's perceptions and identifications in everyday life were demonstrated, for example, by students' pragmatic reasoning to maintain their Singaporean citizenship, and can be exhibited further by the following examples of parallel acts of internalization and rejection.

### **6.2.1 Meritocracy**

The research revealed the predominant perspective on the concept of meritocracy was generally positive among participants. Notwithstanding inequalities in society based on power and status, meritocracy was regarded to benefit particularly the lower-income groups in the city-state. This inculcation of *true* statements regarding equal economic benefits in a just society communicated in the textbooks could be an example of the socializing effects of Social Studies. This could support both Bourdieu's concept of habitus as unconscious socialization effect and Butler's theory of successful reiteration. The research evidence, therefore, could suggest the discourse of meritocracy has affected youths, whose statements were almost identical to those made in Social Studies textbooks regarding rewards for hard work and the fairness of the meritocratic system in Singapore. Through the internalization of these truths, individuals adopt particular subject positions. At the same time, Singapore's education system was perceived by respondents as an example where societal fairness based on meritocratic principles seems to be compromised. Socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds were understood to impact significantly on

youth's educational opportunities and achievements. Racial inequality regarding the participation of ethnic minorities in education and the void between rich and poor deeply embedded in Singapore's society were seen by interviewees as leading to disadvantage and inequality for certain groups in society. Such statements are somewhat contradictory to the discourse of Singapore's meritocratic mantra and suggest that the discourse of meritocracy may not be internalized as assumed but rather *performed* to create the impression of conformity. This confirms the argument that evidence of compliance can be found in most oppositional acts just as elements of resistance in numerous acts of habitual subjection.

### 6.2.2 Racial Harmony

Some interviewees contested the official discourse of racial harmony. These youth reflexively analyzed the official discourse which resulted in its (unconscious) transformation. Rather than internalizing the discourse of racial *harmony*, respondents emphasized racial *tolerance* instead as being prevalent among different ethnic groups in the city-state, thereby supporting a performative reading of their actions. At the same time, the project also revealed that Singapore was perceived by most participants as being a just and harmonious place to live, with everyone treated the same regardless of race or religion. It was demonstrated by several students that textbook-conforming statements which draw on the notion of ethnic equality were highly instructive in terms of performing the good Singaporean identity. Although this suggests the internalization of the racial harmony discourse, findings evinced respondents' conformity can be seen to be performed in this context to conceal deep resentments expressed more openly by other participants.

### 6.2.3 Asian Values in Society

The concept of Asian values propagated by Singapore's government was shown – at least on the surface – to influence interviewees' perceptions of acceptable norms and behavior in society. At the same time, the strong focus on self-responsibility and self-interest contradicts such communitarian drift in society. The research showed that the shift in responsibilities from society to the individual reflects the ideology of neoliberalism with its focus on individual competition and self-responsibility rather than communitarian values. This neoliberal sense of self-responsibility appears deeply inculcated into Singapore's value system and reflects some of the contradictions inherent in Social Studies textbooks where citizenship is conceptualized as individual duties and responsibilities to the state, rather than citizenship as a form of civil society. The findings of the research suggest the coexistence of subjection and resistance to the official discourse of community before self within Singapore's value system. These contradictions, inherent in the parallel acts of resistance and submission, can be seen to be at the heart of becoming a subject. Participants articulated Asian values as the officially expected norms of behavior they should and need to comply with, thereby creating the impression of discourse internalization: the *performance* of good citizenship. At the same time, they emphasized the individualistic characteristics and focus on a market economy

of good citizenship, which reveals the inherent contradictions of the discourse of community before self.

#### **6.2.4 Civic Engagement**

The findings suggest that the cultivation of critical thinking skills in young people is not actively pursued by the government and exposes the contradiction between what is articulated in Social Studies textbooks as a desired citizen and what is experienced by youths in everyday life. The dominant view on critical thinking among participants was that the current system does not encourage or allow for it. Moreover, the research showed that the current approach to citizenship education conceals the actual neoliberal ideal of a good citizen infused into the Social Studies subject, one that stresses the patriotic duty of citizens to follow the normative line rather than criticizing it, thereby confirming the concept of citizenship as a set of rights, duties, and identities linking citizens to the nation-state. Consequently, young people are conceptualized as adults in becoming, which illustrates a narrow perspective on adolescence by its focus on duties and self-responsibilities as main characteristics of adulthood. The findings showed interviewees adopted the subject position of a docile rather than an active citizen, which suggests the rejection of the official discourse of civic engagement. The strong identification with *passive* citizenship illustrated an inherent contradiction within Social Studies. Although an active citizenry that critically engages with society and functions in a socially responsible manner is aspired to in Social Studies curricula, Singapore's repressive form of governance seems to prevent such critical developments from evolving.

#### **6.2.5 National Belonging**

Evidence of pride in Singapore and its achievements suggests the successful inculcation of patriotism into respondents. Singaporeans' social bonding to the city-state, however, was demonstrated to resemble a company code of conduct rather than an emotional sense of belonging. When implemented in authoritarian systems, neoliberalism can lead to frequently ambivalent conditions of belonging for the free, independent, and self-responsible citizen subjects. Regardless of the pragmatic and utilitarian character of Singapore's society, respondents were proud of Singapore, especially its economic achievements. National pride as an aspect of good citizenship communicated in Social Studies appeared to be the only instance where an internalization was expressed in a sincere and convincing way. This suggests that pride in Singapore is not only performed to pragmatically comply with the subject position of the good citizen, but is actually lived by the participants. Peoples' yearning for emotional recognition could be seen as an important obstruction to resistance of official discourses stressing emotions as vital elements of one's existence.

The sense of identification with one's citizenship status was also explored by asking students about their perceptions of national passports. There were two dominant views associated with the Singaporean passport. The first one was the feeling of security linked to the passport and the social status of being a Singaporean citizen. The second perception reflected the omnipresent economic reasoning in

everyday life. Both views support the argument of citizenship as a set of rights and duties rather than emotional belonging to a specific community. The strong economic impetus to maintain a Singaporean citizenship out of pragmatic rather than emotional reasons was apparent in most respondents' statements, which indicates the potential rejection of emotional aspects of the discourse of national belonging and could challenge the positive connection to emotional recognition made above.

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## 7 Conclusion

Overall the findings demonstrate that subjection and resistance to official discourses are co-constitutive rather than mutually exclusive. This confirms the argument made in this chapter that submission and mastery take place simultaneously, and this paradoxical simultaneity constitutes the ambivalence of subjection. The different discourses of good citizenship examined in the empirical study above were all simultaneously internalized and resisted with the aspect of national pride being the only exception. Although the discourse of meritocracy was shown to be internalized by the participants, the findings suggest the compliance with this discourse resembles a performance of good citizenship rather than its adoption. Participants were shown to perform aspects of the discourse of racial harmony such as ethnic equity in schools, but to also openly resist other aspects, which resulted in the discourse transformation to racial tolerance. The analysis of the discourses demonstrated that both subjection and resistance can manifest itself in the form of pragmatic compliance. In the case of Asian values, the discourse was shown to be rejected out of pragmatic reasons originated in students' differing daily life experiences; their resistance, thus, was performed as pragmatic compliance. The research suggests that the internalization of discourses is resisted when personal value systems collide with common or official norms and societal expectations. This illustrates the strong effects of norm and value inculcation as mechanisms of emotional interdependencies. Most discourses were shown to be both resisted and internalized at the same time, which confirms the notion of pragmatic compliance and demonstrates that the *effects* of discourses mobilized through education can be partially resisted and partially internalized out of pragmatic reasons. Different elements of one discourse, then, can perform different effects among young people leading to a multifaceted and complex youth-citizen identity.

Citizenship education in Singapore is not only geared toward the socialization of pupils to current norms and expectation, pushing for their uncritical acceptance, but also conceptualized toward the passive consumption of knowledge rather than stressing critical reflections of even those explicit and implicit societal expectations, constraints, and rules conveyed by Social Studies. This official knowledge imparted to the youth defines how individuals should engage in society as citizens disguised as commonsense knowledge and determined by those who exercise power over institutions. Findings demonstrated youths to be equipped with necessary skills to engage with social problems without challenging the immanent structures of society: the status quo.

Notwithstanding the appearance of a (mostly unconscious) adoption of citizen identities, the research has suggested that compliance with official discourses of good citizenship is *performed* to create the impression of subjection and is not truly internalized by youths. Findings revealed that the structural effects of educational institutions in many cases prevent the open resistance to official knowledge communicated through citizenship education. The social authority of schools gives legitimacy to the good citizen model. The prevalence of the good citizen model and its legitimacy is intensified by the absence of an alternative conceptualization of citizenship in Singapore's education system. Moreover, implicit and explicit threats in Social Studies impact significantly on the feasibility of rejecting commonsense truths in an educational setting, which suggest that youths' acts of pragmatic compliance with official discourses could be seen as one form of indirect resistance. Consequently, citizenship education can be seen as both: either aiming at the development of a critical and reflexive youth or with the intention of a mostly uncritical internalization of official discourses without room for critical thought.

In sum, this chapter illustrated complex and multifaceted correlations between processes of subjection and resistance and processes of social reproduction contextualized in citizenship education. It was demonstrated that an expressed compliance with the good citizenship ideal does not necessarily indicate the internalization of social norms by the youth, but can actually be *performed* to create the impression of an uncritical subjection to the social norms of good citizenship. On a theoretical note, it was shown that Bourdieu's theorizations (1991) of habitus fail recognizing that both the bodily and the habitual are equivocal and also may cover deep resentments. At the same time, it was claimed that Butler's (1997a) performativity theorizations seem to over-interpret the fissure between verbal utterances and the bodily expressed. A performed compliance to social norms, thus, can conceal deep resentments and is not necessarily an indication for effective processes of social reproduction. The notion of pragmatic compliance as both partially resisted and partly internalized *effects* of official discourses mobilized through citizenship education was suggested opening up new pathways of conceptualizing subjection and internalization of social norms among the youth and offers a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted effects of citizenship education on youth identities.

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# Education and Employment Transitions: The Experiences of Young People with Caring Responsibilities in Zambia

# 18

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## Abstract

Studies of “young carers” in sub-Saharan Africa have increased in recent years. A focus on “children” caring for parents with HIV, and other chronic illnesses, has meant the role of older youth has often been neglected in discussions of caregiving, particularly how caring influences their futures and life transitions. This is despite evidence which suggests that “young adults” (aged 18–24) are more likely than children to undertake informal care work within the family as well as to head households and families in times of illness and death. It is essential therefore to theorize how such experiences shape their transitions to adulthood. Young people in Zambia are under increasing pressure to obtain a good education and employment to support their families and make “successful” transitions to “adulthood” while in some instances also having to cope with the loss of parents and care for relatives with little external support. This chapter reviews the current literature surrounding “youth transitions” within the

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geographies of children and youth. It focuses on the role of transitions in Africa, particularly the growing importance of education and securing employment in young people's expected "pathways to adulthood." It positions this within the context of young caregiving in Zambia and the impact that increased responsibility to care for sick or disabled relatives has on young people as they try to achieve independent adulthood. It concludes that the transition to adulthood for African youth is becoming increasingly uncertain, with the social status of "adult" more difficult to achieve. It recognizes that Zambian youth are often caught in a "liminal position" between youth and adulthood and are unable to make the socially expected transitions liked to their age and lifecourse stage (Day and Evans (J Comp Fam Studies XLVI: 137–152, 2015)).

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**Keywords**

Young people • Transitions • Education • Employment • Caregiving • Zambia • Sub-Saharan Africa

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## 1 Introduction

Studies of "young carers" have multiplied in recent years. Since the 1990s, research has documented the roles and responsibilities that children and young people undertake within families and the negative (and sometimes positive) outcomes that caring for a parent (or relative) with a disability or chronic illness may have on their transitions to "independent adulthood" such as education and employment (Evans 2010). In the global North, it has been increasingly recognized that many children take on responsibility at home for parents or relatives with chronic illnesses or disabilities (Dearden and Becker 2000). As a result, research, policy, and practice have started to move toward addressing this increasing knowledge of the issue and providing support to those affected. In the West, there is an overriding assumption that it is the responsibility of adults to care for and secure the welfare and well-being of children and young people, as well as the elderly, sick, or disabled (Becker 2007; Collard 2000). However, it is now well known that where adults are unable to fulfil this role, children and young people regularly assume the role of the carer. Young carers are defined as:

children and young people under 18 who provide or intend to provide care, assistance, or support to another family member. They carry out, often on a regular basis, significant or substantial caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility that would usually be associated with an adult. The person receiving care is often a parent but can be a sibling, grandparent or other relative who is disabled, has some chronic illness, mental health problem, or other condition connected with a need for care, support or supervision. (Becker 2000, p. 378)

This emphasizes the research focus that has been given to "children," i.e., those under 18 while the role of older youth has been neglected to some extent in

discussions of caregiving. This is despite evidence from the global North which suggests that “young adults” (aged 18–24) are more likely than children to undertake informal care work within the family.

In sub-Saharan Africa, it is the effect of HIV on the “middle” or “working,” and therefore parenting, generations that has brought increased awareness of the number of children and young people who take on multiple responsibilities in the home, including caring for sick parents, relatives, or siblings (Evans and Becker 2009). In Africa young people are increasingly relied upon to care for chronically ill parents and other relatives such as siblings and grandparents (Robson et al. 2006) who have experienced the loss of their usual caregivers (Skovdal 2011), as well as those affected by other chronic illness and disability. The few studies that explore caregiving and youth transitions in Africa emphasize that young people’s life transitions are “embedded in their social relations with siblings and other household members, relatives, peers and other adults in the community” (Evans 2011, p. 385) and caring pathways shift over time and space (Evans 2012a; Skovdal 2011). Indeed, Evans (2012a, p. 834) argues that “‘successful’ transitions to adulthood, such as completing education, migrating for work opportunities or achieving the financial means to marry and support their own families could be delayed or restricted because of young people’s caring responsibilities.” This may mean that “young people are caught in a liminal position between discourses of childhood and adulthood, unable to make socially expected transitions linked to their age and lifecourse stage” (Evans 2012a, p. 834).

In a globally interdependent world, increasing emphasis is placed on educational outcomes (Ansell 2004). Young people in Zambia and elsewhere are under increasing pressure to obtain a good education and employment to support their families and make “successful” transitions to “adulthood” while in some instances also having to cope with the loss of parents and care for relatives with little external support. Few studies have explored caregiving and youth transitions in Africa or investigated how “‘successful’ transitions to adulthood, such as completing education, migrating for work opportunities or achieving the financial means to marry and support their own families could be delayed or restricted because of young people’s caring responsibilities” (Evans 2012a, p. 834). This chapter examines how youth experience and negotiate the socially expected transitions to adulthood, specifically education and employment, in sub-Saharan Africa, drawing on studies from Zambia where appropriate. It draws on recent literature on youth transitions and young caregiving to explore the relational life transitions of young people, some of whom care for chronically sick or disabled parents or relatives.

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## 2 Concepts of Transition

“Youth transition” is a relatively new area of interest within the geographies of children and youth (Worth 2009). It has received particular focus from the social sciences in recent years as geographers, sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists have become increasingly interested in young people’s pathways to

adulthood (Payne 2009; Punch 2002). Linked to notions of “the lifecourse,” transitions’ research focuses on how young people negotiate their pathways to adulthood according to various temporalities and spatialities.

Youth itself, as a term, is both “contested and rapidly changing” (Durham 2004, p. 592). A temporary period that young people are expected to rapidly move out of, “youth” is seen as a social location and the young people within it as “shiffters” moving from one social position to the next (ibid). Trying to come up with an “all-encompassing” definition of transition is therefore problematic (Punch 2002). Firstly, conceptualizing “key” transitions in the lives of all young people is a concept from the global North which only accounts for the main and most predictable transitions that can occur. In addition, too much emphasis has been placed on the notion of “normal” development when “not all young people either aspire to all of these ‘norms’, or achieve them in a form that can be measured or acknowledged in conventional ways” (Skelton and Valentine 2007, p. 105). They imply an element of predictability, a series of natural pathways that all young people will undertake and a normalization of the process from childhood to adulthood in which predefined moments must be experienced before a young person can officially define themselves/be defined as adult. Research has therefore begun to recognize that youth transitions, like the concept of youth itself, are influenced by social differences, such as gender, race, class, and sexuality (Bowlby et al. 1998; Valentine 2003; Durham 2004; Valentine and Skelton 2007) which both provide young people with access to particular resources and constrain them (Thomson and Holland 2004).

Crucially, recent research has recognized that young people’s transitions are changing and are increasingly uncertain and fragmented in nature (Skelton and Valentine 2007). Youth as a time period is no longer viewed as a linear progression of events from one point to another (Ansell 2005; Punch 2002) but is recognized as increasingly complex, diverse, unpredictable, and even risky (Worth 2009). This has impacted on the sequencing and timing of when young people’s transitions take place (Valentine and Skelton 2007). In the global North, Valentine and Skelton (2007) describe how for some young people their transitions have become speeded up, using the example of young people engaging in sexual relationships at an earlier age. Meanwhile increased dependence on families, particularly parents, due to increasingly turbulent economies and lack of social support for young people, means that other transitions have become more protracted (Aassve et al. 2006). Cohen and Ainley (2000) describe this as a blurring and confusion of the “cultures and boundaries of childhood and youth,” while Payne describes “the complex processes through which adult status is attained” (2009, p. 82).

Despite this, the term transition, in relation to young people, has been “inextricably woven” into the concept of youth, with youth itself seen as the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood (Wyn and White 1997), a time where one is no longer a child but is not quite yet an adult with the full roles and responsibilities that being an adult entails. According to Lloyd (2005), transitions can be socially, psychologically, economically, biologically, and emotionally challenging. The ways in which young people negotiate this critical period can have a

long-term impact, with the potential to govern the nature and quality of their future lives. Ansell describes how “nowhere is there a single point at which a person moves from a status of having no adult roles or rights to full adulthood. Instead young people make a gradual transition, with changes in a number of aspects of their lives” (2005, p. 79).

Understandings of youth transitions from the global North often draw on conventional “thresholds” that define and pattern the progress of transition into adulthood: completing education, entry into employment, leaving home, and forming a couple (Stokes and Wyn 2007). Youth has therefore been conceptualized in relation to an assumed linear transition between childhood and adulthood marked by these key events (Evans 2008). While some “thresholds” are defined by age limits, such as the legal age at which young people can drink alcohol, earn money, join the armed forces, vote, and consent to sexual relationships, others are more ambiguous and based on perceptions of competence and responsibility (Valentine 2003), such as the ability to live independently, own your own home, and raise a family. They can also be culturally based, such as the initiation practices found in many African cultures through which a young person is often seen as an adult after reaching puberty. Increasingly in the global South however, young people undergo a series of transitions, moving in and out of independence and dependence “in difference contexts and in relations to different people” (Punch 2002, p. 124).

Transitions can also be viewed as the pivotal events that occur in a young person’s life and can indicate they are old enough and mature enough to be seen as an adult (e.g., first sexual experience, marriage, childbirth) or the “rites of passage” which can occur, such as going to university or leaving home. What is crucial to recognize is that all these defined transitions, vital conjunctures (Johnson-Hanks 2002), pivotal moments, or “rites of passage” are differentially constructed and experienced, and culture, place, and space all have a part in dictating who will go through which transitions and at what time. Not all young people follow the same lifecourse or will go through the same transitions. However, it is generally recognized that there are certain transitions, often socially constructed, that are expected to happen at one time or another. These particularly relate to what Stokes and Wyn (2007) conceptualize as the four key “thresholds” that “define and pattern the progress of transition into adulthood” – completing education, entry into employment, leaving home, and forming a couple. It is these “golden standards” of transition for youth that are still often prioritized within Western contexts. Transitions, however, can also be the unpredicted events that occur and shape and/or change young people’s lifecourse – such as a parent becoming sick or impaired (Bowlby et al. 2010). Therefore, while there are certain transitions, often socially constructed, that are expected to happen at one time or another, not all young people follow the same lifecourse transitions or will go through them at the same time, and individual events can both escalate and hold back youth transitions. Bowlby et al. (2010) reveal the usefulness of Dewilde’s (2003) distinction between “transitions” and “events.” “Transitions” are understood as “changes in the lives of individuals that are in accordance with the socially constructed life course” and which are linked to age, such as leaving school or having children, and

“events” which may or may not be predictable and which are not a priori linked to age (such as war or redundancy) (Bowlby et al. 2010, p. 5). It is the intersection of these transitions and events that dictate how transitions unfold in unique ways to individuals.

Thomson et al. (2002) refer to transitions as “critical moments” of choice, chance, and opportunity that occur in young people’s lives. They discuss how particular transitions, such as education, employment, and leaving home, have been privileged by researchers. This has failed to acknowledge young people’s “subjective experience of personal change” (Thomson et al. 2002, p. 337), i.e., the social conditions young people experience and negotiate and how these interact with their transitions. Giddens (1991) discusses these social conditions as “fateful moments” that can have both positive and sometimes negative impacts on a young person and their ability to negotiate their transitions. Bereavement, family illness, and caregiving represent some of these more unpredictable “moments” or events in young people’s family lives that may disrupt, reinforce, or otherwise shape their pathways to adulthood. While many of these are predefined in terms of social expectation, they cannot be defined by chronological markers, but by the circumstances in which a young person is living and the socioeconomic influences on their lives. “Critical moments” may occur outside of the control of the young person or their family and are often commented on retrospectively when the impact of their influence is easier to observe and better understood. They are a particularly useful concept for exploring young people’s own understandings of the significant or specific events that occur in their lives rather than those expected, or not expected, to occur by society. This reference chapter therefore draws on understandings of how caring for sick or disabled parents or relatives in Zambia is a “critical moment,” rarely of choice but certainly of chance and opportunity, that occurs in a young person’s life and influences their pathways to adulthood. This draws away from the notion that transition is developmental or that transition is a linear process through which young people navigate a proscribed number of transitions in sequence on their way to adulthood. It instead recognizes that transitions are influenced by a number of social, cultural, familial, and individual processes that dictate what transitions young people go through and when. This presents challenges for understanding youth in these contexts and illuminates the important contributions this chapter can make to understanding the continuums in which young Africans, specifically Zambians, are growing into adulthood. These continuums become increasingly complex when young people have to negotiate not just the traditional and global expectations of their lives but also the critical moments that occur, particularly caregiving.

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### **3 Transitions in Africa**

How young people negotiating their transitions in Africa has long been a source of interest. Anthropological researchers have predominantly studied children and youth as part of communities and cultures. Indeed many anthropologists recognize



that youth is understood as a pathway to adulthood marked not by chronological age markers but by rites of passage (Seekings 1993; Richards 1982). Marriage, and subsequently the bearing of children, has been one of the key transitions in many cultural settings and often remains so. De Waal (2002) describes how in many cultures girls are usually married shortly after achieving sexual maturity and consolidate their adult status when they become mothers, while for boys it is marriage and the acquisition of land that elevates them to an adult position and eventually to the position of elder (de Waal 2002). Chigunta et al.'s (2005) research in Zambia discusses how those who are not married, or are not able to do so for economic or other reasons, are often regarded as "children," whatever their chronological age. It is therefore not uncommon to find a 12-year-old girl, who by virtue of being married, will be considered an "adult," while an unmarried 40-year-old man will still be considered a "youth" or a "child" and still dependent on their father for support.

Within geography, investigations into youth transitions have mainly focused on the global North. Few studies have explored the lifecourse transitions of young people in sub-Saharan Africa (Punch 2002), although this has started to change in recent years (Day and Evans 2015; Gough et al. 2013; Evans 2012b). While in the global North the focus of research has been on the four key transitions of education, employment, leaving home, and setting up an independent home, there is recognition that the experiences of young people approaching adulthood in Africa often differ greatly from those of counterparts in the global North (Ansell 2004). Transitions are often multiple (Ansell 2004) and subject to wider traditional, familial, and community influences. However, there is also recognition that, as in the global North, transitions in Africa are changing as a mixture of urbanization, "Western" influence, Christianity, and education have dramatically changed attitudes to and processes of transitions (Chigunta et al. 2005). Recent literature has emphasized the gendered nature of youth transitions in different African contexts (Chant and Jones 2005). Women's increasing participation in formal education and employment, for example, has delayed their movement into marriage and having children and increased their mobility. For men, however, the move from education into employment and marriage has become increasingly uncertain as opportunities have reduced and those available have become more insecure and often temporary.

Interest has therefore grown regarding the ways that young people "navigate their social becoming" (Christiansen et al. 2006) within often highly compromised socioeconomic and political contexts (Evans 2011). Economic reform, inflation, global influences, and different generational expectations have meant that it is no longer "a matter of course that young people will acquire the resources they need to marry and set up their own families" (Langevang 2008, p. 2039). "Uncertainty" is considered a defining characteristic of the liminal period of "youth" (Christiansen et al. 2006; Langevang 2008), as African young people grow up in a world increasingly influenced by concepts of youth from the global North and subject to global economic pressures, but where few can obtain the educational or employment opportunities needed to succeed. Indeed the idea of transitions is built on the notion that young people *will* achieve adulthood (Jeffrey 2010), yet increasingly the

sheer scale of the social crisis in many parts of the world, especially Africa, means that many young people are unable to acquire the social status of adulthood and youth becomes a permanent condition (Hansen 2005; Jeffrey 2010). Locke and te Lintelo (2012) describe how it has become increasingly difficult for young Zambians to construct youth-to-adult transitions that meet the normative expectations of coherent life trajectories toward being successful and/or being able to live well. Indeed, youth in Zambia may become a “lost generation” who may never become adult in a normative social and cultural sense (Hansen 2005).

### 3.1 Education

The global North represents education as a central tenet of constructions of a “good childhood.” Achieving universal primary education and eliminating gender disparities at all levels of education are key Millennium Development Goal targets. The prominence of formal school education in the ambitions of young people and their parents is an important aspect of globalization and has become integral to global concepts of modernity and the creation of human capital (Jeffrey and McDowell 2004, p. 132).

In Zambia there has been an increasing awareness of the role of secondary school education, despite the fact that access to this level of education is far more difficult for the majority of young Africans to obtain. The age at which young people access secondary school varies from person to person depending on their schooling history at primary level, although it is unusual for young Africans to begin secondary school before the age of 14 (Ansell 2004), and for many it is much later. As a result, these young people are in school during the period when they would otherwise cross boundaries that conventionally accord them adult status: marriage, childbearing, and setting up a new home. Ansell describes how “inevitably, therefore, schooling intervenes in their transitions to adulthood” (2004, p. 187).

Certainly it has been recognized in the literature that it can delay marriage. Marriage in Zambia, as in many other African countries, is seen as essential in order for a youth to become a complete socially and morally accepted adult (Geisler 1992). Under official Zambian law, the legal age for marriage is 16 years of age with parental/familial consent and 21 years of age without consent (National Assembly of Zambia 1996). However, customary laws in duality with statutory laws often still allow the marriage of any girl who has reached puberty. While an increasing political focus had been given to raising the age at which girls get married, it is recognized that Zambia, like many other African countries, struggles to enforce statutory laws and therefore the marriage of very young girls, described as “early marriages,” still occurs (Geisler 1992). Age at marriage greatly increases with education, and women with more than secondary education get married more than 7 years later than those with no education (24.4 years compared to 17.3 years for women age 25–49) (CSO et al. 2009). Education can reduce early pregnancies and related health complications; reduce the number and frequency of children they

have; increase the likelihood of those children being healthy; empower them; increase their knowledge of their rights, both politically and in the home; and increase their opportunities for economic independence. They are also more likely to send their own children to school “creating a virtuous circle of opportunity and prosperity” (DFID 2011, p. 12). Women are increasingly concerned their daughters are educated as a precaution against marriage failure or abandonment by their husbands (Ansell 2004).

While education is widely regarded as a positive force for change and actively encouraged by African governments, policymakers, and development agencies, secondary education still involves significant costs and is far more difficult for the majority of young Africans to complete. Even if young people manage to obtain secondary level qualifications, this is not necessarily sufficient to secure formal sector employment and may not enhance their livelihood outcomes (Ansell 2004). Yet more young people are delaying their transition to work and economic independence in the hope that completing secondary education will increase their opportunities for obtaining better paid, formal sector work (Ansell 2004). Young people from resource poor communities often see education as a way out of poverty, placing their hopes and aspirations on the possibilities that will open to them with a school certificate (Crivello 2011). The change from subsistence farming to an increasingly urban-based infrastructure has meant that young Africans now have an increased expectation “that a secure future requires paid employment, preferably in the formal sector. This, in turn, increasingly demands secondary education” (Ansell 2004, p. 185).

However, it could be said that education is also having a negative impact on young people’s transitions to adulthood. Chigunta et al. (2005) describe education in Africa as an institution in crisis. Having suffered massive disintegration during the 1980s, many African countries still struggle to improve school quality, infrastructure, and teacher and student morale. For example, until the 1970s, Zambia had a relatively well-resourced school system, but since then it has faced increasing pressures (MOE 2005). A number of government implemented policies, including Educating Our Future (MOE 1996) and The Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Program (Mwansa et al. 2004), have tried to improve the standard of education in the country. Free primary education was introduced for Grades 1–7 in 2002; a school building program increased the number of primary and secondary schools available; additional teachers were recruited at all levels of the education system; and improvements were recorded in the enrolment levels of both girls and boys at all three school levels (MFNP 2011). However, a number of issues remain, including an under-resourced secondary education system, poor quality teaching, inadequate materials, and poor performance. The curriculum has been criticized for not taking into account the changing human resource needs in Zambia, and linkages with other educational institutions such as skills training centers, vocational colleges, and universities are limited (MOE 2005). As a result “the majority of pupils still receive, at best, a very dysfunctional educational opportunity of limited benefit, both in terms of private and social gains, labour market pay-off or benefits in tertiary education” (MOE 2005, p. 1).

## 3.2 Employment

A key marker of adulthood in Africa is the ability to provide an income to support oneself and one's family (Chigunta et al. 2005). Seen as "one of the most important transitions young people make as they grow older," employment is the transition young people make "from being dependent on the economic support of their parents or other adults, to being economically productive in their own right with the ability to support themselves and others" (Lloyd 2005, p. 265). This is despite the fact that the involvement of children and youth in work from a young age represents a key feature of many childhoods in sub-Saharan Africa that conflicts with universal models (Potter et al. 2012). This is a striking inconsistency bearing in mind that many children have remunerated jobs from a young age. Employment is one of the most significant transitions in young people's lives. Writing in the global North, Bowlby et al. (1998) describe how finding a first job is a step of "great significance to most young people," enabling them to have their first taste of independence from their parents' control, as a way of contributing economically to the household, as an enabler to allow them to leave the parental home and set up an independent household and, most importantly, as a crucial step in them developing their own adult identity. The ability to earn an income and be economically responsible for oneself and family members is important in Africa (Chigunta et al. 2005) as it marks a young person's independence and is a significant transition toward having their own home and family. However, the transition to paid employment is a more gradual process than that experienced in the global North. Similar to caring, young people take on an economic role in the household often from a young age, with the level of responsibility increasing over time.

In sub-Saharan Africa, however, the issue of youth unemployment and under-employment remains one of the major challenges for governments and development partners alike (Gough et al. 2013). This is a particularly prominent issue in Zambia. Since independence, Zambia has moved from being one of the middle-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to being one of the poorest, with its human development ranked at 164 out of 187 nations in 2004 (World Bank 2013). This downward mobility was caused by both external and internal factors, for example, the decline in the trade of copper on which Zambia was greatly reliant during the 1960s and 1970s, bad economic management, and the acceleration of the implementation of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) since 1991, which worsened rather than improved the living situation of the majority of Zambians (ibid). Lack of government funds, aggravated by the impact of SAP measures, negatively affected development opportunities in both agriculture and industry. In the last decade, Zambia has experienced rapid economic growth and subsequent development, regaining its title as a middle-income country in 2011 (World Bank 2013). There is still a long way to go, however, and unemployment remains a key concern, particularly for young people. Hansen (2005) asserts that youth are getting "stuck in the compound" as economic, structural, and educational constraints limit the opportunities available to them to find employment, have a house of their own, and have a spouse and children. This emphasizes the difficulties youth face

transitioning to adulthood when they are unable to acquire the economic means, status, and respect to accord them as adults. Hansen argues that many Zambian youth “may never become adult in a normative social and cultural sense,” potentially remaining “youth forever” (2005, p. 5).

Youth unemployment in Africa is regarded as notoriously hard to measure, and accurate statistics are incredibly difficult to provide (Gough et al. 2013). The primary reason for this is that both the concepts and definitions of employment and youth vary so dramatically across different societies. Youth unemployment is defined in relation to the total youth population, the total youth labor force, and the adult working population (ILO 2013). Current estimates have indicated that young people aged 15–24 years comprise 40–75% of the total number of unemployed. While levels of youth unemployment vary across different countries, they are generally double and sometimes triple the adult rate. In Zambia it is presently estimated that over 60% of youth are unemployed compared to 30% of adults (Chigunta et al. 2005) and with large numbers of young people joining the labor force every year, pressure is increasing on an already struggling employment market (Gough et al. 2013).

What is of particular concern in Africa is the fact that employment and unemployment are not fixed states and vary from one time to another. Chigunta et al. (2005) describe some of the ways young people are responding to what they define as “the transition challenge.” They include four primary forms of response which include either remaining without work or, as often described in Africa, “sitting at home,” finding casual work, engaging in illicit activities, or starting an informal enterprise activity. They believe an overwhelming number of young people opt for the first option and less so for the second or fourth. According to Curtain (2000), more concern should therefore be paid not so much to unemployment figures, but to the number of young people “at risk” of not making a successful transition from education to work. Young people are caught “in a cycle of temporary work, periods of active job searching and inactivity, all of which are not reflected in a static indicator” (Curtain 2000, p. 3). This echoes more recent work by Sommers (2010, p. 6) who examines how self-employment and livelihood strategies within the informal sector are disregarded and “not the context for honorable economic activity.” These young people are not only subject to economic insecurities, but it is known that for those who are unable to find paid work and who are not undertaking training that will lead toward such work, the prospect of continuing unemployment can be “both depressing and alienating and lead to the loss of self-esteem” (Bowlby et al. 1998, p. 229). This is particularly pertinent while discussions continue to disregard the value of informal work and small-scale entrepreneurship – although this is changing (Langevang and Gough 2012).

Perceptions of employment have also had an impact on perceptions of education. In Zambia, Chigunta et al. (2005) describe how there is a growing ambivalence toward education and a questioning of its relevance. School is now seen as an important means for social mobility in modern society, and more young people than ever before are completing education. However, these increased educational levels are not being met with corresponding employment opportunities

(Gough et al. 2013). As a result education no longer holds the hope it did for employment or a better future, and many young people perceive it as useless to their livelihoods as they fail to find jobs. Chigunta et al. (2005) blame the type of education young people receive which is failing to prepare young people adequately for a changing economic market, as well as the quality of education, a growing problem in many African countries. Chigunta et al. (2005) question whether young Africans are just functionally literate or actually gaining other competencies and quote that in Zambia, 75% of pupils that took a reading test in grade 6 were still illiterate at this stage. This has long-term implications for the ability of youth to develop key skills to improve their employment prospects and to complete the transitions to adulthood that they aspire to. Certainly the young people in Ansell's (2004) study openly acknowledged that the primary reason for attending education was employment and if they could earn the same amount of money regardless of education, obtaining secondary education would be pointless. It is these "problematic transitions" that Chigunta et al. (2005) believe are changing the sequencing of events in young people's pathways to adulthood. These changes are exacerbated when young people also have to care for sick or disabled parents or relatives (Day and Evans 2015).

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## 4 Youth as Caregivers

Research on young caregiving in the global North has drawn attention to the negative (and sometimes positive) outcomes that caring for a parent (or relative) with a disability or chronic illness may have on youth transitions to "independent adulthood" (Evans and Becker 2009). While young adult carers, defined as aged 18–25 years, may associate caregiving with positive benefits and gain useful skills and competencies, these may be gained at the cost of them missing school and not obtaining important qualifications needed to secure employment opportunities (Becker and Becker 2008). Few studies to date have explored how caregiving may impact on older youth's lifecourse transitions and imagined futures in sub-Saharan Africa (see Evans 2012a, 2014 for exceptions), particularly Zambia (Day and Evans 2015). The few studies that explore caregiving and youth transitions in Africa emphasize that young people's life transitions are "embedded in their social relations with siblings and other household members, relatives, peers and other adults in the community" (Evans 2011, p.385) and caring pathways shift over time and space (Evans 2012a; Skovdal 2011). Indeed, Evans argues that "'successful' transitions to adulthood, such as completing education, migrating for work opportunities or achieving the financial means to marry and support their own families could be delayed or restricted because of young people's caring responsibilities" (2012a, p. 834). This may mean that "young people are caught in a liminal position between discourses of childhood and adulthood, unable to make socially expected transitions linked to their age and lifecourse stage" (Evans 2012a, p. 834).

Not only is care seen as a female occupation, but in the West, there is an overriding assumption that it is the responsibility of adults to care for and secure

the welfare and well-being of children and young people, as well as the elderly, sick, or disabled (Collard 2000). However, it is now well known that where adults are unable to fulfil this role, children and young people regularly assume the role of the carer. Young carers are defined as:

children and young people under 18 who provide or intend to provide care, assistance, or support to another family member. They carry out, often on a regular basis, significant or substantial caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility that would usually be associated with an adult. The person receiving care is often a parent but can be a sibling, grandparent or other relative who is disabled, has some chronic illness, mental health problem, or other condition connected with a need for care, support or supervision. (Becker 2000, p. 378)

This emphasizes the research focus that has been given to “children,” i.e., those under 18, while the role of older youth has been neglected to some extent in discussions of caregiving. This is despite evidence from the global North which suggests that “young adults” (aged 18–24) are more likely than children to undertake informal care work within the family. On the basis of Census 2001 data, Evans and Becker (2009) note that an estimated 5.3% of the population of all 18–24 year olds in the UK are regularly involved in care work. This compares to 2.1% of the population of children aged under 18 years who are involved in care work. Levine et al. refer to these young people as a “neglected group” that have “passed the turbulence of early and mid-adolescence, but have not yet solidified life plans and choices” (2005, p. 2071) and emphasize the need for more research that investigates the needs and concerns of those aged 18–25 years (or older), something which Day and Evans (2015) also seek to address.

The concept of young people caring challenges Western constructions of childhood and youth which believes young people should be protected from adult responsibility (James et al. 1998). As a result, much of the caregiving undertaken by young people is hidden within the home. Certainly research from the UK has indicated that young caregivers may in effect be “silenced” due to the risk of discrimination or stigmatization and also the fear that they will be separated from their families and placed under the registration of child protection and child welfare authorities (Wardale 2003). Its hidden nature also relates to the fact that many young people do not necessarily identify themselves as young carers due to the nature of the caring relationship and societal norms surrounding caregiving (Smyth et al. 2011), such as the fact that children and young people are supposed to be cared for by adults, due to notions of dependence and responsibility, and do not usually have to care for adults. This suggests that actual numbers may only represent a proportion of the real number of children and young people caring for someone at home.

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## 5 Young Caregivers in Africa

A growing literature has revealed the substantial regular care work that young people may undertake for family members affected by HIV and other disabilities in Eastern and Southern Africa (Evans 2012a, b, 2010; Evans and Becker 2009;



Robson 2004a, b; Skovdal 2011). In Africa, it is widely accepted that children and young people take on responsibility within the household, often at a much younger age than that expected in the global North. For example, the Pare in Tanzania view girls aged 12 and boys aged 14 to be equal to adults in work, skill, and ability to take care of the household in the absence of grown-ups (Hollos 2002). In Zambia, children are regularly expected to help at home with cooking, cleaning, and chores (especially girls) from as young as 5 or 6 years old as part of their “training” toward being independent and “good” adults that will make a good husband or wife for someone (personal communication, May 2010). To some degree, children in many parts of Africa have long held responsibility for tasks that are not expected of children and young people in the global North. It is often entirely normal that young people work (Ansell 2005), and work includes a variety of activities including street work, domestic work, mining, vending, and increasingly, caring.

Very little statistical evidence is available about the extent of older youth’s involvement in care work in sub-Saharan Africa, although it is likely that well over 4% of children and youth in many African countries may be regularly involved in caring for family and community members who have a need for care related to illness, disability, young, or old age (Evans 2010). Within the child labor debate, caring for relatives is often ignored as, like chores, it is something that goes on within the home. The ILO (2002) highlights the difference between productive work, that generates income, and domestic work which is essential to the household but provides no income. The latter is often completed by women and children and therefore not seen as “real” work, despite the fact that it can be equally, if not more, demanding, arduous, physically taxing, and emotionally challenging – especially where care involves a disabled or seriously ill parent. Disregarding such activities excludes the young people involved. Niewenhuys (1994) argues that caring can exploit children today as the time commitment and level of responsibility can be considerable and impact on the child’s available time for play and education. Its long-term impacts also include failing to engage in the “rites of passage” that are commonly expected, both culturally, such as initiation ceremonies, and socially, such as further education and finding employment, marriage, and migration.

Families are typically seen as the central location of care and support based on Western notions of parenting that view biologically based relations between parents and children as more fundamental than other sorts of family relations (Evans 2010). It is through families that children and young people are expected to acquire the values and morals needed for adulthood, transmitted predominantly through their parents. Families are often seen as the “crucial and appropriate” place for children to be cared for and in which to be brought up (Ribbens McCarthy et al. 2013). Often children are only seen as a by-product of their relationships with adults, despite the more recent recognition that young people are human “beings” rather than “becomings” (Ansell 2005; James et al. 1998).

African societies are characterized by a rich diversity of household structures, kinship responsibilities, and child fosterage practices within the extended family. Traditionally care has fallen within the domain of the family (Robson et al. 2006). Extended family, clan, and kinship networks, whether operating patrilineal or



matrilineal lineages, have been responsible for the care of all members, including the old, young, sick, and disabled. Such extended familial networks have operated on both a local and nonlocal scale giving an “inbuilt degree of flexibility in matters of childcare and employment” (Bowlby et al. 2010, p. 71). Children are brought up with multiple care providers, each seen as a parent and with the same care obligations as a child’s biological parents, even when this transcends physical distance. As described by Bowlby et al. (2010), it is not uncommon for a child to move away to live with relatives for a number of years before returning to their birth parents (also known as fosterage). Young people and adult family members may migrate or move to live with relatives for temporary or longer periods to gain access to care, material resources, education, training, and employment opportunities (Skovdal 2011; Van Blerk and Ansell 2006).

Despite diversity in family dynamics within and between societies, globally, it is adults who are usually relied upon to care for family members who are sick, disabled, or have other care needs (Evans and Becker 2009). Family relationships in eastern and southern Africa are built upon notions of reciprocal responsibilities to provide care and support for the young and older generations according to an implicit intergenerational contract (Collard 2000). These intergenerational familial responsibilities may be disrupted or come under pressure, however, when ill-health or death affects the “middle generation” (Evans 2013).

Patterns of care have changed dramatically in Africa over the last 30 years. An estimated 15% of the global population is living with a disability (WHO 2011), 80% of whom live in the global South, where resources to support them are very limited (UN 2010). Evans and Atim (2011) argue that the HIV epidemic in eastern and southern Africa has also had major impacts on families and communities, as they struggle to care for large numbers of people with a highly stigmatized, chronic, life-limiting illness, with very limited public social protection or formal care services and inadequate healthcare resources. With the working generation most greatly affected, it is the elderly and the young who have been left with caring responsibilities – either for the sick or once they have died for the children left behind (Bowlby et al. 2010). This form of care has skewed ideas of the intergenerational bargain as those who traditionally impart knowledge and resources to their parents and children are no longer able to do so (van Blerk and Ansell 2007). Such a breakdown has changed many of the caring patterns that occur traditionally in African communities, and new structures have developed including grandparents caring for children (Karimli et al. 2012; Clacherty 2008; van Blerk and Ansell 2007), children and young people caring for grandparents (Robson and Ansell 2000), children caring for parents or relatives (Evans and Becker 2009; Robson 2000), and children and young people heading households (Payne 2012; Evans 2010, 2011, 2012a, b; Evans and Day 2011). Within this context, young people may be called on to provide sometimes substantial care for older, middle, and/or younger generations at a much younger age than would normally be expected (Evans 2012a; Van Blerk and Ansell 2007).

As discussed earlier in the chapter, care, as both physical and emotional labor, is a socially constructed, gendered activity that falls disproportionately on women and

girls (Bowlby et al. 2010, 1997; Evans and Becker 2009). Numerous studies have shown that regardless of paid work commitments, women remain primarily responsible for unpaid care work within the home (Bowlby et al. 1997). Certainly the literature on caregiving in Africa echoes this, with care in many parts of Africa both a gendered and age-related task (Evans and Becker 2009). Boys and girls are socialized to perform different household tasks according to a “traditional gendered division of labor” (Evans and Becker 2009; Katz 1993). Girls and young women are most commonly expected to care for their siblings as a part of growing up, and caring (as well as other tasks) is seen as necessary for children to learn the skills to run households while freeing parents up to undertake other activities. As they grow older the tasks progress in difficulty, for example, girls will move on to cooking and washing. This is not to say that boys/young men do not play their part, but there are often gendered expectations based on cultural traditions and norms, as well as sometimes based on physical attributes such as bodily strength, of what activities are appropriate for boys and girls to do. Where care becomes a necessity, boys particularly have difficulty negotiating their role as carer when it is seen as socially and morally unacceptable. . . especially if the person being cared for is female. Evans and Becker (2009) describe how boys in their research in Tanzania who took on domestic and caring tasks that transgressed gender norms described being “ridiculed and stigmatized” by their peers or relatives which had a negative impact on them emotionally.

In addition to this, patterns of migration for care, as well as care relations themselves, have become increasingly complex. It is still not uncommon for a young person to go to live with extended family members, as has often been traditional in these communities. Increasingly girls or young women live with family members outside of their nuclear kin in order to take on caring roles rather than to attend school or receive assistance from wealthier family members (van Blerk and Ansell 2007). At the same time, there has been a widening of care relations, and it is no longer simply a case that young people care for those with whom they have kinship relations or responsibilities but that they offer care to a number of different family and community members for varying periods of time and intensities (Skovdal 2011).

The hidden nature of caregiving, as evidenced in the global North (Evans and Becker 2009), is a key consideration when examining the occurrence of young caregiving in the sub-Saharan Africa, where it could be argued that young people who care are both visible and hidden at the same time. They are visible in the sense that sociocultural expectations of care, family relationships, and gender roles have actively encouraged, indeed expected, and therefore widely recognized that care is undertaken within the family. This means it is quite accepted for a young person to have some caring responsibility and not seen as anything “out of the ordinary.” However, it has hidden the number of young people who are increasingly taking on demanding care roles for, or in the absence of, parents or other relatives, from active recognition within society as well as policy and practice. The scale of care required and the lack of government initiatives in many African countries mean that care becomes further hidden within the work of the home (Bowlby et al. 1997;

Milligan 2005). In addition to this both disability and HIV are heavily stigmatized in many African communities, preventing people from actively seeking support (Evans and Day 2011; Evans and Becker 2009; Muyinda et al. 1997). As a result, care as a “pressing concern” is often marginalized from view, and young people’s active roles in providing care for parents or relatives are overlooked (Evans 2010).

As recently as 2009, Evans and Becker wrote “there is little recognition of the distinct role of children with caring responsibilities in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the extent, nature and outcomes of their caring tasks, and there are few services specifically designed to support them” (2009, p. 24). While the body of literature focusing on HIV is now extensive, where young people are concerned, it has tended to focus on orphanhood and vulnerability (Foster et al. 2005) and the social impacts of HIV (Evans 2010). Combined with the hidden nature of care, social and cultural expectations, as well as the lack of recognition of household care in policy and practice, this has meant there are still no official figures for the number of children and young people involved in caring in sub-Saharan Africa (Becker 2007; Robson et al. 2006). While some small country-specific studies have gone some way to estimate the number of young carers present (Robson et al. 2006), due to the hidden nature of care, alongside social and cultural expectations, a precise number is far from available.

As will be apparent from this review, a small, but growing, body of research is investigating young people’s caring roles, particularly in east and southern Africa. Studies have focused on siblings caring in child-headed households (Evans and Day 2011; Evans 2011; Payne 2009); for mothers affected by HIV/AIDS (Evans 2014; Evans and Day 2011); for chronically sick, disabled, or elderly relatives (Evans and Thomas 2009); for parents with tuberculosis (Hunleth 2011); or more generally for community members as well as those whom they have kinship loyalties toward (Skovdal 2011). These studies have tended to almost exclusively focus on young caregiving in the context of HIV, resulting in a paucity of studies looking at young people’s caring roles in the broader field of disability, aging, and development across Africa (Evans 2010). In addition to this, few of these studies have extended their research to include “youth.” The tendency has been to focus on *children* and those aged under 18 years. It is therefore important to recognize that many *youth* are also living in households in which “adults are either not present or not fully functioning, in terms of providing material, practical and/or emotional support for children and young people” (Payne 2012, p. 294). While an increasing number of studies acknowledge their research to be with children *and* young people, the majority are still based on research with children. Such a focus is based on the fact that children caring goes against Western ideals of childhood and adulthood and that childhood should be a protected time away from adult responsibilities (James et al. 1998). While there are a few existing studies of young adult carers, over the age of 18 (Evans and Becker 2009), most are small scale and based on a local population (Dearden and Becker 2000).

Occupying an older age group, youth are increasingly becoming the target of research on transitions, although rarely the target of research on caregiving. While the reason for this is not clear, it could be assumed that this is dictated in some way

by both practice and policy. In terms of practice, this may be due to their age as well as perceived levels of maturity, knowledge, and skill development and the fact that they have had longer to develop coping strategies and networks of support, which mean it is assumed they will cope better in situations of adversity. In terms of policy, most funding at government or NGO level is targeted at individuals up to the age of 18 and rarely over this (Potter et al. 2012). This fails to recognize that many caregiving youth originate from child- or grandparent-headed households and may have had to care for family members in the past – “critical moments” (Thomson et al. 2002) that may still affect their transitions to adulthood.

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## 6 The Impact of Caregiving on Transitions to Adulthood

When linking transitions to adulthood with caregiving, it is important to note that both areas of investigation fall within discussions about the “life cycle,” “life stages,” and the “lifecourse” as they represent the passage of time and the predictable life events that take place, as people progress between birth and death (Bowlby et al. 2010). It is commonly accepted in society that “different lifecourse transitions and events bring with them a need for the exchange of care” (ibid: 5), whether this is caring for children, elderly, partners, family members, and friends or as a livelihood. However, as with the notion of young people’s transitions generally, it is these life events that have become less predictable in terms of where and when they will take place in someone’s life. For many young people, caregiving as a life event is occurring at a significantly younger age than often socially expected. However, it is this caregiving responsibility that can also influence a young person’s lifecourse, impacting on when, and sometimes if, they experience life events as expected culturally, socially, and personally. As Bowlby discusses:

caring activities influence many lifecourse decisions and these decisions are affected by past experiences and memories of caring, as well as by anticipations of the future. These decisions also are influenced, through social interactions with others, by social expectations and by the (changing) wider socioeconomic environment. (2012, p. 2110)

It is important to look at the care responsibilities of people in Africa, particularly young people, in terms of the literature related to the concepts of “landscapes of care” (Milligan and Wiles 2010). Milligan and Wiles describe landscapes of care as:

past experiences and future expectations; the various temporal rhythms and routines of care that can extend to stages in care relationships or care-giver ‘careers’; cycles of welfare and economic support, health system arrangements in a particular locality. (2010, p. 740)

For young people in Africa, this is a significant consideration, as the diverse nature of their caring experiences, from childhood well into adulthood, influenced

by both the place and space in which they grow up, impacts on how their care relationships intersect and relate to one another (Bowlby 2012).

A consideration when looking at the relationship between young people's caregiving responsibility and their life transitions is how much their transitions are enabled or constrained by what they do. "Children caring for sick and disabled parents 'risk lasting problems as adults'" was the headline of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation press release accompanying their research report into young carers' transitions to adulthood (Dearden and Becker 2000). While focused in the UK, it was one of the first reports to recognize that young people not only care for parents or relatives, often with little support, but that it can have long-lasting impacts as they transition to adulthood. This report itself acknowledged that little was known about these impacts and that it was important not only to look at how young people were affected by caring on a day-to-day basis, but how it also affected their decisions and activities in relation to education, training, and employment, leaving home, and becoming an adult. The study acknowledged a number of key findings. Firstly young carers often fail to achieve educational qualifications excluding some of them from the labor market or at least making it difficult (combined with their caring responsibility) to find and maintain employment. It also found that leaving home was often problematic and delayed as the young people were needed to stay living at home to care or alternatively young people left home much earlier than their peers, often to be taken into care, as they had reached crisis point at home and could no longer cope. The impacts of caring were not always negative, for example, young carers were more mature and had gained a number of practical skills that are connected to (Valentine 2003) and aided their transitions into adulthood, such as self-reliance, independency, and responsibility. However, these skills were easily outweighed by decreased educational, social, and employment opportunities which undermined their ability to move forward. Young people often used their caregiving skills in the careers they pursued, but the impacts of caregiving (such as on educational qualifications) limited their aspirations for the future. The report also found that among young people caring, poverty and social exclusion were common and few young carers and their families received appropriate support from social care services, if any at all, or services were "sometimes inappropriate, intrusive, or too costly" (Dearden and Becker 2000).

Young people's caregiving responsibilities can have long-term impacts and serious implications in later life – particularly regarding school attendance and attainment, employment prospects, future earning capacity, physical and mental health, and well-being. In addition to this, Dellmann-Jenkins et al.'s (2000) study of individuals aged 18–40 years old caring for parents or grandparents in the USA found care impacted on people's transitions to marriage, employment, and ability to leave home or relocate for work reasons. Levine et al.'s (2005) study of young adult caregivers, also in the USA, concluded that additional research was needed to investigate the impact of caregiving on "educational plans, employment experiences, and social life" among other factors. Part of the reasoning for this could center around the notion of confinement and people's inability to move and "broaden their horizons." Geographers concerned with spatial aspects of care

inequalities have often focused on the implications of confinement and (lack of) access (Bowlby 2012). While confinement can relate to the situation of the person being cared for, it can also refer to the situation of the carer who is confined to a limited space and set of activities by the demands of care. In terms of transitions, this would automatically make it more difficult for a young person to “broaden their horizons,” gaining experience from outside the household and community, which can in turn impact on their aspirations for the future.

Caring itself could also be seen *as* a transition, as well as, or rather than, influencing young people’s transitions. In Smyth et al.’s (2011) study of young carers in Australia, three pathways into caring were examined: being born into caring, a gradual increase in caring responsibilities, and the sudden onset of caring. Care could therefore be a significant event that occurred in a young person’s life, or even a natural progression, and influenced how young people perceived their caring responsibility. Evans (2011), for example, demonstrates in her research on transitions into caring among young people heading households following parental death that a young person may also become responsible for siblings and/or grandparents after their parents death. Day and Evans (2015) also show that young people may care for several different family members over time. This influenced young people in a number of ways, including their employment aspirations as many who took on caring responsibilities as a child or adolescent wanted to become carers in a working capacity when they were older. They felt this would put the skills they had learned within their families to good use by helping others (Evans and Becker 2009).

While there have been an increasing number of studies addressing the transitions to adulthood of young people with caring responsibility in the UK, Australia, and the USA, there are few studies that focus on the transitions to adulthood of young people with caregiving responsibility in Africa and the global South (Punch 2002). Payne’s (2009) doctoral thesis on child-headed households in Zambia and Evans’ (2013; 2012b) work on the transitions of young people caring within families affected by HIV have developed knowledge in this area. Punch (2002) also looks at youth transitions and interdependence in families, although this is in rural Bolivia. However, studies have tended to focus predominantly on children and do not go as far as to look at older youth within their contexts.

Transitions, however, are not only influenced by factors determined within the family but are related to external factors. Dearden and Becker (2000) concluded in their study that while family structure, parental illness, and disability and thus level of care needed were significant factors influencing young people’s transitions to adulthood, it was actually the level of support the family received from outside coupled with the level and adequacy of family income that was likely to have a much bigger influence.

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## 7 Conclusion

The term transition has been “inextricably woven” into the concept of youth (Wyn and White 1997), drawing on notions of conventional “thresholds” or “rites of passage” that define and pattern the progress into adulthood of young people: the

four key ones being completing education, entry into employment, leaving home, and forming a couple (Stokes and Wyn 2007). This chapter argues, however, that transitions can also be unpredicted “events” that occur in a young person’s life and change or shape their transition to adulthood (Bowlby et al. 2010), such as bereavement or parental illness. These “critical moments” (Thomson et al. 2002) may disrupt, reinforce, or shape young people’s pathways to adulthood. This draws away from the notion that transition is developmental or that transition is a linear process through which young people navigate a proscribed number of transitions in sequence on their way to adulthood. It instead recognizes that transitions are influenced by a number of social, cultural, familial, and individual processes that dictate what transitions young people go through and when.

The chapter recognizes that the transition to adulthood for African youth is becoming increasingly uncertain and the social status of “adult” more difficult to achieve (Hansen 2005). Socioeconomic pressures mean transitions are increasingly hard to achieve. This presents challenges for understanding youth in these contexts and illuminates the important contributions that need to be made to understand the continuums in which young Africans, specifically Zambians, are growing into adulthood. These continuums become increasingly complex when young people have to negotiate not just the traditional and global expectations of their lives but also the critical moments that occur, particularly caregiving.

An increasing number of children and young people are taking on caregiving roles for sick or disabled parents or relatives in sub-Saharan Africa, which impacts on their position as a youth within their households as well as on their transitions to adulthood. This chapter highlights the changing nature of care within households as the intergenerational bargain (Collard 2000) has been disrupted and young people have been “uncritically accepted” as caregivers for parents and relatives. Such responsibilities have often impacted on young people’s ability to negotiate their transitions to adulthood as society would expect. While young adult carers may associate caregiving with positive benefits and gain useful skills and competencies, these can be at the expense of other socially expected transitions to adulthood, such as attending and completing school, finding skilled employment, and having the resources to marry and start a family of their own. As a result young people can be caught in a “liminal position” between youth and adulthood as they are unable to make the socially expected transitions linked to their age and lifecourse stage (Evans 2012a).

Care, however, occurs on a continuum, with young people taking on caring responsibilities within the household from a young age which increase over time. The question is when do caring responsibilities become more than what should be expected of a youth, whether these enable or constrain their life transitions, and how they negotiate these additional pressures with often limited support. This chapter therefore calls for deeper exploration of the transitions to adulthood of young people both with and without caregiving responsibilities, especially the way they negotiate their pathways to adulthood within the continuum of care and against wider socioeconomic challenges.



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# Economic Practices of African Street Youth: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, and Zimbabwe

# 19

Wayne Shand, Lorraine van Blerk, and Janine Hunter

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## Abstract

Little is known about how street connected young people maintain livelihoods and how their earning strategies change as they enter adulthood. Living precariously in street environments, markets, and informal settlements, street children and youth develop complex responses to their social and economic marginalization, working on the fringes of the formal and informal urban economy. This chapter draws from research undertaken with street children and youth in three African cities to highlight the importance of the informal economy and reveal how income is generated to meet daily basic needs and the compromises and vulnerabilities these create for young people *Growing up on the Streets*.

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African Street Youth • Earnings • Informal Economy • Urban • Subsistence • Ethnographic Method • Ghana, Zimbabwe and DRC

**1 Introduction**

The rapid growth of informal economic activity is increasingly evident in the cities of sub-Saharan Africa (Lindell 2010). Expanding informality has affected both the spatial configuration of urban centers and the ways in which people shape their socioeconomic relationships (AlSayyad 2004). Definitions of the informal sector have moved beyond the limited scope of unregulated business activity, developed in the 1970s (Hart 1973; Chen 2012), to recognize a more complex and encompassing understanding of the informal as a mode of urbanization that connects spaces and economic activity (Roy and AlSayyad 2004). Urban informality also has a human dimension, manifest in the actions of people, contributing to the social fabric of cities and played out through who is included or excluded as legitimate users of public space.

The growth of the informal economy is significant for street children and youth who occupy dense urban spaces and carve out incomes from the margins to meet their basic needs (Horschelmann and van Blerk 2012). The informal economy, while insecure and precarious, provides an important source of work and opportunities for income generation for youth who may lack the qualifications, stability, or official identification to compete for formal employment (Gough et al. 2013). It offers a plethora of small-scale, irregular, and labor-intensive work tasks, which are relatively easy to access and provide immediate, if minimal, cash payments. For street children and youth, the informal economy has a familiar characteristic of operating beyond the bounds of normative expectations: the lack of regulation and its dynamism creating opportunities for young people to create a subsistence livelihood and find a route into the “adult” economy of the city. The central importance of navigating a path into work is illustrated by a young participant in Accra:

[A] job is a big issue for us on the street because we, the street children, we don't have any work to do. And you know you can go outside and steal and if they catch us they will beat us till death. So we need to work to get enough money to meet our basic needs. (Accra, December 2012)

The subject of children, youth, and work is a contested area of enquiry that can suffer from polarized views, when particular conceptual models of childhood are applied unproblematically, as found in current discourse. On the one hand, children are often positioned as “needing protection” from work (as human beings) and on the other lauded as contributors to families and societies as active agents (Aries 1972; see also James et al. 1998 for the changing conceptions of childhood). In many instances, the roles of young people are blurred in reality, with children in the Global South combining work (paid and unpaid) with education, caring

responsibilities, and play, as part of their daily lives (Ansell 2005). Further, studies of children and youth in a number of urban sub-Saharan African contexts highlight how engagement in diverse work, from a young age, is both a practical necessity and symbolic of transition into adult life (see, e.g., Langevang 2008; Gough et al. 2013; Thorsen 2013). Moreover, for street children and youth, generating an income is essential to meet basic needs and is central to how they survive city life (Conticini 2005; van Blerk 2008, 2013).

The approach taken in this chapter is to accept the complexity of the issue of work in order to explore how street children and youth engage in the economic life of three African cities, focusing on the informal economy. Taking this approach does not negate the importance of removing children from the “worst forms of labor”, but recognizes the reality that street children and youth experience both freedom and constraint as they negotiate urban life (Tranberg Hanson 2008). Despite the challenges created by extreme poverty and violence, street children and youth have a strong motivation to remain in cities (Silvey 2001), perceiving them as places where they can build adult lives “they have reason to value” (Sen 1999). The starting point for understanding the choices and constraints affecting young people is to explore the conditions that determine their ability to generate income and the consequent impact on their safety and well-being.

Where street children and youth are specifically discussed in relation to economic practices, this mostly considers work as part of wider survival strategies or focuses on specific activities including begging, sex work, and street trading (Young 2003; Bromley and Mackie 2008; Abebe 2008; van Blerk 2009). Street children and youth are highly visible in urban centers of Africa as street vendors, begging or undertaking other forms of labor such as cart pulling and collecting recyclable materials. Street youth, due to their precarious social and economic position, live on a subsistence basis and are typically unable to build the material or financial assets to stabilize their position to escape negative cycles of extreme poverty. In this chapter “work” is defined as any economic practice in which street youth engage and includes casual employment, petty trading, waste picking, recycling and selling metals and plastics, illegal acts of theft, sex work, and begging. Despite efforts by government and donor organizations to direct youth into vocational training and regularize economic activity (see, e.g., Izzi 2013), particularly in post-conflict settings, work typically takes place without contract or employment protections within the unregulated informal sector of the economy. Across diverse work activities, there is a common pattern of risk and exploitation that young people attempt, through their actions, to mitigate.

Drawing on research undertaken with street children and youth in three African cities, this chapter examines their economic practices to highlight the diverse approaches adopted to balance the need for income with preserving safety and well-being. The chapter proceeds first with an overview of the method used in the *Growing up on the Streets* research project. This is followed by an outline of the urban informal economy focusing on the precarious position of children and youth. The chapter then turns to empirical data to examine the diverse types of work undertaken by young people and the earnings they are able to generate. Data is

further examined to discuss how work is obtained and how strategies change as children become young adults. The final section of the chapter highlights how street children and youth balance the risks and rewards of working in the urban informal economy. The chapter concludes with an overview of the implications of work for young people growing up on the streets.

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## 2 Research Method

Data for this chapter have been drawn from *Growing up on the Streets*, a longitudinal research project undertaken with children and youth in Accra, Ghana; Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); and Harare, Zimbabwe. The research has engaged 198 young people aged 14–20 across the three cities to understand the choices and constraints affecting street children and youth as they become adults. The study was participative, with young people engaged as informants and investigators in the research (Shand 2014; van Blerk et al. 2017). Using an ethnographic method, data has been collected through weekly interviews with six research assistants in each city, who were trained in ethnographic research skills. During the interviews the research assistants report on the experience of their own lives and those of ten additional young people that belong to the research assistants' social network. These "diarized" accounts were supplemented by quarterly thematic focus groups, which involved all members of the networks, to investigate issues most important to the young people.

A total of 18 focus groups on work and earnings were held in Accra and Harare in October and November 2013 and in Bukavu in June 2014. During the focus group meetings, participants discussed the meaning of work for children and youth on the streets, the types of economic activity they engaged in, and their earnings. Differences of experience, the impact of age and gender on accessing work, and the implications of work on the well-being of street children and youth were debated. The focus group meetings were facilitated by the *Growing up on the Streets* country project manager and conducted in local languages (Twi in Accra, Shona in Harare, and Swahili in Bukavu). Voice recordings of the discussions were translated into English and transcribed for coding and inclusion in the research dataset.

Ethical clearance for the project was obtained from the University of Dundee, drawing on international guidelines for research with children and street children (see Alderson and Morrow 2011). Data collection was undertaken in conjunction with NGO partners in each city and utilized existing child protection policies and contextualized practices of working with street children and youth. Informed consent was obtained from participants, and this was reinforced through discussion about the shared responsibilities to maintain confidentiality of information. The research process was structured to protect the anonymity of participants and to ensure that sensitive information gathered during the research could not be used to cause harm to the young people sharing the details of their lives on the street.

### 3 Working in the Urban Informal Economy

The informal economy constitutes the principle source of employment for a majority of urban dwellers in many cities of the Global South. Mitlin and Satterthwaite (2013, p. 161), drawing on ILO analysis of 46 low- and medium-income countries (ILO 2012a), show that in all but two countries included in the data, the number of persons employed in (non-agricultural) informal employment exceeded the numbers employed in the formal sector. Informal economic activity has expanded rapidly in response to rising urban populations, lack of enforcement of regulations, and an absence of formal sector jobs, to become the main source of income for people living in poverty (ILO 2002; Amis 2006; Brown et al. 2010; Myers 2011).

Income from informal sector activity remains at the core of livelihoods for urban households and particularly so in sub-Saharan African cities that have not, according to Potts (2013), experienced the same shift toward formal employment and the creation of stable semi-skilled jobs as has been seen in Asia over the last 20 years. For the two thirds of urban residents in sub-Saharan Africa who generate their livelihood from the informal sector (Sommers 2010), it is expected to continue to be the primary source of employment and income over the medium term (African Economic Outlook 2012; ILO 2015). Reliance on income from informal sector activity is vitally important for residents of the three research cities. While accurate data on the scale of the urban informal sector is limited, Osei-Boateng (2011) estimates that in Ghana more than 80% of the employed are working in the informal sector. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the African Economic Outlook (2012) reports falling levels of formal employment, with 70% of 15–24 year olds without jobs as evidence of a growing reliance on the informal sector. For Zimbabwe the ILO (2012a) estimates that 52% of non-agricultural employment is in the informal sector.

The existence of an urban “informal sector” was first identified by Keith Hart (1973) to describe the low-income activities of unskilled migrants from northern Ghana to the capital city Accra, who were unable to find waged employment. Initially, informal practices were seen to reflect more “traditional” forms of enterprise, which were out of keeping with “modern” approaches to business organization and activity. Informal business and employment were defined as unregulated by the state, trading from streets and urban markets, often hazardous and short term, and offering few protections to the salary or job security of workers. Perceived as a precursor form of economic activity, informal enterprise was portrayed as an early stage of economic development that would become formalized, as proposed by Arthur Lewis (1954), and absorbed into an industrializing economy. As theories of economic development changed in the 1970s and 1980s, to reflect decentralized production and the creation of more “flexible” labor markets, ideas about the role and position of the informal sector shifted to be regarded as a permanent but dependent feature of capitalist development (Portes et al. 1989, cited in Chen 2012).

While the informal economy continues to be represented as a “lesser” form of urban economic activity (see Sommers 2010), recent readings suggest a more complex picture of blurred boundaries between formal and informal economic



practices. This addresses both the dominance of informality in cities of the Global South and, for some scholars, the informal as a distinctive form of urbanism (Bayat 2004; Simone 2004; Pieterse 2008). While contrasting informal with formal is useful shorthand to describe scale and differentiate modes of economic activity, in relation to the degree they are regulated by the state, these categories are in reality complex and overlapping (Centeno and Portes 2006). Potts (2008) argues that the created dualism between informal and formal obscures the interdependency between the “sectors” and how people, in reality, engage in urban economies. The operation of the informal economy is tied into the structures of power within cities, with some urban territories for vending and markets being controlled by criminal gangs or political parties (Jones 2010; McGregor 2013). Urban informal economies are complex and highly competitive and require that individuals cultivate strong business skills or detailed local knowledge of markets (Skinner 2008).

Street children and youth become expert in the operation of informal economies and the subtle power relationships that exist in the urban territories of markets, unregistered businesses, and street vending. Building livelihoods depends on understanding where opportunities exist and judgments about the risks associated with various types of economic activity. In urban contexts where street children and youth have limited agency, operating in highly constrained and potentially dangerous environments, they have few options other than to engage in the informal economy of cities to meet their basic needs (Beazley 2000; Young 2003; Abebe 2008). Despite international efforts to eradicate the ‘worst forms of labour’, championed by the International Labour Organisation (see ILO 2002; 2012b) and reflected in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989, article 32), street children and youth negotiate contested environments. In these urban spaces adults protect access to economic opportunity and city government exerts control over the public realm to protect the interests of formal business and preserve “authorized” use of street environments (Bayat and Biekart 2009; Kamete 2010; van Blerk 2012). Within this context, and where additional pressure is applied by city authorities seeking to regularize informal economic activity (see Amis 2004 for a comparative review of state efforts to regulate the informal sector), street children and youth are forced to the most marginal economic and physical spaces and into the poorest layers of the urban economy (Lindell 2010).

A central feature of the informal sector, beyond its scale and economic significance in cities, is its permeability. The lack of employment safeguards, the use of public space to sell any goods small enough to carry, and the low cost of entry make the informal economy, and public markets in particular, accessible to street children and youth looking for opportunities to generate an income (Bromley and Mackie 2008). Bass (2000) in her study of markets in Dakar, Senegal, describes how children use overturned buckets as chairs to sell peanuts from the side of the road or work as mobile hawkers selling water and fruit juice. Thorsen (2013) provides examples of young migrants to Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, that engage in petty trade and street selling, while searching for more stable employment. Van Blerk (2008) focuses on the experience of girls arriving in cities of Ethiopia, where initial informal employment (as maids or coffee shop attendants) leads to sex work as girls

attempt to gain a degree of control over their earnings and working conditions. In these examples, the informal sector provides entry into the urban economy, but is limited to low-paid marginal activity where children and youth may face exploitation of their labor and person.

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#### **4 Types of Work Undertaken by Street Children and Youth**

Research undertaken by *Growing up on the Streets* with young people in DRC, Ghana, and Zimbabwe has provided a detailed insight into the economic strategies and forms of work undertaken by street children and youth – as described in Table 1. There are a number of common characteristics and factors across the three cities that shape the types work available in the informal sector. First, young people typically operate on a subsistence basis. Street youth become adept at finding different types of work that generate an income to meet their immediate needs. Such opportunities are wide ranging and can be formal or informal and often involve illegal activity. Street children and youth aim to earn enough to meet their daily requirements, and avoid holding money as it increases their vulnerability to violence and robbery. Second, most work is transient. While there are examples of some young people developing lasting relationships with formal or informal sector employers or regularly returning to familiar areas of work such as petty trading, typically work activity is short term and lacks security. Third, “legal” earnings are very low and are regarded by young people as being inadequate to meet their needs. The lack of sufficient and stable income contributes to risk taking, with young people engaging in work that they are aware may cause them to be injured or arrested. For youth across the three cities, work and risk taking change over time in relation to the opportunities available in the city, their level of need for income, and their age.

There are, however, differences between the three cities in the types of work available to street children and youth which relate to specific local economic conditions. In Accra, the city has dense informal development and large market areas, which create multiple opportunities for young people to find and access forms of petty employment. The strong economy found in Accra contrasts with Harare and Bukavu, where there are fewer opportunities for street children and youth who become reliant on theft and sex work to generate an income. Involvement in these illegal and dangerous activities significantly increases the likelihood of becoming a victim of violence, ill-health, injury, and arrest, all with negative consequences for the long-term well-being of the young person.

As set out in Table 1, street children and youth report involvement in a wide range of work activities across the three cities of the research. The diversity of experience underlines the ingenuity of young people to find and create income-earning opportunities. It also reflects the capacity of the informal economy to utilize the labor of children and youth. As young people have little capital to invest in enterprise activities, there is a reliance on physical work: using their bodies as their only significant asset. The data indicates that the types of work undertaken is similar across the research cities, with carrying, cleaning, vending, and gambling being

**Table 1** Work types – Accra, Bukavu, and Harare

Work type	Accra	Bukavu	Harare
<b>Carrying goods</b>	Off-loading containers Running errands Loading/driver's mate Carrying for shoppers Kayayei (female porters)	Commercial loading Ship unloading Driver's mate	Supermarket customers Luggage at bus stations Moving furniture Commercial goods Newspapers
<b>Cleaning</b>	Sweeping market areas Cleaning chop bars Shoeshine Laundry Toilet attendant Car windscreen	Car washing/cleaning Collecting waste Cleaning canoes Sweeping Motorbike washing	Sweeping market areas Cleaning shops Waste bins Car washing Cleaning "combi" buses Laundry
<b>Vending</b>	Alcohol/water Fruit/cooked food Belts/clothes/shoes Candies/biscuits Earrings/jewelry Soap/toiletries Airtime	Stones Disinfectant Bicycle renting	Sweets and biscuits Cigarettes Airtime Alcohol Fruit and eggs Music and film CDs
<b>Drugs</b>	Marijuana (wee) Tramadol (pain killers)	Ganja (Cannabis) Le chanvre/fege (Hemp) Kazamba (inhaling petrol) BT (Boss Tangawisi whisky)	Marijuana (Mbanje) Strong beer (Zed) Diazepam (tranquilizer) Cough syrup (Broncleer)
<b>Recycling for sale</b>	Scrap metals Plastic bottles	Scrap metals Plastic bottles	Plastic bottles Aluminium cans Copper cables Clothing/cloth/hair weave Food (repackage for sale)
<b>Guarding</b>	Security company	Cars	Market night watch Cars
<b>Sex work</b>	Pick up clients at bars Street prostitution Sugar mama/daddy	Pick up clients at bars Street prostitution	Pick up clients at bars Pornography filming Sugar mama/daddy
<b>Theft</b>	Pickpocketing From sex work clients Confidence trick Sale of stolen goods Snatching phones Internet fraud	Snatching (shocking) Thieves' lookout Stealing car parts	Pickpocketing Violent assault on adults Assault on smaller children Snatching phones/money From shops/shoppers

*(continued)*

**Table 1** (continued)

Work type	Accra	Bukavu	Harare
<b>Gambling</b>	Cards Betting on computer games	Cards	Cards Dice
<b>Laboring</b>	Shoe/clothing repair Repair mobile phones Unlicensed taxi driver Assisting fishermen Chop shop cook Metal shop apprentice	Cart pushing Fishing Concrete/masonry Fritter cooking Repairing fishing nets Charcoal collecting	Shoe repair Ground maintenance Melting plastics to make floor polish Make lampshades for sale Repair of roads
<b>Begging</b>	Street begging Guides for blind beggars	Street begging Church collections	Street begging Supermarkets/churches
<b>Personal services</b>	Babysitter Hairdressing/weave Marriage matchmaker		

Focus groups on earnings: October and November 2013 (Accra and Harare) and June 2014 (Bukavu)

important for all street children and youth participating in the research. There are also some notable differences between the cities, with sex work, theft, and recycling being more significant as an income-generating activity in Harare and Bukavu, when compared to Accra. This difference relates to the availability of work opportunities in the informal economy, with the smaller economic base of Harare and Bukavu creating a greater reliance on higher-risk activities.

## 5 Engaging in the Urban Economy

Living in the streets and informal urban settlements, children and youth are in constant contact, and sometimes in conflict, with the economy of the city. Encountering market traders, street hawkers, food vendors, shoeshine boys, and shop, hotel, and laundry workers forms part of the daily experience of life on the street. The bustle of people at work color the environment and define the points of entry, for young people, into the urban economy. *Growing up on the Streets* data shows how young people adopt a range of contextualized strategies to maximize their ability to obtain work. These are related to specific opportunities available in “base” neighborhoods and within traveling distance of primary work locations. Street children and youth build a detailed knowledge of the opportunities available, drawing on direct experience and intelligence gathered within their social networks.

Many young people travel to cities with an idealized view of the types of work they will be able to access. Once in the city they come to realize that their lack of

knowledge, skills, resources, and social connections means that they are limited to the margins of the economy. In the following extract, a young participant describes how he arrived in Accra with an idea of working as a shoemaker, having just their lorry fare home and a single shoeshine brush:

So I came to Accra when I got here I didn't know anywhere. I was just roaming round [...] and one woman called me and told me that she has gone to buy food items from the market but she is not able to carry it to the car station, so I should go and help her with that. So I followed her and carried it for her [and] she gave me 50 Pesewas. I used 30 Pesewas to buy polish and I had brush in my bag and I used 10 Pesewas to buy pure water and I was left with only 10 Pesewas. [...] So I was roaming round when I came around some plywood, I used the brush to hit the plywood and I will be shouting the shoeshine is here. When I started work from morning before 12 noon I had 15 Cedis. I was happy because that was the first time I had money on me. I continued the business and still sleep opposite to the police station. (Accra, April 2014)

Young people living and working in market areas of Harare rely on good relations with traders who will pay them to clear away cardboard, plastics, and waste food and to carry and load market goods. Market areas are places where street children and youth can create work opportunities, such as the sale of sachets of water and the collection of recyclable materials including glass, plastic bottles, and aluminum cans. These auxiliary activities do not conflict with the interests of traders and therefore are relatively safe for children and youth. In Harare, young people become familiar in local areas by asking for small work tasks and being “called out” to carry goods or clear away waste. A participant in Harare illustrates this, stating:

I move around many shops asking to put away the bins. Some of them know me and some do not. Some of them trust me and some do not even want me near their items. (Harare, November 2013)

Over time relations with traders can provide an important source of social capital for street children and youth, who may otherwise lack stability in most other parts of their lives. Building networks and trust is difficult, however, as a participant in Accra highlights when seeking work in a local market “if you go there is like you are a newcomer there, it will be very hard for you to get one load to carry, because the person can think you will run away with it” (Accra, October 2013).

Central squares and adjacent streets are key locations for street children and youth who engage in petty trade: hawking goods from pavements and to the drivers and passengers of passing vehicles. Street vending is particularly important in Accra and Harare where there are large public markets and high volumes of potential customers. In these cities street children and youth trade a vast array of goods from toffees and biscuits through to music CDs, clothing, and cleaning materials. Anything that can be carried and hawked on the streets, and can generate a profit, will be considered as a saleable item. Young people appear to have two broad approaches to obtaining goods to sell. The first approach is to obtain goods in bulk and subdivide these to sell on the streets. This is particularly common in Harare where young people buy multi-bags of sweets and blocks of 200 cigarettes from the

large city market in Mbare and sell these individually in residential areas. In doing this they are able to generate a small profit on each sale, but they need to have the initial capital to purchase stock. The second approach taken to vending, and more typically found in Accra, is working for a more established trader. Young people are allocated stock to hawk on the streets and at the end of the day get paid either a small fee or a share of the profit on the goods they have sold. Working for a fee reduces the need for young people to have money “up front” but also limits the total amount they are able to earn.

Commercial districts of city centers and retail areas are important locations for street children and youth to generate income from informal and illegal activities. Young people congregate in these areas due to the high flow of vehicles and people, which provide opportunities for begging and for theft by snatching and pickpocketing. Busy commercial and retail areas can be fruitful during weekdays when there is a high footfall, but poor locations on Sundays and during national holidays when there are few people using the area. The character of these places changes at night, when bars open and the environment is dark and lit only by passing cars. During late evening and night hours, some street youth become predatory – “doing rounds” – seeking out intoxicated adults to rob for money, mobile phones, and other valuables. This is the case in Bukavu, where one participant reported “I have no other job apart from stealing” (Bukavu, June 2014). In city centers, street youth target particular areas where they can “cut pockets” or snatch and make a quick getaway. While potentially lucrative, theft is risky as a young person in Harare suggested “you want to steal you have to first look at the face and consider if the person will not kill you once he catches you, because there are other people that can beat you bad once they catch you” (Harare, October 2013).

Street children and youth operating from residential areas of cities rely on informal work activities such as begging outside of shops and churches, car washing, vending, and gambling. In these areas of the city, there is more limited economic opportunity, which means that young people have a greater reliance on scavenging food and opportunistic theft. Despite the limited access to income-earning opportunities, residential areas are attractive to some young people who find it difficult to cope with the risks associated with market and commercial districts of the city.

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## 6 Earnings

Earnings for street children and youth are generally low for most types of work except theft, sex work, and occasionally gambling, which can generate large sums of money. Itinerant working across a range of tasks and in situations, where young people can face considerable risk, generates an average earning of around \$2 per day. However, street children and youth can expect periods with no work and therefore no money. When this occurs, they rely on the support of friends or engage in higher-risk activity. In Bukavu, where there are limited opportunities available in the informal economy, there is a stark choice for street children and youth. A participant stated

**Table 2** Earnings by work type

Work type	Description	Indicative income (US\$)
Carrying goods	Loading/driver's mate – per day	\$1–11 (Accra)
	Ship unloading – per day	\$2 (Bukavu)
	Supermarket/luggage – per day	\$3 (Harare)
Cleaning	Chop bars/laundry – per day	\$2–8 (Accra)
	Car washing 3–6 cars per day	\$1–2 (Bukavu)
	Refuse clearing – per job	\$2 (Harare)
Vending	Sweets/food – per day	\$2–11 (Accra)
	Disinfectant – per day	\$20 (Bukavu)
	CDs/DVDs – per day	\$10 (Harare)
Drugs	Marijuana – per day	\$5–15 (Accra)
	Marijuana – per day	\$15 (Harare)
Recycling for sale	Scrap metals – average	\$7 (Accra)
	300 plastic bottles collected	\$4 (Harare)
Guarding	Security guard – per day	\$3 (Accra)
	Cars guarding – per day	\$4 (Harare)
Sex work	Earnings – per day	\$5–50 (Accra)
	Rate – per client	\$1–5 (Bukavu)
	Earnings – per day	\$38 (Harare)
Theft	Theft and fraud – average	\$0–130 (Accra)
	Snatching per day – average	\$5–30 (Bukavu)
	Street robbery – average	\$26 (Harare)
Gambling	Cards and computer games – average	\$8 (Accra)
	Playing cards – average	\$2 (Bukavu)
	Dice and cards – average	\$15–250 (Harare)
Laboring	Laboring – per day	\$1–8 (Accra)
	Disentangling fishing nets – per day	\$3 (Bukavu)
	Laboring – per day	\$5 (Harare)
Begging	Street begging – per day average	\$8–16 (Accra)
	Street begging – per day average	\$1 (Bukavu)
	Street begging – per day average	\$25 (Harare)
Personal services	Hairdressing/weave – per day	\$3–8 (Accra)

Focus groups on earnings: October and November 2013 (Accra and Harare) and June 2014 (Bukavu)

that in Bukavu “[w]e have only two types of jobs – sex and steal [to] pickpocket or accompany the ‘*omboyi*’ – thugs at night in stealing” (Bukavu, June 2014).

As shown in Table 2, the earnings for different tasks vary considerably and will form part of a patchwork of activity that street children and youth engage in to generate an income. Street children and youth involved in the research think that they are exploited by employers and customers because they have little alternative but to accept the small amounts of money paid to them. Young people report that they often have to haggle for payment at the end of a task to avoid being cheated. Such treatment contributes to the sense of isolation and injustice felt by many young people. The imbalance of income and the cost of living are illustrated by a comment from a participant in Accra:

When you sell *koko* (porridge) or even work in a chop bar, you will wake up at dawn and after a days' work you will be paid 5 Ghana Cedis (equivalent to \$1.30). That is what you will use for food and also save some of it. You will also bathe and others, so you will suffer for the work but you will not get anything. (Accra, October 2013)

Young people can work long hours in labor-intensive activity to earn enough money to meet the cost of life in the city. In most cases income is merely sufficient to cover the basic needs for survival, with little possibility of saving for periods where no work is available.

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## 7 Work and the Informal Economy: Discussion

Detailing the types of work and the level of earnings available to street children and youth provides an insight into the wide range of economic activities undertaken in cities. It highlights how street youth operate in the informal sector to secure income through both legal and illegal means. For street youth, engaging the informal sector has a practical importance to earn money but also reflects their lived experience of being socially embedded in streets, markets, and urban settlements. As children and youth “out of place” (Connolly and Ennew 1996), the informal sector provides a route to making an adult life and accessing the economy of the city, despite their disadvantages. Engaging in the urban economy, for street children and youth, blurs dichotomized boundaries of formal and informal, legal and illegal employment and enterprise in ways that reflect their marginal position. Young people continuously negotiate access to work, aware of the need to balance generating an income against managing risks of age inappropriate and inherently dangerous forms of income generation. The experience and the choices associated with work on the margins are indicative of the constantly shifting and contested nature of livelihoods for street children and youth.

Street children and youth adopt strategies that are informed by, and are designed to exploit, specific opportunities in the urban environment, adopting varying tactics to generate income depending on the socio-spatial context and the time of day or night. Similar to the findings of Ursin (2012) in Salvador, Brazil, the *Growing up on the Streets* research highlights dynamic adaptation to the conditions of the city as a necessary characteristic of survival on the streets. Engagement with the city and the informal economy is constitutive, allowing street children and youth to construct knowledge and establish an identity in ways that enable them to protect their well-being in adverse conditions. These issues are discussed by first considering the different experiences of boys and girls engaging in the informal economy.

### 7.1 Gender Differences

The *Growing up on the Streets* research provides detail on the differing experiences of young men and women seeking work in the informal sector. The type of work



opportunity available to both genders is contextually specific, with data showing a wider range of income-generating activities in cities where there is a stronger economic base. Across all three urban contexts of the research, work can be seen to be broadly gendered, with boys undertaking heavier manual tasks, such as loading, recycling of metals, and laboring, whereas girls are typically engaged in cleaning, vending, and personal services such as hairdressing. One significant exception to this gendered distribution is found in Accra, where girls work as *Kayayei* – head porters who carry goods of all types between markets and lorry parks in the city center. Across the three cities of the research, girls are frequently drawn into sex work where there are no other options available in the informal economy.

Sex work is common among girls in Accra, but is the predominant form of income generation in Harare and Bukavu. For girls participating in the research, sex work appears to be inevitable. A girl in Harare commented on her experience when first coming to the city: “[i]f you meet other girls when you come on to the street they will tell you to go with them to go look for money, of which as a girl there is no other way of making money except prostituting. So at first you will be shy and in the end you will be used to it” (Harare, November 2014). Similarly, for the girls in Bukavu, there appear to be few alternatives other than engaging in sex work, and according to one participant, “once in, you are stuck!” Girls engage in sex work, “because of the poverty and hunger; when you are hungry, you cannot think twice. Even for 500 francs [around 60 US Cents] you can have sex provided that you get some food” (Bukavu, June 2014).

While there are examples of boys engaging in sex work, this appears to be less common than for girls. van Blerk (2008) has highlighted the complex motivations and routes into sex work in Ethiopia among young girls migrating from rural areas to Addis Ababa and the provincial city of Nazareth. The research discusses the hazards of sex work but also highlights how it can provide a way to regain some control over work to enable transition into adult life. Similarly in Bukavu, sex work provides income for girls, it is also a means to obtain a degree of stability. Many girls work in bars where they source “clients”, taking men into back rooms for sex. This is facilitated by bar owners who allow girls to sleep in the back rooms, during the night, as the presence of the girls attracts men to the bar. While these bars are bleak environments for girls, they are marginally safer than working from the street, where they describe frequent experiences of gang rape and violent assault. Girls use their contact with men to steal money and other valuables they can use to meet their needs. A girl in Bukavu illustrates, commenting “[o]nce you have no lover interested in you, you may go around the bar looking for old aged men or very drunken men, pull him to the dance floor, check his pockets while dancing. What you find will be your booty” (Bukavu, June 2014).

## 7.2 Work Changes as Children Get Older

Participants in *Growing up on the Streets* report that age is an important factor determining the types of work they can access in the informal sector. For boys the physical changes of adolescence and early adulthood enable them to undertake more

strenuous forms of laboring such as loading, security work, and fishing, as other forms of work, such as begging, become less lucrative. As identified in other contexts (see Hecht 1999; Young 2003), with age boys becoming less able to beg, they no longer secure adult sympathy; their physical presence is more likely to be perceived as a threat. In these circumstances boys move to other forms of work but, within social networks, may continue as “guards” for younger children, who alongside girls with babies and young people with disabilities are more successful in eliciting money when begging. The changing perception of boys, in relation to work, is illustrated by a young person in Harare:

[They] consider that if you are older you may steal from them; others look at your face – if it is innocent you will get the job. A person may look at your face and see a scar and he will not give you a job; but if he looks at that youngster’s face which is smooth he will get the job. (Harare, November 2013)

Street children and youth develop detailed knowledge of the informal economy, adapting their tactics and learning new skills to maximize their chances of obtaining work. In Bukavu a young man described how he developed new skills through observation and practice: “I befriended the old cart pushers, helping them and progressively became accustomed to cart pushing up to now” (Bukavu, June 2014). From a very young age, girls can be seen in the streets of Accra practicing to be *Kayayei*, carrying steel bowls on their heads. Young people watch and will engage adults and other young people that they see working. In Bukavu a participant describes when he arrived in the city he came to sleep on the shore of Lake Kivu and saw fishermen bringing in their nets. He says “when I was first chased from home [...] I started not knowing how to take a fish out of the net [...] now [I am] an expert” (Bukavu, June 2014).

Young people have to constantly negotiate their relationships and represent their ability to undertake the work tasks available. A participant in Accra stated “there are some jobs when you are going to get them they will ask of your age before they will offer you the work, if you are about 12 or 13 years, you will not be given the job” (Accra, October 2013). While the ability to successfully “hustle” for work is an important skill in a competitive marketplace, it can have severe consequences for the young person if a deceit is discovered. A participant in Bukavu commented “I never carry loads because I once carried a sack of cement, but I was unable to lift it and make a single step forward. Both the sack and I collapsed to the ground! I am too young to carry loads, heavy loads” (Bukavu, June 2014). Engaging in work beyond their physical abilities can result in serious injury but can also produce a violent response from employers when an inability to sew, sell, or carry loads is revealed.

### 7.3 Managing Risk

Engaging in all forms of work, in the informal sector, young people experience verbal abuse from adults and encounter risks to their physical safety. The types of

work available to street children and youth make them visible and therefore vulnerable to various forms of attack and manipulation. Street children and youth have very little power to affect the behavior of adults toward them and commonly experience being misled or exploited. A frequent report from research participants is that they are promised a sum of money or other benefits to complete a work task, but find that they are not paid when the job is finished. Street youth and particularly girls experience situations where a promise of work and payment is used as a lure into situations where they become victim to sexual violence. Young people often lack the confidence and social standing to make formal complaint against this exploitation to police or other authorities. Even where there are legal rights in place, reports from research participants indicate that young people are often considered, by state agencies, to be undeserving of the protection of the law.

Informal and unregulated work can be very dangerous. Activities including carrying heavy goods, using chemicals to strip plastic from copper wiring, selling goods in the road, laying and repairing fishing nets, and using machinery all carry the potential of serious harm. The risk associated with unprotected and age-inappropriate work is highlighted by a participant in Accra describing the hazards of carrying bails of secondhand clothes (known as *foss*):

When I was doing the *foss* work, the bails are very heavy. When it rains it doesn't mean you shouldn't carry it, you have to. When you are walking I don't wear shoe just rubber slippers, so it is dangerous for me because I know someone who slipped and was hit by the bail and the person died. (Accra, October 2013)

Risks of violence are also prevalent for young people seeking work. A participant in Accra described how they woke at dawn to search the market area for coconut to sell, stating that “[s]ometimes when you are not lucky you will go and meet some thieves and they will take all your money from you” (Accra, October 2013). A violent response is also typical in Bukavu where young people face assault when they are stealing. A participant commented “I sometimes wake up with a bad luck. I may spend the whole day being caught and beaten” (Bukavu, June 2014).

A key source of risk for street children and youth engaged in economic activity is through contact with state authorities including police, city wardens, and soldiers. Living and working in contested public spaces, street youth are visible transgressors of bylaws on trading, sleeping, and occupying areas of the city that are designated for other uses. Young people report that they are frequently subject to violent assault, confiscations, and harassment from authorities who wield significant authority in the lives of young people working in the public realm. The negative perception of street children and youth, as a source of criminal activity, is used to justify the behavior of police and city authority staff tasked with “sanitizing” urban centers (see also Kamete and Lindell 2010; Lindell 2010). Additionally, shopkeepers and licensed traders, according to focus group participants in Harare, call upon the authorities to reduce competition. “People of the shops are cruel: they may report to the police that street kids here are disturbing their customers – they are pained for the two Rand (20 US Cents) we will be begging for” (Harare, November 2013). This finding is

supported by Kamete’s (2008, p. 1729) research in Zimbabwe, which indicates some businesses “buy services” from corrupt officers to “deal with youth who may have been ‘hurting’ their business.”

In Accra, young people trading on the street conflict with city authority market wardens. These officials are called, in the Ga language of Accra, the *Abaayee*, which translates as “they are coming.” The *Abaayee* have a reputation among street children and youth in Accra for confiscating and destroying goods that the young people are selling. A participant in Accra who worked on the street painting nails tells how the *Abaayee* “even came this morning to destroy things. They came to sack everyone there – they said that they will not allow anyone to sell there” (Accra, October 2013). The confiscation and destruction of goods is not only a financial blow for young people, who may have invested their money in buying stock to sell, but also multiplies risk. Where young people are operating on behalf of another trader, they can be held responsible for the loss of goods, creating either a debt or leading to violent physical punishment.

To explore perceptions of risk and decision-making among street children and youth, an exercise was undertaken with participants in Harare to identify anticipated reward and the risks associated with different work activities the young people had previously identified in discussion. A summary of this exercise is shown in Fig. 1. Participants were asked to rank their perceptions of different work activities as being low to high reward and low to high risk (on a scale of 1–5). Reward was defined primarily as financial gain in the form of cash or goods. Risk was defined as the

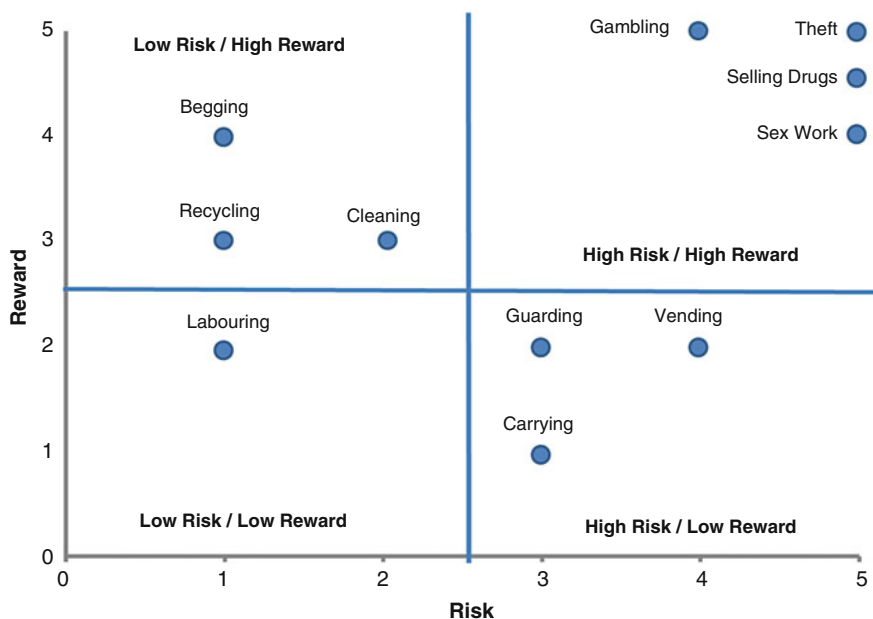


Fig. 1 Economic activity – risk and reward (Source: Harare Focus Groups – November 2013)

potential for violence, injury, and arrest when undertaking the task. It was clear from the discussion that illegal activities such as theft, the sale of drugs, and sex work were perceived as offering the potential for significant reward, but the likelihood and the severity of risk were very high. However, safer activities such as laboring, recycling, and cleaning were seen as offering lower rewards.

It was notable that the understanding of risk was situated in the urban context of the informal economy and in the previous experience of the participants. Perception of risk changes both in relation to context and activity and also a factor of age and knowledge of the street. Higher-risk activity becomes more attractive and likely where individuals have avoided punishment or capture in the past. Local knowledge of escape routes through informal settlements or the support of group members helps street children and youth to manage high-risk situations. Decisions on which activities are high risk are situated with vending, for example, being seen as a higher-risk activity because of the potential for arrest by the police, being visible and therefore more vulnerable to street robbery, and the dangers of moving between traffic when selling goods to motorists. Guarding was also perceived as having relatively higher risk given the potential for violent confrontation. The exercise allowed participants to reflect upon and discuss their criteria for engaging in different types of work activity. While there are a limited range of options available to street children and youth in Harare, individuals think carefully about the types of work they engage in, taking account of context and previous experience of managing dangerous situations.

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## 8 Conclusion

This chapter has examined street children and youth in relation to the informal economy, drawing on research undertaken in three African cities, to explore issues of work. The burgeoning informal sectors found in cities of sub-Saharan Africa are key locations for street children and youth who gravitate to the dense settlements and streets as places of opportunity to earn income and to become established as independent adults. For street children and youth, the porous character of the informal sector offers a range of opportunities for legal and illegal work, but moreover provides a means to cope with the disadvantages of age, lack of education, and social status to generate a livelihood. In a sense street children both contribute to and are as “informal” as the economy, being outside of normal family environments and engaged in irregular, illegal, and illicit activities.

Data from *Growing up on the Streets* highlights the diversity of work activity, the limited earnings, exploitation, and the risks associated with street life. It also, however, underlines the complexity and the constrained agency of young people building a route into adulthood. The adverse conditions require the construction of a detailed knowledge of urban spaces and social relations to identify opportunity and to avoid violence and arrest. As children grow, their work strategies adapt in relation to their physical abilities and as they gain new responsibilities for children and partners. While outside of formal education and training, street children and youth

build a grounded knowledge of the informal sector that forms a foundation for adult life. The patterns of coping and transition from childhood to adulthood provide insights into the operation of urban economies, giving the experience of street children and youth added importance to those tasked with managing the development of cities.

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## Abstract

Despite rapid economic growth in recent years, youth unemployment in Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, has remained stubbornly high. This situation has compelled unemployed young people, in particular those not at school, to venture into self-employment in the informal sector. Governments in sub-Saharan African countries (SSA), unable to underwrite labor markets in which there is regular or secure employment in the formal sector, are promoting entrepreneurship as a means of addressing employment challenges that young people face. This chapter argues that although the optimism concerning the entry of youth into entrepreneurship may be justified, the effect in terms of reducing unemployment and underemployment is rather complex. Entrepreneurship appears to provide both pathways out of poverty and mitigation against severe poverty for some young people. Unlike the majority of nonentrepreneurial youth (that is, those not involved in running a business venture), some entrepreneurial youth, especially

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older ones, can develop sustained economic activities and can, it seems, pursue independent livelihoods. However, the majority of youth face a vast complex of issues and challenges in starting and running viable businesses which makes it difficult for them to pursue successful livelihoods.

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**Keywords**

Sub-Saharan Africa • Entrepreneurship • Informal sector • Livelihoods • Unemployment • Youth

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## 1 Introduction

In recent years, the promotion of youth entrepreneurship as a means of improving youth livelihoods in the Third World has attracted increasing attention from scholars and policy makers (Bennell 2000; Curtain 2002; Barasa and Kaabwe 2001; Chigunta 2007; Sommers 2010; Chigunta 2012; Chigunta and Chisupa 2013). Most of this attention has focused on sub-Saharan Africa (SSA, i.e., African countries south of the Sahara desert) where many countries are faced with seemingly overwhelming problems posed by ever-growing numbers of unemployed youth (Mulenga 2000; Chigunta et al. 2013). Employment and economic opportunities in the formal sector of the economy have generally contracted, in part due to measures linked to structural adjustment programs (Chigunta 2012; Chigunta et al. 2013). Despite rapid economic growth in recent years, youth unemployment has remained stubbornly high, in many instances double or three times the national average. This situation has compelled unemployed young people, especially those not at school, to venture into self-employment in a range of activities, some licit and some illicit, in what is generally referred to as “the informal sector.”

Drawing on a diverse range of literature and the nationwide 2013 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) survey, this chapter discusses the challenge of youth unemployment in SSA and the extent to which entrepreneurship can provide a solution. It scrutinizes the levels and characteristics of youth entrepreneurship across selected SSA countries, revealing the nature of the businesses that they are establishing, their operations, and the challenges that they are facing. The entrepreneurial environment within which youth entrepreneurs operate is also examined. This is done in order to gain some insights into the kind of institutional constraints that young entrepreneurs in Africa face.

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## 2 Understanding Youth in the African Context

The continuing debate on who is a “youth” in Africa has not resolved the confusion surrounding this concept. Not only does the perception of youth vary historically and culturally, it also varies from one context to another and even within contexts

(Mkandawire 2000; Kanyenze et al. 1999, 2000; Bennell 2000; Curtain 2002; Argenti 2002; de Waal 2002; UN 2003; Chigunta 2007). As Kanyenze et al. (1999) observe, the definition of who is a “youth” appears to depend much on which dimension of “youth” takes precedence. It can be demographic (age); cultural (notions of adulthood); biological (attainment of puberty); social (attainment of “maturity” or marriageability); or economic (ability to sustain oneself).

Sociologically, “youth” denotes an interface between “childhood” and “adulthood.” Although what it means to be youth is socially constructed, “youth” as a social group is generally defined in terms of chronological age. For this reason, the spectrum of youth has been variously defined as ranging from the ages of 10 or 11 years (as in some cultural traditions in Africa) to as high as 35 years (as in South Africa, for instance). In an attempt to “standardize” youth programs, international organizations, in particular the United Nations and the (British) Commonwealth Association of Nations, have come up with specific age categories to define “youth.” For instance, the United Nations uses the age category 15–24 years to define a “youth,” while the Commonwealth uses the age category 15–29 years. Ruddick (2015, p. 357) noted how worldwide there are “vastly different understandings of what it is to be young” and the irony of the exportation of the west’s modern ideals of youth to places and settings that lack the socioeconomic resources to realize those ideals. This is an important point because in many African societies, especially rural Africa, the status of “adulthood” is determined mainly by marriage. Those who are not married, or are not able to do so for economic or other reasons, as many young people in sub-Saharan Africa currently are, will, whatever their chronological age, still be regarded as “children.” Hence, it is not uncommon to find a 12-year-old girl who, by virtue of being married, will be considered an “adult,” while an unmarried 40-year-old man will still be considered a “youth” or “child” and still be dependent on the father for support (Mkandawire 1996). Brenner (1999) and Abdullah (1998) observe that in Mali, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Conakry, and Senegal, “adulthood” is still defined as the capacity to sustain a marriage. With colonialism, mission education, social and economic development, and the ratification of international conventions by African governments, the concept of a single chronological age of maturity has gradually been introduced, though not fully accepted, across SSA.

This chapter realizes that the concept of “youth” in the African context is a “social location” involves a complex set of problems, with a range of characteristics and behaviors that cut across age segments in different social contexts. Nonetheless, it uses the 15–35 years age group as the definition of “youth.” Moreover, this definition is also in line with the definition of youth in many African countries. The chapter makes a further distinction between “younger youth” (or “adolescents”) aged between 15 and 19 years and “older youth” aged between 20 and 35 years, as it is possible that problems faced by these two subgroups are distinct. In this study, the term “youth” is used interchangeably with “young people.”

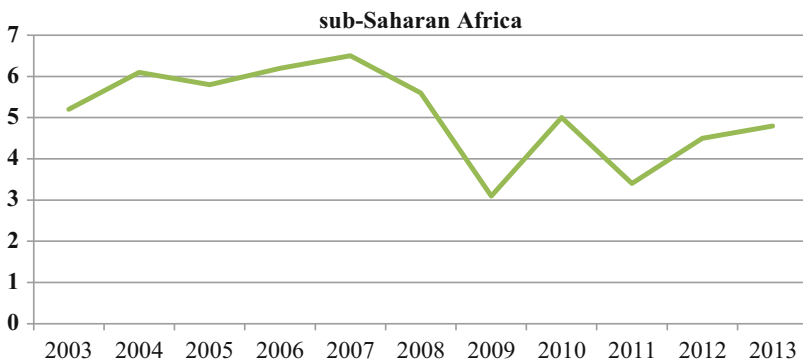
### 3 The Socioeconomic Context of Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship in SSA

Youth in Africa today find themselves on a continent with a booming economy. The region has experienced strong growth in recent years with national output, as measured by gross domestic product (GDP), growing by an average of 5.0% annually in the recent past (Jerome et al. 2014; Moghalu 2014). While SSA's economic performance suffered slightly during the 2008–2009 global economic and financial crisis, as shown in Fig. 1, it has since rebounded. Economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa is predicted to increase from 4.7% in 2013 to a forecasted 5.2% in 2014.

The key contributors to the sustained increase in economic activity in Africa have been increased production in natural resources, fuelled by foreign investment, as well as increasing investment in infrastructure, and strong household spending. As Moghalu (2014) observes, prudent fiscal policy and sound macroeconomic management have also been critical factors in creating an environment conducive to growth by stabilizing economic conditions, lowering the user cost of capital and putting downward pressure on the real exchange rate. This has stimulated notable increases in foreign direct investment (FDI) flows. However, the most salient risks to SSA's economy stem from global economic developments which directly impact the price of SSA's primary export commodities. Any deterioration in the economic situation in the Eurozone, China, and other major markets can adversely affect the economy.

The current pickup in growth has propelled some SSA countries, such as Zambia, Ghana, and Kenya, back into the ranks of middle-income countries. A major challenge, however, is that SSA's recent growth has not been *inclusive*. As used here, inclusive growth is taken to mean growth that not only creates new economic opportunities, but also one that ensures equal access to the opportunities created for all segments of society, particularly for the poor. While per capita income has generally risen, unemployment and poverty have remained high.

At the global level, Africa remains one of the poorest continents in the world, in spite of recent growth. Available data show that poverty in SSA is serious and



**Fig. 1** SSA's economic performance in recent years (Source: Chigunta 2012)

widespread. While the poverty head count in some urban areas has marginally declined, it still remains high. Notably, the statistics indicate that poverty in SSA is largely a rural phenomenon. In Zambia, for instance, while urban poverty declined from 53% in 2006 to 34% in 2010, there was an increase in rural poverty from 78% to 80.3% during the same period. SSA, therefore, faces the challenge of ensuring that the benefits of growth are equitably shared by all the people, especially young people. In view of this, it is not surprising that most countries in SSA failed to meet millennium development goal one (MDG-1) that focuses on reducing extreme poverty.

It is also worth noting that the labor absorptive capacity of the formal economy in sub-Saharan Africa is limited. While the private sector is expected to create jobs, this has not been the case. The universe of SSA's private sector is sharply divided into large enterprises and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The large enterprises generate most of the economic growth, exports, and tax revenues. However, they employ fewer workers than the small enterprises. The majority of MSMEs are found in the informal sector. Most workers in MSMEs are unpaid family members or workers paid in kind. The youth, especially those in the younger age cohorts, find themselves engaging in low-productivity, low-income survival pursuits in a range of activities, some licit and some illicit, in the informal economy.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the youth in SSA did not pose a serious social problem (Chigunta 2007). Since the mid-1970s, however, concerns have been rising over the socioeconomic situation of young people in SSA and the prospects of creating additional livelihood opportunities for them (Chigunta 2007). The protracted and deep-rooted economic crisis that affected SSA since the early 1980s adversely impacted on the well-being of the majority of people. As a consequence, many ordinary women and men experienced a decline in their welfare owing to a fall in real incomes and declining social sector expenditure per head. However, it is youth, women, and other vulnerable people who seem to have particularly borne the brunt of the economic crisis and the measures adopted to restructure the economies (Mkandawire 1996; Kanyenze et al. 1999; Bennell 2000; Argenti 2002; de Waal 2002). These measures include retrenchments and removal of subsidies on basic social services like education and health.

Detailed information on the situation of youth in SSA is not available, but in the context of a high and growing incidence of poverty and the documented adverse social impact of economic restructuring, there is increasing concern that large sections of young people have become "marginalized" and "excluded" from education, healthcare, salaried jobs, and even access to the social status of "adulthood" (Abdullah 1998; Brenner 1999; Bennell 2000; Mkandawire 2000; Sommers 2010). However, it is in the area of employment that young people have especially been affected.

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## **4 The Challenge of Youth Unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa**

A diverse literature exists on the challenges that young people experience in the labor market around the world. However, the term "youth unemployment" is contested in the literature. Some writers argue that youth unemployment cannot be

separated from the overall problem of unemployment and underemployment in a country (Ly 1991). The problem of youth unemployment also affects many adults. Ly (1991) argues that all the other groups who are unemployed deserve attention, and youth cannot be treated in isolation from them. Moreover, in reality, it is difficult to segregate the problem of youth employment from that of employment in general since labor markets do not recognize or respect any such distinctions.

For other authors, however, there are certain features that justify the separate treatment of youth unemployment as “distinct” from the overall employment problem (Makgetla 2014; O’Reilly et. al. 2015). These authors cite, among others, the limitations associated with age such as lack of work, experience, and skills as well as the demographic significance of young people as reasons that “youth unemployment” should be treated separately. It is projected that one-third of the world’s young people will live in Africa by 2050, up from about one-fifth today (Bloom 2012, p. 10).

This chapter takes the view that youth unemployment is a distinct problem that requires special attention. In Africa, young people have come under scrutiny in the labor market because they constitute a relatively large proportion of the population. This phenomenon, also termed a “youth bulge,” is common in many developing countries. It is often due to a stage of development where a country achieves success in reducing infant and child mortality but mothers still have a high fertility rate. If the increase in the number of working age individuals can be fully employed in productive activities, other things being equal, the level of average income per capita should increase as a result.

Researchers and scholars often highlight the potential for a youthful population to realize a “demographic dividend” (Bloom 2011; Makgetla 2014). To harness the potential of the demographic dividend, as some East Asian and Latin American countries have done, requires treating young people as a productive asset. This involves investing in education and skills development for young people, among others, by financing youth policies and programs, and ensuring that the youth have access to decent jobs. Above all, maximizing the dividend requires social and economic policies that reinforce inclusion, equity, and opportunity across the entire population. Where this has failed to occur, as in most African countries, the inevitable consequence is high youth unemployment.

It is difficult to provide accurate statistics on youth unemployment in SSA. Available estimates of unemployment face the conceptual and design limitations imposed by definitional and measurement problems of “employment” and “youth” (Chigunta 2007; Sommers 2010; ICGLR LMRC 2014a, b). This makes it difficult to assess the scope of the problem and trends associated with youth unemployment. Nonetheless, existing estimates indicate that the unemployment rates for youth in Africa are among some of the highest and the lowest in the world (ICGLR LMRC 2014a, b). As Makgetla (2014) notes, at 7.6%, youth unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa is lower than, or comparable to, the stated unemployment rate in regions such as the developed economies and the European Union (8.6%), Latin America and the Caribbean (6.5%), the Middle East (10.9%), and North Africa (12.2%).

However, the statistics on aggregate youth unemployment rates in sub-Saharan Africa mask substantial variation within countries (ICGLR LMRC 2014a, b).

Indeed, the challenges that young people in Africa face differ dramatically from country to country, or, to cite the 2012 African Economic Outlook: “Africa’s youth employment challenges are as diverse as the continent itself” (AfDB et al. 2012, p. 101). But, on the whole, youth unemployment appears to be a problem of wealthier SSA countries such as South Africa (25.3%), Botswana (18.4%), and Namibia (17.7%), with these countries recording unemployment rates of 3.3 times, 2.4 times, and 2.3 times higher than the regional average (Makgetla 2014). Significantly, the SSA unemployment rate does not include individuals that are underemployed, stuck in vulnerable employment, or are classified as the “working poor.” The lower income SSA countries mainly contend with problems of vulnerable employment.

Vulnerable workers comprise own-account workers – meaning people who are self-employed and have no employees but may have contributing family workers. Without any other options, these individuals are forced to take whatever work opportunities that present themselves, most of which are not sustainable nor are they viable routes out of poverty (Gough et al. 2015). A large majority of young people are employed (or self-employed) in informal businesses, often household businesses, or in small-scale farming in the low-income countries characterized by low productivity and low growth (Chigunta 2007; Gough et al. 2015). The unemployment rates are also understated as they do not take into account discouraged work seekers (Chigunta et al. 2013; ICGLR LMRC 2014a, b; Makgetla 2014). As a region, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest levels of vulnerable unemployment in the world, at 77% in 2013 (ILO 2015). The high percentage of people in insecure employment poses particular challenges for policy makers as it is relatively difficult to regulate conditions for the self-employed.

This means that for many young people in Africa, difficulties in the labor market do not center on getting a job. Rather, problems arise around the quality and nature of work that young people find (Makgetla 2014). Underemployment, where a person cannot work the number of hours they are willing and able to work, is, therefore, high and widespread (Chigunta 2007, 2012; Chigunta et al. 2013). Moreover, much of the work young people can get is poorly paid, unskilled, and often unsafe (Chigunta 2007; Makgetla 2014; Gough et al. 2015). In some countries, informal sector work is the norm (GEM Youth Reports for SSA 2015) (Fig. 2).

The high rate of unemployment among young people is giving rise to a sense of despair about the prospects of improving their livelihoods in many African countries. Although some analysts have cast some doubts on the usefulness of the concept, scattered evidence suggests that, in the absence of engagement in productive activities, the youth bulge can become a demographic bomb, because a large mass of frustrated youth is likely to become a potential source of political and social instability. Idleness and frustration predispose some young people to risky behaviors, including exposure to drug and substance abuse as well as the risk of HIV infection (ECA 1992; Nasir 2015).

Other negative outcomes include youth involving themselves in crime, organized violence, and protests (Momoh 2009). Bennell (2000) notes that urban society in Africa is consequently becoming increasingly criminalized, especially with the





**Fig. 2** Self-employed youth pushing a cart carrying planks in Lusaka, the Zambian capital (Source: Author 2015)

proliferation of youth gangs. In extreme cases, unemployed young people, as in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, join, or are coerced into joining, rebel movements as a livelihood option (Hilker and Fraser 2009; Bricker and Foley 2014; Makgetla 2014; Onuoha 2014). More recently, in North Africa, the so-called Arab Spring, which toppled some regimes, was driven by frustrated youth (UNESCO 2011).

## **5 Entrepreneurship as a Solution to the Challenge of Youth Unemployment in SSA?**

Specific responses to the employment challenges facing youth may vary from one African country to another, but a notable convergence has been a growing interest in, and emphasis on, the role and potential of entrepreneurship in employment and income generation (Mulenga 2000; Barasa and Kaabwe 2001). The SSA governments, unable to underwrite labor markets in which there is regular or secure employment in the formal sector, hope that the youth unemployment problem will be largely solved through the vigorous promotion of youth entrepreneurship, especially in the informal sector.

### **5.1 The State of Youth Entrepreneurship in Africa**

Around the globe, there is growing recognition that entrepreneurship is critical to, among others, job creation, innovation, and economic growth (Heilbrunn 2004; Audretsch 2007; Kelley et al. 2010; Mohanty 2012). However, despite its apparent importance, there is presently no precise or exact definition of either what constitutes



an “entrepreneur” or “entrepreneurship.” This chapter conceptualizes youth entrepreneurship as the practical application of enterprising qualities, such as initiative, innovation, creativity, by a young person who fits the definition of a youth in a particular environment and culture, to set up a business venture.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) surveys carried out in nine selected sub-Saharan African countries in 2013 indicate that the level of youth entrepreneurship is high. The GEM central measure of entrepreneurship is the “total early-stage entrepreneurial activity” (or TEA) rate, which consists of individuals in the process of starting a business and those running new businesses less than 42 months old. GEM also measures societal attitudes of entrepreneurship by establishing whether individuals believe that starting a business is considered a good career choice, their opinion relating to the association of entrepreneurship with high status, and their awareness of positive media attention with respect to entrepreneurship.

Among the SSA countries surveyed in 2013, Uganda recorded the highest proportion of youth entrepreneurs with 55.6% of the population aged between 15 and 38 years involved in nascent, new, or established businesses, followed by Zambia (53.4%) and Nigeria (52.7%). In Ghana, 40.6% were entrepreneurs; Malawi, 37.9%; and Namibia, 32.9%. In Angola, it was 26.5%, while in Botswana it was 21.6%. South Africa had the lowest level of youth entrepreneurship at only 12.8%. The South African case is puzzling because, as previously noted, the country has a very high rate of youth unemployment (GEM 2015).

On average, young people in sub-Saharan Africa are more involved in nascent enterprises (start-ups) and new businesses less than 42 months old, than in established businesses (GEM 2015). However, youth involvement in entrepreneurial activity varied across sub-Saharan African countries. In Botswana, Namibia, Nigeria, and Zambia, more youths were involved in nascent enterprises; while in Angola, Ghana, and Malawi, more youths were involved in managing new businesses. In Uganda, more youths were owners/managers of established businesses.

The 2013 GEM data indicate that the overwhelming majority of the youth entrepreneurs are involved in trading activities, especially in the informal sector. These activities are mostly characterized by low value addition, little productivity, and low earnings. Youth mainly find themselves in this sector due to what is called “ease of entry.” Studies also show that informal enterprise activities are anchored in social networks of family, kin, and immediate neighborhoods (Chigunta 2007; GEM 2015). Chigunta (2007) notes that in informal settlements, there is a prevalence of *bonding* social capital. Consequently, the social world of informal sector operators (ISOs), especially youth, is much narrower than the economic world in which they must operate, isolating them from mainstream economic opportunities and institutions. This social isolation is not helped by the general absence of relevant formal institutions and structures (Fig. 3).

### 5.1.1 Age Distribution of Entrepreneurial Youth

GEM research consistently shows that the prevalence of early-stage entrepreneurial activity tends to be relatively low in the 18–24 year age cohort but rises among 25–34 year olds, with a lower proportion of age groups above 34 years old involved



**Fig. 3** A youth trader in his shop in Zambia (Source: Author 2015)

**Table 1** Involvement in early-stage entrepreneurial activity in selected SSA Countries, by age, 2013 (%) (Source: GEM Africa Youth Report 2015)

Age Category	Angola	Botswana	Ghana	Malawi	South Africa	Nigeria	Uganda	Zambia
18–24	17	16	41.9	26	8	19.9	26	39.1
25–34	26	25	58.1	33	14	31.3	31	41.2

in nascent and new firms. As shown in Table 1, the evidence from several SSA countries supports this observation.

Table 1 also reveals that youth entrepreneurship is more prevalent in low-income SSA countries like Malawi and Uganda than wealthier ones like South Africa. As earlier noted in this chapter, the lower income SSA countries mainly contend with problems of vulnerable employment. Hence, young people in low-income countries are more likely to venture into self-employment in a range of activities, some licit and some illicit, in the informal sector.

The GEM data also show that the youth in the age group 30–35 years are more likely to run established businesses compared to those in the younger age groups. For instance, in Nigeria, the rate of established business rate rises from 13.2% in the age group 18–24 years to 23.7 in the age group 25–34 years and 26.8% among those aged 35–44 years. In Ghana, it rises from 30.1 in the 18–24 years age group to 69.8 among those aged between 25 and 34 years.

These findings suggest that older youth (20–25 years) tend to be involved in more viable businesses than younger youth (15–19 years). A variety of factors account for this. The older youth are more likely to have work or business experience, sufficient capital, social networks, and so on, than younger youth. A recent evaluation study of

youth entrepreneurs under the UNICEF/Barclays Bank-sponsored “Building Young Futures Programme” project in Zambia appears to confirm this (Chigunta 2015). The study findings indicate that, despite being in the majority, the younger youth are not so involved in running viable enterprises compared to the older youth.

GEM research suggests that it is established businesses that seem to generate more growth and income for those involved. As discussed later, this allows older youth to pursue more independent livelihoods through entrepreneurship than younger youth. However, the data do not show whether the older youth have “developed” from being TEA or whether they have worked in the formal job market and then quit to start their own business. This is an area that requires further research.

### **5.1.2 Educational Level of Youth Entrepreneurs**

In all the study countries, including South Africa, the educational attainment of youth was observed to be very minimal. In Ghana, less than 11% of the sampled youth had progressed beyond the senior high school level (SHS); in Malawi, only about 17% of Malawian youth aged 15–24 and 22% of those aged 25–34 had secondary school as their highest education qualification; in Uganda, only 17.5% of the sampled youth had proceeded beyond senior secondary school; in Zambia, less than a quarter (19.1%) had done so. In South Africa, over 60% of young people did not complete matriculation. A number of factors account for the poor educational attainment of youth in the study countries.

The quality of education in African countries is being affected by issues such as inadequate access, unaffordable fees, and low budgets. Other factors include the poor quality and management of teachers and resources. In countries like South Africa, with relatively high expenditure on education, gang violence, and other socioeconomic issues play a critical role in producing poor educational outcomes. In all the study countries, inappropriate educational curricula with little or no focus on entrepreneurship have worsened the problem. The low educational attainment among the youth raises questions about their ability to run high-growth enterprises.

### **5.1.3 Entrepreneurial Propensity Among Youth**

Despite their low educational attainment, the GEM data show that at least 60% of the youth population in all the surveyed countries except South Africa showed entrepreneurial propensity or were currently actively pursuing an entrepreneurial opportunity. Entrepreneurial propensity includes potential and intentional entrepreneurs. However, the level of entrepreneurial propensity varied across countries. Uganda recorded the highest youth entrepreneurial propensity with 55.4%, followed by Malawi (52.3%) and Namibia (44.1%). South Africa had the lowest youth entrepreneurial propensity of only 23.3%.

### **5.1.4 The Gender of Youth Entrepreneurs**

There is slight variation in the involvement of male and female youth in entrepreneurial activities in the surveyed SSA countries. The 2013 GEM data show that male youth tend to participate more in enterprise activities in Angola, Botswana, Malawi,

South Africa, and Uganda. This contrasts the situation that exists in Ghana, Namibia, Nigeria, and Zambia. In addition, the data show that male youth have greater propensity to become entrepreneurs in all the surveyed SSA except Uganda where more female youth (40%) had more propensity to become entrepreneurs than male (33.2%) or Angola where both genders had about equal propensity to be involved in entrepreneurial activities.

### **5.1.5 Entrepreneurship and Employment Creation**

On average, the level of employment generated per entrepreneur in sub-Saharan Africa is very low. The overwhelming majority of entrepreneurs in SSA offer jobs to a maximum of five employees. In certain countries, namely Malawi (81.5%), Ghana (59.1%), and Uganda (58.8%), the impact entrepreneurs have on job creation is even less with the majority of entrepreneurs in these countries offering employment only to the entrepreneur themselves. However, countries such as Angola (6.1%), South Africa (4.5%), and Namibia (3.1%) have a small pool of entrepreneurs that are currently offering employment to 20 or more employees.

GEM asks early-stage entrepreneurs how many employees (other than the owners) they currently have and expect to have in the next 5 years. The difference between current and expected employees indicates growth expectations. Entrepreneurs with high estimated growth rates create significantly more jobs than other entrepreneurs. The GEM data show that the majority of entrepreneurs in all the surveyed countries in sub-Saharan Africa, in some cases as high as 81% as in Zambia, have low growth expectations.

### **5.1.6 Entrepreneurship as a Career**

The GEM data show that the overwhelming majority of youth in Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda consider entrepreneurship to be a good career choice, while over two-thirds of the youth in Angola, Namibia, and Zambia consider entrepreneurship to be a good career choice. However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously. While it may be stated that societal attitudes towards entrepreneurship seem encouraging among African youth, it has been observed that, with extremely high levels of poverty and high rates of joblessness and underemployment in sub-Saharan Africa, as noted in this chapter, considering entrepreneurship a good career choice may in fact be an acknowledgment that this may be the only career option available.

## **5.2 Youth Entrepreneurship and Independent Livelihoods**

In this chapter, an “independent” youth livelihood is defined as the ability of a young person, especially a male, to attain “economic independence.” Chigunta (2007) describes “economic independence” as the ability of a male youth to “maintain” himself and/or sustain a legal marriage. In the African context, young women living with parents or guardians are not considered dependent in the same way as young men. Similarly, Sommers (2010) observes that traditional understandings of

manhood, and therefore adulthood, in Africa are associated with having a house, being married, and having children. The critical question that arises in this regard is the extent to which entrepreneurship, especially in the informal sector, allows the youth to earn sufficient income to acquire these things.

There is some evidence to suggest that entrepreneurship plays an important role in promoting independent youth livelihoods (Chigunta 2015). This can be verified by comparing the livelihoods, especially incomes, of entrepreneurial and nonentrepreneurial youth (Chigunta 2007). Differences in income and sources of income between the two groups of young people imply that the entrepreneurial youth, who seem to have a more reliable and regular source of income, albeit low, than the former will pursue independent livelihoods.

Recent evidence for a number of countries in the developing world, including Africa, shows that returns to capital in the urban informal sector are high, often in the range of 60% to 70% annually, especially at very low levels of capital (Kremer et al. 2010; Fafchamps et al. 2011). This finding contradicts the conventional wisdom that there is little potential in subsistence activities and that most own-account activities are a simple reaction to a lack of alternatives. There is, therefore, significant potential for growth among microentrepreneurs operating in the informal sector.

In this respect, the optimism concerning the entry of youth into entrepreneurship may be justified. For those youth engaged in various enterprise activities in the informal sector, entrepreneurship provides both pathways out of poverty and mitigation against severe poverty for young people (Chigunta 2007; 2015; Sommers 2010). Unlike the majority of nonentrepreneurial youth (that is, those not involved in running a business venture), some entrepreneurial youth, especially older ones, can develop sustained economic activities and can, it seems, pursue independent livelihoods. Compared to younger youth entrepreneurs and the nonentrepreneurial youth, older entrepreneurial youth tend to run viable enterprises from which they seem to earn a sufficient income to provide for their needs.

In many African countries, it would appear that the nonentrepreneurial youth or those youth who are unable to get a job have become a particularly problematic group compared to the entrepreneurial youth (Abdullah 1998; Momoh 2009; Sommers 2010; Honwana 2012). (In many cultural contexts, getting a job is an important step in the transition to becoming an adult.) Instead of leaving their ambivalent status behind and entering into adulthood by marrying and/or establishing an independent household, a growing proportion of the nonentrepreneurial youth are unable to attain any other social status. In Sierra Leone, for instance, young people who go beyond the official definition of youth but are not yet economically independent are known as “Youth Man” (Abdullah 1998; Sommers 2010). (There are growing signs of this phenomenon in the West but for different reasons (see Cote 2000). In Zambia and elsewhere in Africa it appears that youth alternate between the statuses of youth and adulthood, as they embark on economic activities that allow them to sustain their livelihoods for short periods of time.) Such “youth men” also exist in Nigeria (Momoh 1999; 2009; cited in Sommers 2010). This term is a reflection of the inability of young people to reproduce themselves as a social group in contemporary Africa.

Despite its apparent beneficial effects, it is important to stress that entrepreneurial activity in much of sub-Saharan Africa seems to be less about developing innovative entrepreneurial activity which generates prosperity. The GEM surveys suggest that much of the current entrepreneurial activity within the region is not leading to sustainable livelihoods but mere survival. Given the current official emphasis on encouraging young people to become job creators across SSA, a crucial question that arises in this respect is the extent to which government policies and programs have helped young people to go into viable entrepreneurship. It is in this context that this chapter discusses the existing environment for youth entrepreneurship development in SSA.

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## 6 The Entrepreneurship Environment in SSA

The growing problem of youth unemployment in SSA has started to receive serious policy attention at the highest level. An analysis of policy documents and development frameworks from several African countries suggests that youth unemployment has become a major policy priority. In all the documents, the major emphasis is on increasing substantially the creation of youth employment opportunities and improving the labor market. In addition, most of the countries have taken measures to reform their education and training systems in an attempt to make them relevant to the demands of the labor market. The focus is largely on entrepreneurship and technical skills training. Efforts are also being made to mainstream youth employment creation in the main development frameworks.

However, the policy and institutional interventions so far undertaken by various countries in SSA to address the challenge of youth unemployment through entrepreneurship have had a limited impact (Chigunta and Chisupa 2013; ICGLR LMRC 2014a, b). There are concerns about poor policy implementation. There is also growing concern about the effectiveness of existing policies, programs, strategies and regulatory frameworks. Moreover, despite the high youth unemployment levels in the region, nearly all the countries lack a comprehensive human resource development plan and strategy. As a consequence, a paradox has emerged. There is high youth unemployment, including graduate unemployment, amid skills shortages. In some countries, especially post-conflict countries, the efforts to rebuild the country have resulted in a serious neglect of youth policies.

It is also evident from the available evidence that, while both the state and nonstate actors, among them nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), have initiated a number of programs designed to promote youth employment through entrepreneurship, these are very few and far apart. While some of these institutions have innovative youth livelihoods intervention strategies, with some seemingly inbuilt mechanisms for sustainability, their intake and coverage is very limited. There are also concerns about lack of effective coordination and institutional networking.

Significantly, despite the high youth unemployment level, there is currently an incoherent approach towards addressing the youth (un) employment challenge in SSA at institutional level. While the relevant policy, legal, and regulatory framework

(PLRF) for the promotion of youth employment creation and entrepreneurship development exists in many countries, it lacks the synergies necessary to facilitate concerted action. Moreover, young people are not being actively engaged in the process themselves as partners to assert their role in informing the development of relevant strategies to address their concerns. This illustrates the need to strengthen and improve the existing legal, regulatory, and institutional framework in the region in order to provide optimal benefits from the combined impact of interventions of various actors, including the government, the private sector, civil society, and development partners.

Additionally, in many SSA countries, there is no clearly identified agency that is responsible for coordinating issues related to youth employment and entrepreneurship promotion. In general, the institutional framework for youth employment in SSA can be divided into two: youth-specific and general support institutions. The former largely comprises Ministries of Youth and Sports and National Youth Councils. Underlying the operations of the youth-specific institutions are national youth policies. (General support institutions include line ministries and entrepreneurship development programs.)

There is also a strong tendency in several countries towards adopting a general approach to the promotion of youth entrepreneurship. As previously noted, youth, least of all entrepreneurial youth, is not a homogeneous category. The data presented in this chapter show that entrepreneurship is concentrated within the older youth age groups. These are what may be called “budding entrepreneurs” and “emergent entrepreneurs.” It is these categories of youth entrepreneurs that tend to access support services and establish viable businesses.

Despite the existence of various policies and institutions, the youth in SSA face a vast complex of issues and challenges in starting and running viable businesses. While the idea of promoting youth entrepreneurship sounds good, in most countries it remains just that. Even where they successfully engage in enterprise activities, the youth also face other problems, including the lack of social security over or governmental job benefits such as maternity pay, sick pay, and pension. In such a context, the youth cannot lead independent livelihoods.

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## **7 Conclusion and Recommendations**

After decades of economic decline, SSA’s economy has, in recent years, been experiencing strong growth mostly driven by the high prices of the region’s main export commodities. However, SSA’s growth has not been inclusive, and unemployment and poverty have remained high. This situation has compelled unemployed young people, especially those not at school, to venture into self-employment in a range of activities, some licit and some illicit, in what is generally referred to as “the urban informal sector.” Governments in SSA countries, unable to underwrite labor markets in which there is regular or secure employment in the formal sector for their youth, are promoting entrepreneurship as a means of addressing employment

challenges that young people face. This chapter suggests that the optimism concerning the entry of youth into entrepreneurship may be justified. More entrepreneurial youth tend to pursue and attain what may be called “independent livelihoods” than nonentrepreneurial youth. But this largely occurs among older youth. The older youth seem to have accumulated vital experience and contacts in business or in other areas of life. However, the entrepreneurial environment for youth entrepreneurs, whether young or old, is deficient. While the idea of promoting youth entrepreneurship sounds good, in most countries it remains just that. While the relevant policy, legal, and regulatory framework for the promotion of youth employment creation and entrepreneurship development exists in many countries, it lacks the synergies necessary to facilitate concerted action. Although there are some institutions, including governmental and NGOs that seek to address youth employment in SSA, they are few and far between, hence their impact appears minimal.

Based on the above conclusion, we make the recommendations below. The chapter makes the following recommendations. First there is need to provide youth entrepreneurs with business training, advice, and support. This requires setting up experiential incubators which are easily accessible to young entrepreneurs. In addition, youth entrepreneurs need to have access to professional organizations that provide advice to businesses through the creation of a partnership between the government and the private sector. In the long term, there is also a need to promote youth entrepreneurship as part of the regular curricula in school. Second, there is need for the state and nonstate actors to introduce or scale-up interventions aimed at assisting young people intending to go into entrepreneurship or those running businesses with access to capital. This entails providing young people with money management skills through short-term training programs. Related to this, there is need to ensure that youth entrepreneurs are provided with role models that are constantly in touch with them in order to give them business guidance and encouragement. Third, there is need for central governments and local authorities to work together to facilitate the access of youth entrepreneurs to suitable working space. In addition, there is need for governments to focus on improving ICT infrastructure in both urban and rural areas as a means of encouraging the emergency of key growth clusters. Also important is the need to ensure access to cost-effective Internet and reliable connectivity. Finally, entrepreneurship support programs need to lessen bureaucratic complications and that they are easily accessible to as many youth entrepreneurs. This will require a deliberate media campaign aimed at raising awareness about existing youth entrepreneurship support programs for young people.

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# Schooling, Generation, and Transformations in Livelihoods: Youth in the Sand Economy of Northern Kenya

21

Nanna Jordt Jørgensen

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## Abstract

In northern Kenya, sustainable pastoral livelihoods are under strain. While climate changes implicating more frequent and prolonged drought periods reduce pasture productivity, new political and economic interests in the region are generating a growing pressure on land. In Laikipia North subcounty, schooled young people increasingly turn to new livelihood activities, such as sand harvesting, to replace or complement pastoralism. This chapter explores how livelihood activities become controversial topics in schools and communities and discusses how generational relations are negotiated through learning and laboring. Through an analysis of the livelihood activities and narratives of young men involved in the sand economy, it is argued that school ideas and practices regarding labor and environment come to play a central part in generational

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negotiations and that these negotiations reflect young people's attempts to carefully balance competing moral expectations and generational positions of autonomy and dependency. The chapter contributes to debates about young people's learning and laboring in Africa by pointing to the ways in which embodied laboring practices and environmental learning processes, entangled in livelihood changes, are fundamentally tied to generational relations and interactions.

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**Keywords**

Generation • Schooling • Livelihoods • Environmental knowledge • Pastoralism • Sand mining • Anthropology

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## 1 Introduction

The main street of Keringet, a small town center in Laikipia North subcounty in Kenya, was wide and dusty, lined with buildings of wood and a few of bricks. From the rusty corrugated iron roofs, dangled homemade shop signs and old advertisement posters were plastered on the walls. Open verandas of concrete faced onto the street; on these, people were hanging out, chatting, at all times of the day. On one side of the street was a small barbershop with a sign hanging from the roof reading "labour," and next to the building lay a large tree trunk and some rocks which served as benches and chairs for a group of youngish men dressed in old Western clothes and flip-flops made of plastic or old car tires. They were the *sand loaders*. Chatting with each other or people passing by, sometimes smoking, chewing khat, or playing with their mobile phones, they were waiting for a sand lorry. Every day, a large number of old lorries drove up the rough Laikipia North road from Nanyuki, Nyeri, and other cities in central Kenya, picking up a group of sand loaders at a "labor office" in one of the small town centers. They were heading toward one of the sand harvesting sites, which, in most cases, were located on communally owned group ranches. When the loaders had filled up (and quite often overloaded) the lorry, the driver paid them for their labor and the group ranch for the sand.

Some of the loaders were from Keringet, others had come from "the interior," the rural hinterlands, to "try their luck" finding other livelihood options than herding. Most loaders were young men with little schooling, typically primary school graduates or dropouts. These youths were sometimes described as *nusu-nusu*, Swahili for half-half, referring to "half culture, half school." In each group of sand loaders, however, there were a few people with secondary level education who assumed roles as coordinators. They were sometimes described by others as *brokers*, indicating that they used their position to mediate between buyers and sellers and, perhaps, also to distort the exchange situation to their own benefit. While the brokers also loaded sand, their engagements with sand involved other aspects, such as organizing work rotation schemes and negotiating with the group ranch management committees, the sand dealers, and various government officials. The young sand loaders and brokers hanging out on the street corner in Keringet had all grown up in families for whom

the main livelihood activity was pastoralism. While many of them still kept animals, the way they earned their daily bread in the sand economy represents a transformation of historical livelihood patterns.

This chapter discusses the intersections between schooling, changes in livelihood practices, and generational relations. It takes, as its point of departure, the analysis of the activities and stories of a group of young people from Keringet town (the name is a pseudonym) in Laikipia North subcounty in Kenya who have ventured into a new livelihood activity: sand mining in dry riverbeds. Of primary interest is the ways in which young people's educational positions, livelihood practices, and use of school knowledge form part of their negotiations of generational relations and positions. It is argued that school ideas and practices related to labor and environment come to play a central part in such generational negotiations and, furthermore, that these negotiations reflect young people's attempts to carefully balance competing moral expectations and generational positions of autonomy and dependency. As such, the chapter contributes to discussions of young people's learning and laboring in Africa by pointing to the ways in which embodied laboring practices and environmental learning processes, entangled in livelihood changes, are fundamentally tied to generational relations and interactions.

The chapter is based on ethnographic research, driven by a phenomenological interest in the everyday life experiences of young people, and grounded in the research traditions of social anthropology. The empirical material analyzed and discussed here was gathered during 5 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Laikipia North in 2012 and a shorter follow-up visit in 2014. This chapter in particular draws on interviews with young men involved in the sand economy, observations of their work, interviews and participant observation in primary schools in the area, and document analysis of textbooks and syllabi.

The following section contextualizes the research in relation to scholarly debates on generation, schooling, and livelihoods in Africa. Hereafter, it is suggested that the generational position of young people involved in sand harvesting is closely linked with moral understandings of schooling, livelihoods, and landscape as conceived among older generations in the community (discussed in Sect. 3), as well as within schools (discussed in Sect. 4). Sections 5 and 6 explore the generational negotiations implicated in the learning and laboring of sand loaders and sand brokers, and the final section summarizes the argument that learning to labor concerns not only learning to cope with livelihood challenges but also to negotiate livelihood moralities in order to become a youth in socially acceptable ways.

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## 2 Researching Generation, Schooling, and Livelihoods

A recent special issue of the *European Journal of Development Research* suggests that development processes, including mass schooling, are fundamentally generational (Huijsmans et al. 2014). Thus, as summarized by Ansell in a commentary upon the issue, "a variety of types of age relations profoundly structure the ways in which societies are transformed through development" (Ansell 2014, p. 283).

The relational approach proposed by Huijsmans et al. focuses on how age is constituted and attributed importance through social interactions: processes which the authors refer to as “generationing” (Huijsmans et al. 2014, p. 164–165).

Generational relations have been an important topic of interest in the regional anthropology of Africa since the earliest ethnographic studies. Studies of pastoralist groups such as the Nuer in South Sudan/Ethiopia (Evans-Pritchard 1950), the Arusha Maasai of Tanzania (Gulliver 1963), and the Samburu in Kenya (Spencer 2004 (1965)) were characterized by a strong focus on generation as organizer of social structure. In recent decades, the anthropological interest in generation in Africa has shifted from focusing on the social structure of age systems to generational conflict and youth agency (cf. Pratten 2012, p. 316–317). In African youth research, which is to a large extent based on anthropological approaches, youth is often applied as a lens for studying wider societal processes such as “the complexities of globalization” (Frederiksen and Munive 2010; c.f. Cole and Durham 2008), war and conflict (e.g., de Boeck and Honwana 2005; Vigh 2006), livelihood and economic strategies (e.g., Mains 2013; Thieme 2013), or educational processes (e.g., Abebe 2008; Madsen 2008; Meinert 2009). In continuation of the classical ethnographic tradition, in most of these studies, youth is conceptualized as a contextually defined stage or social position within other generational life stages, rather than as the social or cultural entity (i.e., youth as subgroup or subculture) often depicted in sociological youth studies (cf. Vigh 2006, p. 92). Youth researchers have thus pointed out that local understandings of a young person in Africa seldom refer to actual age, but to a person in a life phase where he or she possesses little or no power and authority and is socially dependent on adults, albeit less so than children. A number of social and cultural variables play a part in defining who is regarded as, or who considers themselves to be, a youth. These include power, responsibilities, possibilities, levels of affluence, expectations, gender, religion, class, race, and ethnicity (see, e.g., Cole and Durham 2008; de Boeck and Honwana 2005; Vigh 2006; Day (► Chap. 18, “Education and Employment Transitions: The Experiences of Young People with Caring Responsibilities in Zambia”). As opposed to, for instance, much policy discourse, which depicts youth as individuals with rights or problems, the approach of African youth studies accentuates the relational and contextual aspects of youth agency, showing how it is situated within social relations and larger societal processes.

Whyte, Alber, and Geest propose that older and more recent studies of generation in Africa shed light on two different meanings of the notion of generation. On the one hand, generation refers to “[t]hat which is generated” (Oxford English Dictionary in Whyte et al. 2008), in other words, to how “people come into being” through historical forces and social relations and forms. On the other hand, generation also implies agency and creativity, referring to “the act of generating” through which people take up generational positions and “pursue their own interests” within these (Whyte et al. 2008, p. 3). Drawing inspiration from this double understanding of generation, as structurally formed category as well as singular processual act, this chapter discusses relations between mass schooling and generational processes by exploring how schooling creates new kinds of age positions and relations, as well as

how young people take up and negotiate these positions by making use of ideas and practices encountered in school.

The approach to schooling is informed by research on the processes and consequences of mass schooling within educational anthropology (e.g., Anderson-Levitt 2003; Levinson and Holland 1996). These studies have, on the one hand, looked at schooling as a globally traveling education practice which shapes youth as national citizens and individual consumers and, on the other hand, explored how notions of education and personhood are transformed and negotiated in specific historical contexts (see, e.g., Levinson and Holland 1996). Schools, in other words, may be seen as channels through which globally traveling knowledge circulates and encounters local realities (cf. Levinson and Holland 1996; Madsen 2008; Meinert 2009).

In this chapter, the discussions of the relations between schooling and generation center on livelihoods and interactions with the material environment. Pastoral research has dealt extensively with transitions in the livelihood practices of East African pastoralists (e.g., Fratkin 2013; Galvin 2009) and drawn attention to an increasing uptake of agriculture (e.g., Fratkin and Mearns 2003) and wildlife tourism (e.g., Thompson and Homewood 2002), as well as to incremental sedentarization in or near smaller towns where economic opportunities may include small-scale business, day labor, and access to relief supplies (e.g., Galvin 2009). While climate change and land fragmentation are important background factors for livelihood changes (Galvin 2009), several studies have also pointed to the role of mass schooling. Thus, Bishop (2007), in line with Bonini (2006), has examined how the orientation of the schooling systems in Tanzania toward sedentary cultivation is directing livelihood attention away from pastoralism among the Maasai, while Lesorogol (2008) and Archambault (2014) have discussed how schooling brings about new norms in relation to livelihoods and understandings of property rights among pastoralists in Kenya.

The approach to livelihoods used in this chapter is inspired by anthropological debates on labor and livelihoods in Africa which highlight that livelihood practices are not just about earning one's daily bread, but also about becoming part of social (and generational) relations through embodied material and moral interactions and exchanges (see, e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; Ferguson 2013; see also van Blerk et al. ("Economic Practices of African Street Youth: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, and Zimbabwe") and Ursin and Abebe ("Young People's Marginal Livelihoods and Social Transitions in Urban Brazil: Tale of Four Lives")). As highlighted by Whyte et al., morality is a keystone of intergenerational relations (Whyte et al. 2008, p. 7), and moral interpretations of the embodied labor and human-environment relations of different kinds of livelihood activities form a central part of generational negotiations in Laikipia North. Of particular interest are the ways in which young people in their negotiations of generation seek to balance autonomy and dependence in relation to older generations. Ferguson suggests, in his article on *Declarations of Dependence* (2013), that, historically, dependency in southern Africa has been a "mode of action" (Bayart 2000, p. 218 in Ferguson 2013, p. 226), in other words, an actively sought-for position in societies where persons were (and are) understood relationally, in particular gaining attraction in



“times of insecurity and hardship” (Ferguson 2013, p. 227). Although Ferguson reflects upon historical processes and forms of personhood in southern Africa, his ideas point toward an interesting ambiguity in the generational interactions evolving in relation to schooling and livelihoods in Laikipia North. In contemporary Laikipia North, climate change, educational transformations, and the introduction of new livelihood activities and income sources create an ambiguous space, within which negotiations of positions in relation to older generations take place. Indeed, young people embodied narrative expressions of their livelihood practices which appear to reflect ongoing attempts to balance dependency and autonomy.

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### 3 Landscapes and Litigious Livelihoods

In pastoral communities, the position of young people has traditionally been one of little power and influence in relation to older generations. However, as pointed out by Burgess, generational relations in pastoral communities changed significantly in the course of the twentieth century (Burgess 2005) and continue to change. In Laikipia North, schooling is an important force in creating new age categories and enabling young people to negotiate generational hierarchies. But, as will be discussed in the following, schooling also positions young people in morally precarious age positions. Furthermore, young people who attend school but fail to gain salaried employment often find themselves in difficult livelihood situations. Having spent most of their youth in school, many lack the comprehensive pastoral skills and other cultural knowledge of former generations, and droughts, environmental degradation, pressure on land, and stricter government responses to cattle raiding are making it difficult to build up the herd as expected of an adult. This section will shed light on how schooling and livelihood activities play a part in shaping the older generation’s positionings of youth in Laikipia North.

The majority of the population of Laikipia North are Maa speakers and describe themselves as Maasai pastoralists belonging to one of five subsections with different ethnic histories (see, e.g., Cronk 2004). Among the Maasai in Laikipia North, young people are in general defined with reference to the age system, focusing on age cohorts. In the age system, young men within a certain age bracket form an age-set (or age-group) with a specific name, and these age-sets pass through age stages together, with the promotion into a new age stage marked by ceremonies (for a detailed description of age systems, see, e.g., Spencer 2004). When boys are circumcised, they move into the moran age stage and become young men, obtaining a new status in gendered and generational relations. Apart from their belonging to the moran age stage, young people (men as well as women) were described by many of my interlocutors as characterized by their ability and obligation to work. Young people are people who are “energetic and can work” and are “healthy and strong,” people said.

Among older people in Laikipia North, there were mixed feelings about the current moran age-sets, and they often complained about changes in generational relations. Young men used to work hard to build up their herds, be warriors, and

protect the community, the elders said, grumbling that, with young people going to school, there was no one to take care of the cattle and that youth were idle and did not “have respect anymore.” Respect, as understood by the elders in Laikipia North, was related to respect for generational authority and for custom. As suggested by researchers working among the Samburu (Maa speakers described as “cousins” by the Maasai in Laikipia North), notions of respect have been a keystone of morality in Maa-speaking communities (Spencer 2004). However, the understanding of the concept of respect appears to be changing, shifting from an emphasis on respect for age and custom to respect for other people in general (Holtzman 2009; Straight 2013). In Laikipia North, young people’s understanding of respect often differed from that of older people, and the elders attributed this change to schooling.

While acknowledging that schooling in some cases resulted in betterment of livelihoods, many elders were critical of “modern” mass schooling. Young people with primary schooling were considered as falling between two cultures or “disparate worlds” (Abebe 2008): that of school and that of pastoral life, failing to contribute properly to community growth. Secondary school graduates, if unsuccessful in finding employment, were also considered problematic: too occupied with their own rights and too little with their generational obligations. And even the few with tertiary education who succeeded in finding gainful employment were blamed: “School these days is like barren land because once one is learned he runs away from this community and never comes back. It’s therefore seen as barren land because it never produces anything,” one interlocutor said (translated from Maa by field assistant). The young people involved in sand harvesting, in particular, were regarded with ambivalence by elders: their ability to earn cash and contribute to family economies being acknowledged, but the practice of sand harvesting nevertheless being viewed with suspicion.

The sand trade, according to most people in Laikipia North, started in the area in the 1970s, but has expanded drastically in recent years due to increasing demand from the booming Kenyan construction sector. Sand, which is a main component in concrete, filler, and the foundation of roads, is harvested from permanently or temporarily dry riverbeds and sold to the building industry further south – in Nanyuki, Nyeri, and other city centers in the vicinity. In most cases, the sand is harvested on group ranch land owned communally by a group of people, and sand harvesting is carried out on a large scale on four of the 13 group ranches in Laikipia North. These four group ranches have created a cooperative society, founded in 1989, which controls the marketing of sand and regulates the extraction of sand through a rotation system. This is supposed to ensure that the resource is not overexploited. According to many interlocutors, in 2014, between 80 and 100 lorry loads of sand were purchased in Laikipia North per day, although the number varied according to season and demand.

The landscape of Laikipia North has been transformed by land use and livelihood activities over a long historical period. Grazing livestock influences vegetation patterns and the texture of the surface of the ground, and the landscape is transformed through the building of temporary or permanent houses and structures for animals. The sand trade, however, entails a more comprehensive transformation

of the landscape. The excavation of sand, in permanently or temporarily dry rivers, is broadening and deepening the riverbeds and creating erosion along the banks. The sand lorry traffic makes the road a more dominant feature of the landscape and creates tracks through the hills toward the riverbeds. Furthermore, the influx of cash and people creates more business opportunities, resulting in an increase in constructions and buildings and, in some cases, the establishment of completely new trade centers. Compared to many other mining activities, the environmental impact of sand harvesting appears less dramatic, but in an area where the population already struggles with erosion and water scarcity, the deterioration of riverbeds is potentially disastrous. Without natural water catchment areas, water is even more difficult to come by in the dry season.

To people involved in pastoral livelihoods, and in particular to elders, sand was seen as an integral part of the land (*enkop* in Maa), and removing and selling it are considered as going against tradition and cultural values. When older people in the community talked about the environmental changes in Laikipia North, their narratives expressed the degradation of the land as related to the degradation of animal health, human health, and cultural values. They attributed charcoal burning, overgrazing, and sand harvesting to cultural deterioration, but also pointed to forces which appeared to be beyond the control of people, but which pushed their lives and culture in certain directions, such as a changing climate, the entering of large herds of elephants into the area, and the spread of the *Opuntia* cactus. Such descriptions of environmental change indicate a complex interrelation in the understanding of people, culture, and environment. Along similar lines, Hughes, in her history of the Maasai, cites descriptions of the land which point to close relationships between the state of the land, the health of animals, people, and social relations (Hughes 2006, p. 117). Many people, particularly among elders, saw the sale of sand and soil as a strong cultural taboo linked to the traumatic loss of land by the Maasai in the twentieth century (cf. Hughes 2006). Invoking the widely held fear of curses (*ol-deket* in Maa), which are of key importance in the Maa-speaking communities (see Spencer 2004; Straight 2013 on Samburu curses), they maintained that sand harvesting was cursed and could result in various kinds of social and bodily misfortune.

Thus, while sand offered an important livelihood activity for young men whose families had lost, or chosen not to live entirely on, livestock and provided a possibility for group ranches to generate cash and establish trade links to markets elsewhere in Kenya, sand harvesting generally had a bad reputation in Laikipia North. "I would not advocate for sand harvesting, because it is destroying our land, so where will we graze? And us, we are a pastoralist community, so we will try many other things, but livestock keeping will always remain a backbone economic activity in our community," an interlocutor said, summarizing the general community opinion on sand harvesting. Involvement in sand was described as "not Maasai work," and the "rhythm" of the livelihood practice of sand harvesting was considered unhealthy and even dangerous. Young men waiting for work as sand loaders were considered to be "idling," and as people in Laikipia North considered physical strength and the ability to work a main characteristic and obligation of youth, lack of movement and physical work among youth was attributed negative moral value.

The combination of limited schooling and involvement in the sand economy positioned the young sand loaders in a low-status “youth” category in their community. The sand brokers, with their position as more fully “learned” through their secondary schooling, were in a slightly better position, but were still viewed with suspicion because of their livelihood activities. In other words, moral understandings of learning and livelihoods intersected with generationing processes and made the sand loaders a certain kind of “youth”: young people who were not considered to be living fully up to their obligations toward elders and community customs. School, however, offered a different view on livelihood, learning, landscape, and generation.

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#### **4 Circumcised Brains, Sedentary Farming, and Natural Resources**

In school, the age categories and generational relations of the community were quite openly challenged, particularly in relation to the cultural transition from boy to man through circumcision. For instance, during a school assembly in a primary school in Keringet, a teacher told the pupils, “What is circumcision? It is nothing but a mark, it is useless, it is better to have a circumcised brain, and that is why you are here. You should all follow the rules and regulations of the school, and not take circumcision as a big issue.” Teachers often complained about conflicts arising between circumcised and non-circumcised male pupils, caused by the former demanding that non-circumcised boys spoke to them in a culturally respectful way. Teachers stressed that “moranism” was not welcome in school. Pupils were supposed to submit to the internal hierarchy of the school where any differentiation between pupils was controlled by the teachers. “There are not pupils here who are special; in school we are all equal, *wote ni sawa* [all are equal], it doesn’t matter where you come from, what you eat. All can be punished,” the teacher continued his speech at the school assembly. This section of the chapter argues that school challenges the position and knowledge of elders in the community, not only by questioning cultural age categories but also by offering a different moral framework for understanding livelihoods than the one that is dominant in the Maasai community.

In Kenyan primary schools, livelihood activities are dealt with in the subject social studies, under the theme of “resources and economic activities.” Pastoral agriculture is primarily discussed in the standard 7 textbook for social studies, where the practice is described as “characterized by the keeping of large herds of cattle whose quality is not of keen interest to the farmer” (Kamau et al. 2013, p. 71). The book outlines a number of economic benefits of pastoralism. The list of problems facing pastoral farming is, however, long and includes overstocking, movements across political borders, and cattle rustling (Kamau et al. 2013, p. 75). The authors then highlight new developments in pastoral areas offered by the government, including offering better provision of education and encouraging pastoralists “to treat their occupation as an economic activity” (Kamau et al. 2013) and sell surplus animals, start up alternative economic activities, undertake controlled grass planting, sedentarize, and take up cultivation. In the standard 8 textbook,

pastoralism is presented as a major cause of soil erosion facilitated by overgrazing: “Many pastoral communities in Kenya keep more animals than the land can support. The animals end up eating all the vegetation, leaving the ground bare” (Kamau et al. 2012, p. 32). Pastoralism as presented in the textbook thus comes across as a somewhat unruly and irrationally practiced livelihood activity.

While this negative view of pastoralism is to a large degree formed by state actors such as policymakers and curriculum developers, as a localized project, its main emissaries are teachers at the local school, supported by local government officials. The majority of teachers at the schools in and around Keringet come from sedentary farming communities, and their opinions are generally in line with the messages of the textbooks. Keeping livestock, particularly in large numbers, was presented as a problematic part of the Maasai culture which schools should encourage people to abandon. “In school we tell them that many cattle will destroy the environment,” one teacher said. Several teachers linked the problems of environmental degradation to communal land tenure: “We try and educate them to come from where they are, where the land is owned communally, and move to some place where they will own land individually.” According to others, another problematic aspect of pastoralism is the nomadic lifestyle, and they suggested that permanent settlement would increase education levels, thus bringing about salaried employment and “civilization.”

The views expressed in textbooks and by teachers mirror the wider political discourse on pastoralism in Kenya. Encouraging alternative livelihoods to pastoralism has been an ongoing policy agenda of state and non-state development agents in northern Kenya since colonial times. Historically, the promotion of alternative livelihoods in pastoral areas was motivated or accompanied by a lack of understanding, if not outright contempt for the pastoral lifestyle. Both colonial and postindependence governments have regarded pastoral nomads as poor and culturally conservative people, causing land degradation with their large herds of animals, and encouraged sedentarization, uptake of cultivation or more market-oriented livestock production, and privatization of land either on an individual or group basis (see, e.g., Lesorogol 2008, p. 44–5). More recently, however, experiences from failed development projects, along with a large body of research on pastoral livelihoods, have demonstrated that pastoralism is in fact a rather effective livelihood strategy in arid and semiarid lands and pointed out that pastoral livelihood strategies are flexible and innovative rather than conservative (see, e.g., Catley et al. 2013). While some newer policies and development activities acknowledge this (notably the *National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands*, adopted by the Kenyan parliament in 2012), many state and non-state development agents are still influenced by the image of culturally conservative pastoralists hanging on to non-sustainable livelihoods and becoming involved in irrational resource conflicts. A key point in the negative view on pastoralism expressed in textbook statements, echoed in interviews with teachers, is thus that this livelihood activity represents at best noneffective, and at worst destructive, ways of exploiting natural resources.

The concept of natural resources is a salient one in the Kenyan curriculum. The Kenyan education system posits employment and wealth creation as key aspects of

nation building, encouraged through schooling (King 2007). This framing of the educational project also frames the view on the environment. Among the general objectives of the social studies syllabus is to “understand, use and manage the immediate environment for individual and national development” (Republic of Kenya 2009, p. 2), and the concept of resources plays an important role in the understanding of environment which is promoted by the state. In a social studies lesson in standard 4, the teacher gave the following definition of resources: “In this community there are things we do which earn us a living, which make us rich.” He then mentioned water, forest, and soil. “So we are having our daily needs. Those are our resources. Resources are around us, they help us to get wealth and money.” Likewise, in the social studies textbook for standard 8, resources are described as “the things we use to create wealth. Resources are used in economic activities such as agriculture, trade, tourism, mining, forestry and industries to create wealth” (Kamau et al. 2012, p. 79). School, in other words, introduces a view of the environment as consisting of materials which should be exploited and transformed into economic wealth – and pastoral livelihoods as ineffective in this endeavor.

Schooling in Laikipia North, through intersections between notions of morality, generation, livelihoods, and environmental resources, worked toward generating a category of youth less dependent on the generational hierarchies, livelihood traditions, and environmental understandings of their community. The contrasting moral understandings of livelihoods and environment in school and among community elders left young people in Laikipia North in an ambiguous space. Buying land and taking up cultivation, as encouraged by textbooks and teachers, were not an option to these young people from poor families. But due to the pressure on land and environment in Laikipia North, neither could they be full-time pastoralists as the elders appeared to prefer. The following sections will discuss how the sand loaders and the sand brokers negotiated their way through this ambiguous space.

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## 5 Laboring to Negotiate Livelihood Moralities

None of the sand loaders interacted with during fieldwork disputed the worth of pastoralism. Their choice of livelihood, they stressed, was primarily a choice of survival, brought about by external pressures and uncertainties. In particular, they pointed to the changing environment: the decrease in precipitation, the more frequent droughts, the deforestation of the area, and the spread of the *Opuntia* cactus. All of these developments challenged livestock productivity and health – and thereby pastoral livelihoods. Even very young people talked about environmental changes; about hills that used to be covered with forest so dense that when looking at them from a distance you would not be able to see the color of the soil and about the ease of finding fodder for the goats in the dry season by simply cutting branches from the trees. Now the hills were brown with a few spots of green, and finding fodder for the goats was difficult. According to a young man who in 2012 considered becoming a sand loader:

The environment has changed. When we were growing up there were no plants like this cactus here, no gullies, and the ground was not bare. The weather is dry. [. . .] When livestock feed on the cactus, they die, and since livestock is the only source of food here, when they get finished, we also get finished.

(14/6-2012)

Most of the loaders in Keringet explained that droughts had caused the death of family livestock and left them with no source of income. When they had found an opportunity in sand harvesting, they had taken it. Some still kept a few animals, but according to the loaders, “nowadays livestock is becoming a problem. People are finding alternatives. Because of the environment, it’s dangerous. Before, people had 200–300 goats, but now people cannot even maintain 50; drought comes every year.” The loaders emphasized that loading sand enabled them to be less dependent on older members of their families in terms of the provision of daily bread and, furthermore, to maintain a herd of livestock. “Before, we often had to sell a goat to be able to eat, but since I have started this work, we can go for 2–3 months without selling a goat,” one loader noted. The sand economy thus offered young men a way to gain a livelihood: not a secure way, however, as the sand trade depended on rain washing the sand from the mountains into the riverbeds, on demand from uncertain business connections and building projects, on the passage of lorries, and on the control and corruption of government officials.

On top of this uncertainty, loaders struggled to obtain an acceptable status as youth, with too little schooling to be considered “learned,” and engaged in livelihood activities considered low status and morally risky. Emphasizing the physical labor of sand loading offered one way of negotiating the status of their position. When the loaders described their work, they often underlined that sand, while providing quick cash, was hard labor. When they were digging and heaving sand, the heaviness of sand had a direct impact on the loaders’ bodies, causing them to sweat and become physically tired. This characteristic of the work had given the loaders their name – the *walajasho*. The word *walajasho* is translated as “the ones who eat their sweat” and has its root in the Swahili expression *kula jasho*, which literally means to eat sweat; that is, to do hard work, or work for oneself. While herding was characterized as work that was not hard to do, the loaders emphasized the physical efforts involved in loading sand. “We sweat for our daily bread,” the *walajasho* said, or “*pesa yetu ni ya jasho*” (our money is from our sweat); “it is hard and tiresome work, but you can make your goats multiply.” Typically, newcomers experienced the work as very hard, and learning to handle a spade effectively to load quickly and building up the necessary muscles took time. When they became more “qualified,” they sweated less, got stronger arms, their muscles ached less, and their hands got tougher, with calluses instead of blisters, according to one experienced loader.

As mentioned, the ability and obligation to work hard were described as a defining feature and duty of youth in the Maasai community. At the same time, notions of work also play an important role in Kenyan schools. “Education should prepare the youth of the country to play an effective and productive role in the life of the nation,” as one sentence in the national goals of education in Kenya reads



(Republic of Kenya 2009, p. iv). Among the objectives of primary education is to “provide the learners with opportunities to: [. . .] Appreciate and respect the dignity of work” (Republic of Kenya 2009, p. viii), and under the theme of citizenship in social studies, it is highlighted that a good citizen should “work and be productive in society” (Kamau et al. 2012, p. 184). Pastoralism was considered a non-industrious activity by many of the teachers and other state actors interviewed, and school was seen as a place that would teach young people to be “hardworking, self-reliant, and not being dependent on outside relief.” In the primary schools in Keringet, the school day started early with different kinds of practical, physical work. If pupils were late, or in other ways broke the school rules, the punishment most often consisted of hard physical work, e.g., cutting grass, digging in the school garden, or filling up holes and cracks in the ground created by erosion.

In his classic study of the ethics of Protestantism, Weber proposes that, following the Reformation in Europe, Calvinist ideas encouraged believers to work hard and pursue economic gain, in this way providing a foundation for the development of capitalism (Weber 1958). According to Comaroff and Comaroff (1997, p. 32), the protestant mission in Africa “was born of a shift of moral values initiated by the Reformation.” Virtue was seen as grounded in “disciplined labor and domestic existence” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997, p. 32), and being a morally good person thus came to be an individual and work-related endeavor. This concept of work differed in important ways from the concept of work among the Tswana studied by the Comaroffs. The Tswana considered work as a process of social and material interaction and exchange “through which persons worked to construct themselves in relation to others” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, p. 141). As for the protestant missionaries in South Africa and for colonialists in Kenya, herding animals was not considered a proper, industrious activity (Knowles and Collett 1989, p. 435). Maasai were thus described by colonialists as having “contempt for work” (Cranworth 1919, p. 51 in Knowles and Collett 1989, p. 435), while the agricultural Kikuyus were seen as hardworking (Knowles and Collett 1989, p. 435). After independence, work continued to be a key concept in Kenyan nation building, and the school system became focused on building up a labor force in order to secure national economic growth (King 2007, p. 360). While notions of autochthony have been mobilized as claims for belonging across Africa (Geschiere 2009), in the dominant Kenyan political discourse (which is to a large degree directed by Kikuyu interests), the key claim to state belonging and citizenship is work. As noted by Lonsdale: “It was not by accident that under the Kikuyu President Kibaki the motto of national unity became ‘Kenya: A Working Nation’” (Lonsdale 2008, p. 308), echoing President Kenyatta’s slogan of *uhuru na kazi* (independence and work) (cf. Droz 2006).

The ideals of work and industriousness provided the young loaders with a way to overcome the moral divide between school and community conceptions of livelihoods and create an acceptable generational position. When the loaders emphasized the hard work entailed in loading sand, they did not only comment on their experience of the work, they also negotiated its value, placing it as a valid alternative or complement to pastoralism, and thereby attempted to generate a different but morally acceptable way of being a young man in the community. Emphasizing that



their livelihood activity entailed hard work and sweat, they drew on both school and community ideas about the value of industriousness, challenging the widespread view that loaders were idle, lazy, and engaged in morally dubious activities and that they therefore belonged to a low-status category of youth. Their livelihood made them stand apart, but through this way of expressing their livelihood practice, the loaders drew on school experiences in an attempt to become youth in a socially acceptable way.

The sand brokers had a different way of trying to form their generational position through navigating schooling experiences and livelihood practices, and, as we shall see, this entailed negotiating understandings of the socio-material landscape of which they were a part.

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## 6 The “Learned” Managers of Natural Resources

The sand brokers in Laikipia North were young secondary school graduates who were considered to be, and self-identified as, “learned” people who, through their schooling, had come to know about “modern” life. However, as young people coming of age in a place and time where, for the large majority, educational promises of social mobility are broken (cf. Johnson-Hanks 2014; Prince 2013), they struggled to find new ways of establishing a social position as “learned” youth, other than through salaried work, and of obtaining the future they hoped for. And the hopes for the future among young people with secondary level education were remarkably similar and fixed: Mirroring pictures in school textbooks of smooth tarmac highways and shimmering skyscrapers in downtown Nairobi (see, e.g., Kamau et al. 2012), they envisaged economic development, political attention, and access to infrastructure in their own community – or, alternatively on an individual level, gaining an income enabling them to move to more developed places. Development was thus connected to specific places and in particular “the city.” Ferguson and, in relation to Kenya, Holtzman (2004) have discussed how this understanding of modernity is based on a powerful postcolonial narrative which “transforms a *spatial* global hierarchy into a *temporalized* (putative) historical sequence” (Ferguson 2006, p. 178, italics in original; see also Mains 2013). While the spatialized hierarchy was initially particularly connected to the relation between the “first” and the “third” world, it has in Africa increasingly become linked to relations between urban and rural areas (Holtzman 2004). Schooling shapes young people’s orientations toward city environments (Meinert 2003) and toward the future, conceptualized in linear, progressive terms (Mains 2013, p. 9). The key to obtaining the future lives they hoped for, according to the brokers, was natural resource management; a concept which constantly cropped up in their discussions. Natural resources were “resources found naturally, such as sand,” the brokers said, and these resources “belong to the community and need to be marketed.”

Sand is a material with a number of different properties (see Ingold 2011, p. 30 for a discussion of materials and their properties). For instance, sand forms the banks of riverbeds in Laikipia North, it erodes during heavy rain, and it holds water in the dry

season. For the brokers, however, the most important properties of sand were the ones linked to its status as a natural resource available for exploitation. When focusing on the properties of sand related to creating economic value, the brokers discerned between different types of sand according to its worth and function as elements in a construction material. The most common, the yellow-brown, rough, and gravel-like sand, was used for floors or roads. The rarer, finer, and lighter sand was for plastering walls and put aside for special orders. Lastly, small amounts of black sand, which is found in the top layer of sand just after rain has washed it into the river, were claimed to be magnetic, and it was said that some Indian businessmen had recently shown some interest in it. The brokers noticed different properties in different types of sand through seeing and touching the sand in the riverbed, but also through their anticipation of the future uses of the sand, formed in interactions with other sand actors. As such, the categorization of sand drew out the properties of sand as related to the ways the material would be used in future infrastructural developments in distant urban areas. Sand was therefore primarily (although not exclusively) seen and dealt with as a material available for exploitation, which could be isolated from the ground and made to mix and interact with new materials in a production process and which, due to these properties, gained an economic value. As discussed in Sect. 4, this understanding of sand had been, if not created, then at least strongly encouraged through schooling.

The sand brokers advocated strongly for regarding sand as a natural resource to be marketed and did not, at least in public, show any fear of curses engendered by the sale of land or soil. Seeing sand as a natural resource implies a view of the environment which differs from the understanding of close entanglements of people and landscape which dominates among elders. Seeing the landscape as consisting of resources to be exploited (or protected) is based on a notion of the environment as external to human beings (cf. Ingold 2000, p. 214–5). Promoting this view could thus be seen as a drive toward autonomy by the brokers. They were aware, of course, of the difference between the understandings of landscapes and environmental materials in school and among elders in the community, and they knew that engaging with sand positioned them in a potentially precarious youth category. However, their longer schooling and status as “learned” appeared to have provided them with the confidence to challenge the elders more directly than the loaders did.

The making of natural resources, Ferry and Limbert have suggested, involves a process of ascribing generalized, monetary value to a material, which can then be claimed (Ferry and Limbert 2008, p. 4). Numerous studies have discussed the conflicting claims of ownership arising from situations in which existing materials or landscapes are ascribed a new economic value (see, e.g., Greiner 2013). In Laikipia North, the official legal framework for the ownership and environmental regulation of sand appeared relatively unclear, with most of the land surrounding the rivers belonging to communally owned group ranches, while the river itself, and certain natural resources of the land, was government property, thus requiring permission for exploitation. The jurisdiction of the cooperative society, which tried to control the sand sale, was also unclear and contested, and disputes about land ownership and boundary demarcation complicated matters further. As a relatively

new resource in the area, traditional governance systems offered little guidance on its management. This did not mean that the elders readily gave up control; according to one of the brokers, “these old people do not want to give the youth a chance, because there is a lot of money there. They fear young people who have gone to school; they say that they are *wakora* [con men] and that they can’t be trusted.” However, as the current demand for sand primarily comes from outside Laikipia North district, the trade required mediation by people able to speak other languages than Maa and with an understanding of economic transactions. In the past, before people “knew” the business, the Maasai were often cheated in the sand trade, interlocutors said. While this idea might, to some degree, be exaggerated ethnic stereotyping, it created a space for young people like the brokers who had gone to school, who spoke several languages and who understood monetary value categories. They took up this space by making use of ideas about natural resource management encountered at school. As young, “learned” people, the brokers considered themselves well equipped for assuming the position as managers of natural resources. One of them said:

Our mission is to promote the quality of life and livelihood. We want to alleviate poverty. We have resources and, when we manage the resources internally and externally, it will help us. We have the resources, but we have been failed by the management and the leadership. So we came up as the youth to offer some management, because we, as the youth, can do it. And we are today’s leaders, not tomorrow’s.

(29/3-2012)

Through schooling, young people had learned to desire lives different from those of their pastoral forebears. As suggested by Valentin (2014, p. 117), “[p]erhaps more than any other institution, modern schooling offers hope – for social mobility, for a place in the symbolic universe of modernity, and for a predictable stable future.” The scarcity of work and limited access to a traditional labor market led young people to seek new paths toward social mobility. Engagements in new kinds of environmental transformations offered one such path. Their educational experiences at school had offered the brokers certain kinds of knowledge about the environment and understandings of time and space which made them regard the surrounding landscape as comprised of natural resources to be extracted, marketed, and managed. This knowledge played an important role in their attempts to create an altered generational position as “learned youth.” The brokers employed their school knowledge and position to mediate community interests in access to economic resources and development with an outside market while also trying to accommodate individual economic interests. School knowledge provided the youth with a moral rationale which could compete with the moral order of the community and enable them to oppose the idea that selling sand was cursed.

Thus, to a considerable degree, the generational position sought by the brokers was one of greater autonomy from the generational relations, hierarchies, and moralities of their community than that sought by the sand loaders. Still, the brokers clearly did not strive for complete independence. In their interactions with elders,

they attempted to avoid conflicts and underlined that, while they might have “modern” ideas, they still valued their “culture and tradition.” “I remain Maasai but I have city ideas,” one broker stated. Furthermore, they were extremely busy making use of internal disagreements among elders in the community and building alliances to avoid standing alone. Finally, while they challenged the elders who made decisions on behalf of the community, they also acknowledged the age hierarchy. Through their involvement in the sand trade, they struggled to mobilize the resources that would enable them to take part in age transition ceremonies and with time become elders in “the cultural way.” As such, just like the loaders, the livelihood practices of the brokers reflected careful attempts to balance autonomy and dependence in generational relations.

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## **7 Conclusion: Learning and Laboring, Balancing Autonomy and Dependency**

This chapter has discussed intersections between schooling, transformations in livelihood practices, and generational relations based on the practices of young men involved in the sand economy in Laikipia North.

Schooling in Kenya, the chapter has suggested, channels transnationally and transtemporally traveling understandings and moral framings of life and livelihood which denigrate pastoral livelihood knowledge and generational moralities. As such, in the Maasai community in Laikipia North, being schooled means embodying norms and knowledge which question and challenge the position of elders in the community. In this way, school has become a key agent in new kinds of generationing processes (cf. Huijsmans et al. 2014), making contemporary young people youths in specific ways with reference to the length of their schooling as well as to their livelihood activities. Rather than suggesting that school and community represent incompatible cultural worlds, the discussion in this chapter has centered on the ways in which school and community knowledge and moralities intersect and interact in processes which frame generational interactions and the conditions for young people’s learning and laboring.

State schooling tends to judge livelihood changes and practices according to an economic rationality and to assume that education will enable people to make intentional, rational decisions to obtain certain economic ends. This chapter, conversely, has proposed that livelihood activities are not only economic projects but also embodied material and moral interactions and exchanges which constitute endeavors to become part of social, and in this case in particular generational, relations. As environmental changes generate pressure on pastoral livelihoods, young people turn to new, uncertain, and morally precarious livelihood activities. Their ability to take part in such livelihood transformations is, to some degree, dependent on their position as schooled youth; a position which in itself represents and therefore also enables independence from the pastoral ways of life of the community, but which, furthermore, involves moral ambiguity and risk. Therefore,

this form of livelihood also demands quite intensive relational work. Thus, while loading sand entails a reorientation of young people's livelihoods, the embodied labor of sand loading is emphasized and narrated in ways which underline the physical work involved, thereby instituting it as a morally acceptable youth activity in the community. And as the sale of sand challenges strong cultural understandings of moral relations with the landscape, the young sand brokers attend very carefully to their social networks, mediating roles and cultural identities in order to avoid becoming ostracized from the community.

The competing, and in some cases overlapping, moral expectations regarding youth and their livelihood activities from school and from the wider community form an important background for the ways in which young people in the sand economy negotiate their generational positions. Young people make use of school knowledge in these negotiations in ways which reflect cautious attention to the social context and its generational relations. Youths involved in the sand economy are particularly occupied with balancing dependency and autonomy in relation to older generations and community belonging, attempting to broaden the understanding of morally acceptable livelihoods to include a wider range of livelihood activities. Learning and laboring form part of these negotiations, as environmental knowledge encountered in school and hard work become elements in efforts to seek inclusion in the community or to set oneself apart: efforts which do not reflect unequivocal positions of autonomy or dependence, but rather attempts to obtain points of balance in ambiguous and uncertain realms. Hence, dependency and autonomy in generational relations, while related to economic exchanges and reciprocity (Ferguson 2013; Mains 2013; Whyte et al. 2008), are also negotiated through embodied labor and interactions with material environments.

The generational perspective draws attention to the social relations in which new forms of laboring and learning are embedded, underlining that learning to labor, in this context, is not only about accessing new kinds of knowledge to become able to cope with livelihood challenges and changes brought about by climate change and land pressure. Learning to labor in the sand economy is also about bringing school knowledge into play in negotiations of the morality of different kinds of learning and laboring and of different ways of becoming a youth through these actions.

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## 8 Cross-References

- ▶ [Economic Practices of African Street Youth: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, and Zimbabwe](#)
- ▶ [Education and Employment Transitions: The Experiences of Young People with Caring Responsibilities in Zambia](#)
- ▶ [Young People's Marginal Livelihoods and Social Transitions in Urban Brazil: Tale of Four Lives](#)

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# Reproducing Work, Education, and Revolution: Two Latin American Case Studies

# 22

Stuart C. Aitken

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## Abstract

The chapter is set up as a presumptive justification for young people's right to work and participate in the making, creating, and production of space. Although it is clearly not appropriate for young people to show up in dangerous and exploitative workplaces, it is nonetheless not necessarily clear what constitutes danger and exploitation or what, even, constitutes work. The chapter, then, is in part a consideration of the workplaces where we do not find young people, the places where our existence would benefit from their presence, and the places that enable play, surprise, and dislocation from adult sensibilities. It is also about educational spaces and young people's right to fair and just educational practices and a learning environment that is not tied so tightly to the excesses of the global marketplace. Examples are drawn from a child work project in Mexico and the

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work of young people as activists for their own education in Chile with the idea that these two stories highlight the radical and transformative work of children and youth.

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**Keywords**

Children and young people • Family and community enterprises • Global restructuring processes • Mexico's working children • Social reproduction • Spatial dislocation • Neoliberal education

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## 1 Introduction

On July 17, 2014, Bolivia enacted a law allowing children as young as 10 years old to work in paid employment. After decades of proclamations from institutions like the United Nations and the International Labor Organization (ILO), the new law flies in the face of ideas that young lives should be dedicated exclusively to education and play and that they should be protected from the seeming harsh realities of the world of work. Under Bolivia's new law, 10-year-olds can work if they are self-employed and if they are also attending school. The legislation also sets 12 as the age when a child can work under contract, assuming that they have permission from their parents or guardians and continue in school. These new criteria expand Bolivia's "Code for Children and Adolescents," which previously followed ILO recommendations of 14 years of age as the minimum for child labor. The new law was immediately criticized as a step backward in its attempt to bring Bolivia out of poverty (Krishnan 2014). But in acknowledging that a large swathe of Bolivian children work anyway, the law was also an attempt to ensure better provisions for young people's physical and mental health. To that end, the law put in place restrictions on employers; it enacted severe consequences for violence against children and required voluntary consent from child laborers and their guardians and mandated permission from a public ombudsman before the child could work (Thompson 2014). The law ensured an outright ban on children working in mining, lumber, and other hazardous industries. To the extent that the law is the first clear counter to the "abolitionist" sentiments of the ILO and the United Nations, it perhaps reflects more clearly the complex nature of child labor and establishes a more nuanced and effective regulatory strategy. This complex nature is contextualized in systemic poverty that cannot be eradicated by simply removing children from productive work. The Bolivian labor law begins from the premise that children work because they are poor and that, until their poverty is overcome, they are better served by having their work brought out of the shadows of illegality. This involves having child labor legalized and regulated and ensuring that child workers receive the same protections and wages as their adult counterparts (Howard 2014). Moreover, and importantly, young people vigorously supported the new law, adding their voices and agency against right-wing opposition. In the run-up to the signing of the law, Neil Howard (2014) notes that the "pioneering Bolivian Union of Child and Adolescent Workers (UNATSBO), which represents tens of thousands

of under-18s all over the country, argued that regulation and labor protection are more useful for the poor and the young than wholesale bans” on their ability to work legally.

After over four decades of geographers thinking about the spaces and places of young people and their productive activities, many are still uncomfortable accounting for what constitutes children’s work and its scale and to what extent it is exploitative (Aitken et al. 2006; Jennings et al. 2006; Punch 2009; Grugel and Ferreira 2012). From a normative perspective, there are concerns about where young people should work, how child work should be differentiated from child labor, and in what ways it ought to relate to education and skill acquisition (ILO 2012). There are general concerns about the ways child work and education are tied to the spatial inequalities of global economic restructuring (Aitken 2004) and the excesses and abuses of neoliberal economics (Aitken 2004; Edmonds and Pavcnik 2005). Obvious and specific concerns focus on the abuses of children working in the appalling conditions of Los Angeles sweatshops, the Bolivian lumber industry, or tanzanite mines. For some there is also discomfort with the idea of workplaces – from rice paddies in China to the financial and technology worlds of Wall Street and Silicon Valley – set aside exclusively for adults; children, they say, have a right to be part of productive activities (Aitken et al. 2006). Scholars who advocate children’s rights to work take issue with universal proclamations emanating from institutions such as the International Labor Organization (ILO 2002, 2012, 2013) and the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC 2004, 2013) suggesting childhood as a time of life set aside solely for education and play. Still others argue that infants and very young children should also occupy workplaces, albeit accounted for by the spatial contiguity of daycares and playgroups (England 1996; Holloway 1998; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2014). The position taken in this chapter is that the sequestering of young people solely in a reproductive sphere circumscribed by the domesticated spaces of play and education is a problematic outcome of a capitalism that wants to control separate spheres from which a compliant workforce emerges. Increasingly, and particularly in the affluent Global North, children’s activities and education are circumscribed and organized to such an extent that the possibility of flexible and creative play, learning, and questioning disappears. Prior to the new labor laws in Bolivia, neoliberal ideals of childhood from the Global North permeated policy and educational institutions and the spaces they created for young people in Latin America. In the less affluent parts of Latin America, to a large degree, young people continue to work alongside adults, but increasingly that work is structured by neoliberal considerations that extract surplus value from the work of low-income children and their families, while removing most forms of welfare security and placing the burden of education, health, and infrastructure squarely on the shoulders of those increasingly unable to bear its weight.

This chapter weaves together stories of young people’s work and education in Latin America, but it is really about their right to space and, by extension, their right to creativity. To paraphrase David Harvey (2008, 23), the freedom to create and recreate our spaces and ourselves is one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights. The denial of this right shows up most stridently among children

and young people, who are hidden or sequestered away from public participation in pernicious processes meant perhaps to keep them safe bodily and emotionally but which mostly stultify and enervate their creative capacities. These processes are, in reality, thinly veiled mechanisms for adult control of young people's bodies and emotions, which are over-tested through neoliberal education systems concerned mostly about creating children as quantitative and compliant measures in tune with the global marketplace. In addition, these mechanisms keep adults safe from the annoyance, chaos, disruption, and cacophony, that is, young people. A recent example is the "rolezinhos (little strolls) no shopping" phenomenon, which began in December 2014 in São Paulo. Organized on Facebook, thousands of young people (usually from working-class neighborhoods) descended on shopping malls to socialize. Not overtly political, but nonetheless contentious, these gatherings were not about shopping but about socializing. The first major *rolezinho* took place in December 8, 2014, at the *Metrô Itaquera* mall, allegedly drawing over 3,000 young people (Romaro 2014). No violence of robbery was in evidence, but within a month and after four *rolezinhos*, the authorities responded with crackdowns that authorized police to use rubber bullets and tear gas. It is as yet unclear whether the *rolezinhos* are about young people protesting or socializing, but it is clear that the most uncomfortable issue is that the majority of those involved in the *rolezinhos* are working-class youths of color and that they are determined to occupy adult private spaces (cf. Vargas 2014). Of course, beyond the commodified and glitzy spaces of malls, there are adult spaces that bore or enervate young minds and bodies, and there are many other spaces where young people may choose to avoid. The take away point of this chapter is that to deny young people's choice is problematic, and it is absolutely necessary to fill more adult spaces with the presence and energy of young people. Indeed, as Moosa-Mitha (2005) notes, ignoring the *presence* of young people is, in and of itself, a form of oppression. And that form of oppression will result in *rolezinho*-like pushbacks.

Empirically, the chapter pulls from previously published work on child labor and education in Tijuana, Mexico (Aitken et al. 2006; Jennings et al. 2006; Aitken 2008), and work on spaces of education and youth activism in Santiago, Chile (Colley and Aitken 2013; Aitken 2014a, b, c). These case studies do not in any way offer a generalization of Mexican or Chilean youth work practices. The two research projects are summarized and consolidated here to say something about two unique Latin American contexts of positive aspects of child labor on the one hand and, on the other hand, young people taking back their rights to education. The case studies are considered through a theoretical lens that valorizes the importance of young people's access to space and their right to create and recreate those spaces and themselves through what Walter Benjamin (1978) called revolutionary imaginations.

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## 2 Learning to Labor and Opening Up Space

A focus on how children and young people learn to labor highlights an important part of social reproduction and is key to understanding the right to create and recreate space. Cindi Katz (2001, 2004) argues that reproduction is primarily

about the daily health and welfare of people, including the creation of educational and play environments. Children and young people are not just recipients of processes that bolster learning, health, and welfare, but they are also important harbingers of those processes. Social reproduction is about difference, complexity, and skill in a labor force, and education, health, and welfare play a large part in that differentiation and complexity. Children are integrally linked to social reproduction, but the places and practices of young people's everyday lives are rarely considered a dynamic context for understanding historical change and social differentiation and how those vary across the globe (Aitken 2004; Katz 2011). The lives of children are dramatically affected when caught up in a web of flexible accumulation with attendant local economic uncertainty, associated un- and underemployment, decreasing public services, and increasing control of education by the private sector. Marx (1976, 372–373) argued that children's and women's labor is a large part of incipient capitalism in any particular place because it is the most flexible and cheapest. In noting this, Katz (2004, 143) goes on to suggest that “[n] either history, nor geography seems to have altered this situation. While the continued importance of child labor in urban and industrial areas of the ‘third world’ is well recognized, . . . research [indicates] that capitalist ‘development’ [brings] about an intensification and expansion of children’s work.” Most children up until the recent historical past worked alongside adults as part of family and community enterprises. This may have taken the form of newspaper delivery, seasonal fruit picking, or working part time in a store. Today in the affluent Global North, these activities are mostly lost to young people with an increasing influx of flexible immigrant labor. In the Global South, traditional child labor practices such as gathering firewood or tending livestock are increasingly joined by activities such as caring for sick parents and relatives in the wake of economic restructuring that picks apart welfare structures (Robson 2010; Ansell et al. 2014). In addition, in some parts of the Global South, there is severe underemployment among relatively well-educated young people, suggesting not only economic restructuring but also a failing educational system (Jeffrey 2010a). As economists and policy-makers debate the vicissitudes of globalization and market restructuring, it is nonetheless clear that the opportunities available to children and young people, and the futures they can hope for, are very different from those of previous generations.

While most people would wish to see the eradication of exploitative and abusive workplaces, there is nonetheless an argument for appropriate forms of child work as part of productive activities and spaces. The intensification and expansion of work during childhood and adolescence is important because it is during these formative years that the principles of society are mapped onto the consciousness and unconsciousness and, concomitantly, this is when portions of social reproduction and labor production are potentially contested and negotiated through children's lives. What is required for this contestation and negotiation to happen well is openness to what Ernesto Laclau (1990) calls *spatialdislocations* and to what Michel de Certeau (1984) calls *spatial surprises*. If spatial practices are dominated by adult and institutional frameworks, then they more than likely foreclose upon the possibility of surprise and dislocation emanating from children. For Laclau (1990), seeing

space as a Cartesian container of social activities is a hegemonic practice. It frames activities into neat bundles so that they are then amenable to certain forms of control, such as touting standardized tests or using the number of children taking sciences in school to predict future economic prosperity. Spatial framings relate to what de Certeau (1984) calls institutional strategies and are the product of ideological closure, a dislocated world seen as somehow coherent (Massey 2005, 25). In highlighting the work of Laclau and de Certeau, Massey (2005) argues that surprise and dislocation open up the political and, hence, the possibility to reframe space in liberatory ways. If the political is opened up for children and young people, in what ways do they work toward recreating spaces and themselves? How do they exploit the openture created by the spatial disjunctures (certain paths being closed or dislocated) in their lives? The implications of these questions for young people suggest, first, a focus on the transformation of children and their labor as familial, community, and governmental institutions change and, second, a focus on the ways that children's lives are seen as flexible in the ways they learn to labor. From this, a focus on where surprise, openture, and dislocation take place suggests ways to let young people create and recreate spaces and themselves.

The balance of the chapter focuses on surprise, dislocation, and playful imaginations in two studies about young people working to recreate spaces and themselves. The first follows a program in Tijuana, Mexico, that was set up by the social and family welfare department (DIFF) to encourage young people to work while staying at school (Aitken et al. 2006; Jennings et al. 2006; Aitken 2008). In the early 1990s, the global restructuring processes that undergirded local economic transformation forced many children in Tijuana out of educational institutions, onto streets, and into work. In attempts to offset the worst of this exploitation, government officials in Tijuana set up a labor program to protect young people and keep them in education. Tijuana's *Paidimeta* program (program of support for the integral development of children packers at Tijuana's supermarkets) ran from 1996 to 2006 and was an attempt to regulate children's work as grocery bag packers in Tijuana's supermarkets. The program was set up to contribute to children's *formación* (training/integration) both as workers and as family members. The research study revisited here demonstrated the ways that *Paidimeta* enabled young people to show up at home and on the shop floor in innovative and creative ways (Aitken et al. 2006), creating spaces of surprise and delight where young people attained value from their actions (Aitken 2008). The second study takes place in Chile and is about the ways young people dislocated city streets in order to retake their education system. Beginning in spring 2006, students in Chile took to the streets and occupied high schools in Santiago to protest the continued privatization of education and an increasing disparity between rich and poor students (Colley and Aitken 2013). Within a few weeks, the protests grew from a single march in Santiago to a nationwide campaign that placed half of the schools in Chile on strike or under occupation. By showing up on the streets *en masse*, in uniform and sometimes carrying their school desks, the student activists reimagined their political identities and reclaimed their right to political dissent and street protest. The protest became the work of Chilean young people from 2006 to 2013.

Both these examples, then, are about young people remaking spaces. The Mexican example is a subtle reworking of the spaces of supermarkets by young people who bring an important energy that is suffused with delight and surprise. The Chilean example is much less subtle but no less surprising, with young people using their bodies (in school uniforms) and educational paraphernalia (e.g., desks) to take over and disrupt public/adult spaces.

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### 3 Mexico's Working Children

For the most part of the last century, the vast majority of children in Mexico learned to labor through the family, and this form of education was mixed with play and leisure. On this fabric of social reproduction, school-based education imposed a cadence that was often incompatible with work and family rhythms. Children's work was indelibly linked to family reproductive strategies, and when educational structures tried to impose themselves on, for example, agricultural needs such as harvesting, then family reproduction usually took precedence. Bey (2003, 296) points out that in rural Mexico young children derived considerable pride and well-being from working alongside their parents or in other jobs offered by the community. As pointed out in the discussion of the Bolivian child labor that begins this chapter, the ILO (2002, 2012) and IPEC (2004, 2013) are intent upon eradicating the worst forms of child labor, defined in part as "labor performed by a child who is *under a minimum age* specified in national legislation for that kind of work." And while most countries, including Mexico, define the minimum age for work as under 14 years of age, of the 250 million child laborers globally, the majority are aged between 4 and 15. For example, in San Quintín, a rural community south of Tijuana, 24.6% of the child workers questioned in the early 1990s began work between 5 and 9 years, and the rest (75.3%) started between 10 and 14 years (UNICEF 1994). Globally, Mexico still has some of the highest rates of child agricultural labor, and, importantly, agricultural work here differs from many other places in the world because it remains a family and community affair that is controlled by usufruct property structures such as the *ejido* system (e.g., Bey 2003). This rural context has implications for urban young people whose parents learned to labor in the fields. In a crude characterization of the global economic map, Mexico takes its place among what Ruddick (2003, 339) euphemistically calls the "convergence club" of countries whose gross domestic product is joining those of the minority Global North. These are nations with sufficient capital and human resources to take advantage of changes in technology and labor forces restructured through the movement and manipulation of work practices. This convergence in Mexico is limited to certain regions, including the border with the USA and gives rise to what Perez-Bustillo and Cervantes (1997) call "growth without equity" (cited in Ruddick 2003, 350). For Mexico, this regional growth has resulted in a significant movement of people to urban areas and to the northern *frontera*. As a consequence, in Tijuana in the early 2000s, youth and childhood was restructured in distinct ways by civic institutions determined to represent the region as a vibrant part of the emerging



Pacific Rim economy. Prior to this era of convergence, rural and urban children in northwestern Mexico were part of the home and family for most of their earlier years, and it was in this environment that they learned to labor. With an economy that was increasingly tied to global markets, childhood in Tijuana was categorized as a stage strongly determined by institutionalized educational spaces. To the extent that children's labor was part of a collective family strategy of income generation, increasingly toward the end of the twentieth century, it was monitored by Mexican welfare-based government institutions.

### 3.1 An Example of Tijuana's Institutional Oversight of Child Labor

*Paidimeta* was created in 1996 by Tijuana's social and family welfare department (DIFF) to enable children who attended school to work part time in local supermarkets as checkout grocery packers. Modeled after a successful but short-lived program in Mexico City, *Paidimeta* ran until 2006, when it began to encounter problems similar to those experienced in Mexico City. One problem related to the cost of the program and a second related to the suspicion of the supermarket owners of involvement by organized labor. At its height, 1,200 young people were part of the program with an average age of 11.9 years and average schooling of 4.6 years (Jennings et al. 2006). The packers were not paid by the supermarkets but could keep any tips they received; through this arrangement, a young person could make over double the average adult wage in Tijuana. Ostensibly, the program's purview went beyond income generation with its aspirations to prepare young people for future integration to the labor force: "children learn a culture of work discipline, a responsible management of money, [the] program promotes children dedication to study, children's personal achievement, family integration, and children's non-participation in antisocial activities" (*Paidimeta* pamphlet, 2002). The program spoke to the older Mexican discourse described above, which honored the intervention of families in how children learned to labor, and it elaborated concerns of DIFF that children were schooled in the dangers of antisocial activities with specific reference to drugs and prostitution.

The first part of *Paidimeta*'s intent was to teach work ethics among the supermarket packers. The focus on producing good workers is elaborated through the DIFF's desire not only to protect the packers but also to train them for future integration into the labor market. DIFF and the supermarket chains considered the children "volunteers" who learned requisite work skills and ethics. The *Paidimeta* program was formulated in accordance with federal labor regulations. In Mexico, Federal Labor Law Article 22 prohibits the use of children's labor when they are under 14 years old and when they are older than 16 but they have not completed elementary school. In addition, Article 23 establishes that children between 14 and 16 years old require parents' permission to work (these young people may be paid salaries directly). According to the *Paidimeta* program, children from 9 to 14 years old participated as packers in supermarkets only as volunteers. In practice, children



packers as young as 8 years old were found on the ship floor (Aitken et al. 2006). Supermarkets took care to not allow children older than 14 to participate as packers, because to do so required recognition of their labor rights, including a regular salary, benefits, and the right to join a union. The only benefit for packers that the *Paidimeta* program insisted upon was emergency medical aid paid for by the supermarkets. The study found that other program rules were broken. For example, while the program established that children could not work more than 4 h a day and no more than 6 days per week on a schedule from 8:00 in the morning until 20:00 at night, the study found that some children work 6–8 h and often until 22:00 h. Managers often treated the children as salaried workers, keeping records with information about them and their families, and sometimes these records were used to cite children who did not conform to the rules established for formal workers. Sometimes discipline reports were written when children laughed, ran, and/or played in the supermarket; these reports were not condoned by *Paidimeta* as it implied children's status as workers rather than volunteers, thus contravening Mexican labor laws. Child packers' labor contravened the intent of *Paidimeta* when they did more than pack groceries at the checkouts. Some children were required to learn product codes or where products were located. In addition, children often wheeled customer carts out to their cars and helped them unload groceries, a practice that was condemned by the local press when a girl packer was assaulted in the parking lot. It was nonetheless a common practice that provided the best opportunity to obtain large tips. Nonetheless, the overall conclusion of the study was that young child packers fared well as part of the *Paidimeta* program (Aitken et al. 2006).

The dual intentions of the *Paidimeta* program focus on family, and work ethics intimated a coalescence of old and modern notions of learning to labor, and they joined together to suggest *formación integral*, a training that was, as literal translation suggests, “essential and whole.” Children packers lived at the interplay of home, school, and work, and as social actors they transformed these different spaces, appropriating them through creative social practices and many times resisting and challenging definitions of child, childhood, work, and worker (Aitken 2008). With the intensification of children's daily round came a tighter packing of daily time budgets. Packers experienced an expansion of their local geographies beyond the confines of family and neighborhood/*colonia*. It may be argued that these children were in the process of reproducing and recreating time, space, and scale (Jennings et al. 2006), the end point of which meant not just social acknowledgment but also spatial reification; specifically, they gained rights and acknowledgment in space. The packers got to recreate “a space . . . [where] each idea of ‘value’ acquires or loses its distinctiveness through confrontation with other values and ideas it encounters there . . . groups, classes or factions cannot constitute themselves . . . as ‘subjects’ unless they generate (or produce) a space” (Lefebvre 1991, 416). The Tijuana child packers' creation and recreation of space/time/scale was not just about overcoming physical distance and time constraints in their daily rounds, but it was about resisting and reworking their place in society.

As part of the *Paidimeta* program, 14-year-old Pedro and his 10- and 13-year-old sisters, Iva and Vives, could make up to 800 pesos (80 USD in 2005) a week from tips. His mother, Maria, was a single parent earning 650 pesos a week working full time at a local maquiladora factory. She talked about the needs of her family and noted just how intimately her children and their labor were tied to the family's economic and social welfare, suggesting a different kind of home/work context and the creation of a reproductive space to which the children were intimately tied and one that was warmly connected to the social and spatial contexts of the family and emotional geographies that elaborate spaces of economic resourcefulness and caring (Aitken 2008). Pedro and his sisters were the principal wage earners in the family, earning considerably more per week than Maria and a live-in uncle. It might be expected that this would empower the children and change the family dynamic, but when asked this all three young people said that they gave over their earnings to Maria who would then give them pocket money. What they gained in return was a certain amount of autonomy. The children's work enabled an expansive mobility and a chance for them to move beyond the *colonia*. This expansion was important in the context of a very difficult urban environment with a disorderly, relatively unplanned structure, a topography characterized by hills and canyons, and an inefficient transportation system. The children would often take *califas* (private minibuses) to work, paying the fare with money earned in tips. While the experience of moving between the home, the school, and the supermarket gave Pedro better spatial control over the city, at the same time it exposed him to the risks of an insecure urban environment. Drugs, prostitution, and gang violence were evident throughout the *colonia* at this time; Pedro and his sisters negotiated these dangers on a daily basis, but the autonomy of their pocket money and the prestige and self-confidence that came from working as packers in addition to the responsibility they felt toward the family enabled them to avoid trouble (Aitken 2008). They also develop the skills to negotiate and navigate the streetwise risks which are useful to their future lives, and it is important to note that the urban environment is the site for learning these skills which they would not acquire under normal circumstances (e.g., sequestered in formal schools).

Other produced and recreated spaces emanated from the supermarket shop floor. For the most part, packers enjoyed the shop floor space, even as it disciplined them and at the same time gave them some freedom and distance from problematic *colonia* dynamics. While waiting their turn at the counter, seated in a bench or making a line by height, children chatted, played, and laughed. Children's work organization at the supermarkets followed two different patterns. On the one hand, large chains like *Calimax* and *Gigante* let children organize teams by themselves. Older children would place younger workers at particular checkout counters and generally teach them the ropes. At smaller chains such as *Comercial Mexicana* and *Casa Ley*, adult supervisors were in charge of organizing children into teams. Children sometimes faced difficult relationships with supervisors and clients and with other children. According to the *Paidimeta* program, store managers mentored and took care of children packers. However, the relationship between children and managers was frequently one of conflict. To deal with tensions and conflicts, some

children resisted, some fought, some broke rules, and some consented to the social order of the supermarket floor.

### 3.2 Reproducing Capital's Needs

It is remiss to not consider children's work, play, and education within global discourses of social reproduction that include an understanding of family transformations, community changes, and local and regional development. These are considerable issues that go well beyond the purview of the Tijuana research project, and yet three substantial implications were drawn from the focus on Tijuana's supermarket packers (see Aitken et al. 2006 for elaboration). The first implication for child's labor from the Tijuana study was that young people are marked as flexible – perhaps the most flexible – consumers and producers of capital. Very shortly after the establishment of the *Paidimeta* program at the supermarkets, video arcades were established in close proximity, and child packers were often seen spending their tips after a shift. The so-called nature of children changes as the objects around them – social practices and institutions, family and community structures, labor relations and commodities – change, but it is nonetheless clear that children continue as pivotal and flexible artifacts of contemporary capitalism. That said, young people are not a simple *tabula rasa* upon which the will of capital is etched. Children not only “become” through the influences of these changing objects, but they also bring something of themselves into work and culture as they actively participate in the day-to-day workings of places (see Aitken 2008 for elaboration of this theme).

A second implication of institutionalized labor practices for children's lives resides in issues of disequilibrium and inequality that are very much manifest at the local level. In the 1980s and 1990s, Tijuana was uniquely positioned in the global economy by rapid modernization and continued dependence on the Global North. This local focus of globalization suggested a complex web of processes that impinged upon the lives of workers in a myriad of ways, and it is young workers who flex most under pressures to adjust. The packers in Tijuana experienced space-time expansion as they played, learned, worked, and journeyed daily between home, school, and work negotiating various modes of transportation while securing their own safety in a chaotic urban environment. They also negotiated space-time compression as their worlds collapse into a stringent daily routine, at least for a while. By the mid-2000s, the excesses of global neoliberal adjustments landed in Tijuana, and DIFF experienced difficulties funding its myriad of welfare programs. In addition, organized labor began getting involved with child packer programs elsewhere – most notably in Mexico City – and the supermarkets involved became wary of what was being asked of them. After all, there were other cohorts of the population who could be used to pack grocery bags. The *Paidimeta* program was stopped in April 2006, and within 2 weeks the place of children at the checkout counters was replaced by that other cohort of flexible wageless labor: elders. For many of the young people involved in *Paidimeta*, the change was traumatic for

them and their families, who had come to rely on the extra income. On a positive note, however, the program engaged young people in productive activities about which they felt proud. They brought to the shop floor a positive energy of responsibility and delight, which could not be diluted by the vagaries of larger economic and institutional forces.

The third implication of the Tijuana labor study, then, focuses on the minds and bodies of children, how they are constructed, how they are taught to labor, and how their play and activities are a crucial part of explaining the distinctive shape of larger material transformations. Focus on children and social reproduction is important, it seems, insofar as it follows Laclau and de Certeau in efforts to “break[s] the frames of dominant models of transformations in the world system” (Stephens 1995, 8). Children are very much in the game of world making. On this point, Aitken et al. (2006) noted the ease with which young people in Tijuana grew into responsibilities at home and at work and the ways they incorporated play and creativity into these responsibilities. Walter Benjamin (1978) talks about a revolutionary imagination in children’s play and creativity that for the most part remains dormant (coiled like a spring) or is disciplined out of adult life. In noting this, Katz (2004, 257) argues that revolutionary imaginations of these kinds may be the key to halting or at least transforming “capitalism’s rapacious trajectory.” With the withdrawal of support from, and the eventual demise of, the *Paidimeta* program, it may well be appropriate to question whether there was any success in transforming capitalist practices. One of the reasons for the program’s eventual collapse was the threat of involvement by organized labor, a prospect about which Benjamin would have no doubt approved. It was nonetheless the magic of children’s worlds that enthralled Benjamin throughout his writing career, and it was in particular their capacity to take the detritus and leftover materials of capitalism and transform them in liberatory ways that enticed him to talk of young people’s revolutionary potential. Benjamin was convinced that young people’s mimetic propensities were not just about copying adults and learning to labor through play; children’s play and activities were about making the world anew. The young people involved in the *Paidimeta* program were in the process of revolutionary world making in subtle ways through their play and involvement on the shop floor. And at almost exactly the same time that the child packers were removed from Tijuana’s supermarkets, a much more obvious revolution was brewing in Chile.

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#### **4 Recreating Space for Educational Justice Through Revolution in Chile**

If the Tijuana child labor project focused on the recreation of flexible spaces in workplaces and families and the ways young people brought their creativity to the shop floor, the Chilean example forcefully highlights young people’s revolutionary imaginations and their ability to recreate street and political spaces through a recreation of themselves. At the same time that the *Paidimeta* program ended, in spring 2006, students in Chile took to the streets to protest (sometimes violently but

mostly through civic disruption) the privatization of their school system. Showing up in their school uniforms, the media dubbed the young protesters *Pingüinos*, a moniker that they embraced and used to push forward their political agenda (Aitken 2014a). Continuing through 2013, the *Pingüino* revolution is one of the most successful protracted uprisings of our time, demonstrating that young people are perfectly capable of reclaiming rights and recreating spaces.

In terms that resonate with Massey's (2005, 149) "politics of the event of place," Tyner (2011, 69) argues that "power to violence" can be understood in terms of "place-as-disciplined" space. School spaces provide an important venue for understanding violence as a social and spatial practice (Aitken and Colley 2011; Aitken 2014a), but they also harbor the potential for change and revolution. Tyner points out that from a very early age, we are socialized into a recognition and an understanding of the appropriate use of space and who has access and rights within particular spaces. He goes on to evoke Sibley's (1995) rendering of geographies of exclusion wherein, with any given situation and at any given place, the presence of certain bodies as well as specific behaviors and representations is deemed acceptable or not. Shopping malls, for example, are appropriate places for most adult consumers but are restricted or have no access to adolescents who tend to loiter and not spend money. Cresswell (1996, 3) notes that the word "place" turns up as part of the daily vernacular because we are socialized into understanding that "[s]omething or someone belongs in one place and not another." The idea of belonging to a particular place necessarily creates the potential for disruptive or violent interactions. This is especially true in conceptualizing the classroom and schoolyard in terms of its many territories and microgeographies. When the individuals using that space come into conflict with the rules of that space, belonging can result in exclusionary practices, which may or may not result in disruptive events (cf. Thomas 2011). The balance of this chapter describes one of the most famous contemporary events where young people *en masse* exceeded the spaces of their demarcation to protest the creation of privatized education system that had dramatically changed the social and spatial opportunities of a large swathe of Chileans.

## 4.1 Chile and Neoliberal Education

According to David Harvey (2005, 39), neoliberalism was birthed in Chile when Augusto Pinochet's military coup, with US backing, ousted the democratically elected Allende government. Salvador Allende's move toward socialism was upended in this violent coup, in which Allende died, to be replaced by an economic model based on the work of Milton Friedman and his students at the University of Chicago (cf. Friedman 1962). Harvey (2005, 8) points out that since the 1950s, Chilean economists were funded at the University of Chicago by the USA as part of a program to counter left-wing ideologies during the Cold War. Pinochet brought some of these young neoliberal economists into his new government to prescribe a new ideological structure for his brave new world. Working with the International

Monetary Fund (IMF), they restructured Chile's economy around their theories of neoliberal capitalism. Harvey goes on to emphasize the short-lived nature of the Chilean economic turnaround – particularly with the debt crisis of 1982 – but the policies were in place and continued after Pinochet was gone. In time the processes moved relentlessly and consistently toward associated right-wing social doctrinarianism. The Pinochet coup provided the USA an opportunity to experiment with a neoliberal economic model based on Friedman's (1962) ideas of capitalism and freedom that embrace privatization, individuation, and free-market global competition. The seeming success of neoliberal economic policies in Chile created enthusiasm for a market-based mode that began to filter into social policy-making, including those that prescribe healthcare, welfare, and education. This model extended a pernicious form of social doctrinarianism to the extent that schools were privatized and a free-market ethic was introduced into the entire education system, presaging a plan that was beginning to find a foothold in the US, UK, and Canadian education systems (Mitchell 2003). A motley assortment of non-state agents entered the vacuum left by the Chilean state: a diverse array of profit-seeking educational entrepreneurs and institutions with overt religious and political agendas offered progress and development through education (Aitken 2014a). By 2006, there was little evidence of progress in Chile, and students were vocal about the injustices of the system.

Jeffrey (2010b, 499) points out that most evidence to date suggests that neoliberal education does little more than further consolidate the position of a handful of prestigious institutions at the expense of government-funded schools and colleges that provide for the poor. Ravitch (2013) pushes Jeffrey's concerns further by the suggestion that reforms focusing on national standards and testing are driven primarily by individuals and companies that produce testing packages, and so a larger agenda of social doctrinarianism is pushed by those most likely to profit. In Chile, the young people most at risk from neoliberal educational practices, the young people with the most to lose, and the people unable to vote or access the democratic process in any meaningful way because of their age took to the streets to push for profound change through unprecedented and swift radicalism. The *Pinguinos*' rapid mobilization through text messaging took authorities by surprise and is generally regarded as the world's first social-media-activated protest (Reel 2006).

## 4.2 Taking the Schoolyard to the Streets

What happens when schools and schoolyards are occupied and controlled by young people and school uniforms (and sometimes desks) spill out into the streets? Bakamjian (2009) notes that the *Pinguinos*, who had grown up after Pinochet and entirely under democratic rule, were unsatisfied with the effectiveness of traditional channels of democratic representation and that they felt compelled to go outside of these methods to express their views. That they chose the simultaneous use of social media, occupation of schools, and taking to the streets suggests a new mode of

public discourse, and the extent to which it caught the authorities unaware is worth considering within the contexts of youth activism (cf. Colley and Aitken 2013).

At the core of the *Pingüinos*' demands was a complete restructuring of the privatized education system, which they deemed was undemocratic and socially unjust. The event that sparked the first protest marches on April 26, 2006, was an announcement of increased cost to take the *Prueba de Selección Universitaria* (PSU, equivalent to the SATs in the USA), which many students believed should be free for those of the lowest socioeconomic class. The first march comprised students from 15 high schools in Santiago but quickly grew to a nationwide protest. The first school occupation occurred in Santiago on May 19, and, a week later, 100 schools across the country joined the occupancy movement, and an indefinite strike on instruction was declared. Traditional channels of democratic representation had failed for these students, and so they organized a taking of the streets, and school occupation became a rallying cry through social media (Colley and Aitken 2013). Students in some affluent private schools claimed solidarity and also joined the occupations and marches. Even as the movement took off, government officials continued to refuse to meet with students, and on May 21 newly elected President Michelle Bachelet stated that the movement was undemocratic (Bachelet 2006). A week later, the Minister of Education, Martin Zilic, agreed to meet with the students but sent his subsecretary instead. Feeling that they were not being taken seriously, the students mobilized once more, and on May 30, just one day after the failed meeting with Zilic, approximately 800,000 students across the country took back the streets and the schools (Colley and Aitken 2013). The protest continued for over a week as the students negotiated with a more attentive Zilic. Their basic demand was for a restructuring of the market-based decentralized school system, which included a free *Prueba de Selección Universitaria* and public transportation for all students. A week later, Bachelet went on state television with a public announcement to the *Pingüinos* saying, "We have realized that your demands are justified and reasonable. So from this year on we will give every student who needs it an inclusive grant" (Bachelet 2006). After 3 months of struggle and with many of their demands met and the creation of a Presidential Advisory Council on Education with student representatives, the *Pingüino* movement disbanded, and normal classes were resumed with the proviso that the government follow through with its promise (Aitken 2014a, c).

The students' method of mobilization, which bypassed official institutional channels, reveals a deep-seated belief that the system no longer served their interests. Called a "smart mob for better education" by Rheingold (2012), the *Pingüinos* were an exemplar of political pressure by youths too young to vote but able to activate massive social connectivities to take back the streets (cf. Colley and Aitken 2013). As Bakamjian (2009, 18) notes, "they were dissatisfied with the policy ambiguities between authoritarianism and democracy that plagued the society in which they had been raised, and they recognized the urgency to change them . . . The student's belief in true democracy is evident by the purpose for the movement, the manner in which they executed it, and the organization within the movement." The students used assemblies and meetings to organize themselves.



Bakamjian (2009) notes the remarkable nature of the *Pingüinos*' mobilization among a group of young people who had never experienced mass political demonstrations during the demobilized democratic era that followed the fall of Pinochet. The revolution is remarkable to the extent that the young people had no model of street protest.

Although the leadership and mentoring of the *Pingüinos* was exclusively by adolescents, Chovanec and Benitez (2008) note that there was "behind the scenes" guidance. Throughout the Pinochet dictatorship, when thousands of men went "missing," radical activism was constituted and practiced by women. As a consequence, older mothers and grandmothers were on hand to guide the *Pingüinos*' organization. Chovanec and Benitez argue that while some of the young people involved with the *Pingüinos* may have had no experience or little reference for revolutionary practices and political protest, there is a history of resistance in some of the young women who participated in the movement. They suggest that through intergenerational learning, young girls "that played innocently 'under the tables' as their mothers and grandmothers clandestinely planned and protested" gained insight into the worlds of repression and resistance without having actually experienced it (Chovanec and Benitez 2008, 48). Although there may be a pervasiveness of fear and distrust ingrained in them by their forbearers, it did not prevent these young women from actively participating in and leading the student protests. Thus, while growing up in the "demobilized" era of neoliberal democracy, the young people of the *Pingüino* revolution not only felt free to express themselves without the fear of authoritarian repression but also some had the familial background to know how to organize. Chovanec and Benitez (2008, 50) note that this ingrained social consciousness leads to greater social movement continuity in that the young women of the revolution were influenced not only by their family members but also through all of the educators and activists in their life. This is especially important because the *Pingüinos* have maintained their protests from 2006 to 2013 as a result of their capacity to use the education system to their advantage even when it has failed them.

The *Pingüinos*, many of whom were now at university, continued the Chilean struggle through 2013. Every year, when school was out for the summer, they took to the streets. In the last few years of the uprising, the protest became carnivalesque, replete with costumes, and synchronized dancing. What started off as a struggle against privatized education became a platform for dance, clowning, gaiety, and performance. And each year, the government yielded a little toward a new set of demands. The *Pingüino* revolution was remarkable then to the extent that it is made up of an amalgam of young people with no model of street protest, although some had experienced resistance secondhand through their family's experience and still others had realized through their education that they could move against a system and regime which did not expect resistance. As suggested by Aitken (2014a, c), the revolution was a palpable example of Žižek's (2010, 326) radical ethical act because it encapsulated change among young people first internally through families and their school system and then through change in the attitudes of the authorities toward their situation and hence a toppling of at least one insidious



aspect of neoliberal capitalism. The vitriol, passion, and speed of the *Pingüinos*' uprising shocked the government out of its complacency, and, as such, it was a combination of dislocation and surprise that provided a sufficient political push (de Certeau 1984; Laclau 1990). In spring 2013, a new generation of school children occupied schools in Santiago to protest continued inequities and rising costs. Michelle Bachelet returned to power in November 2013 with a promise to dismantle further the Chilean privatized education system.

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## 5 Conclusion: Revolutionizing Youth Work and Education

The issue of child work is not a new one for policy-makers or academics, and yet it continues to challenge our thinking about how local geographies contextualize definitions of childhood and youth and the nature of work, play, schooling, and apprenticeship. Child work comes in many forms and intersects with issues of play and education in a myriad of ways. The seeming peripheral and yet converging status of Mexico in the 1990s and early 2000s bore the brunt of a rapidly polarizing global economy, the excesses of which were checked for a while with the rise of institutionalized child work and energetic play among Tijuana's supermarket packers. Although it is not possible to generalize about how children learn to labor across generations and other places in Latin America from the Tijuana study, it is clear that young people are social actors whose lives are shaped by their local working and living environments and the times of those environments, and in turn they also have the capacity to playfully recreate and reimagine those times and spaces. Their responsibilities highlighted a resistance to capitalism's rapacious trajectory, but it is important to note that, also, at times, there was a suggested complicity with capitalist norms by the young people. And then again, at times and in certain spaces, the actions of the young people reflected an imaginative revolution, which suggested hope through difference, that is, young people and their transformative power. That the *Paidimeta* program ultimately caved to the pressures of neoliberal economics, and the young people were replaced at the checkout stands by elders, does not detract from the surprising and palpable energy that they brought to the creation and recreation of the shop floor, their families, and their own lives. That energy is precisely what Benjamin recognized as magical, close to messianic, in the sense that it made the world anew. By using the term messianic, Benjamin (1978) argued that the magic of children's play is not something that they push but something with which they are endowed; it permeates their being. When that magical world view turns to political action, truly radical change is possible. The *Pingüino* revolution provides a different kind of example of the work of young people and shows a capacity not just to work within the system and for the profit of the system but to change it in the creation of a fairer world. It shows how the work of young people *en masse* can challenge a political system that rarely pays attention to children and young people. The actions of the Chilean students during the revolution highlight the importance of space – in this case, schools and streets – as a way not only to gain attention and make a statement but to gain

legitimacy and political will. It is important to note here, as with the case of the *Piedimeta* program, that there are important connections in solidarity with the struggles of older generations and that appropriate styles of protest and work can be learned through families. So, there is memetic understanding here, but as Benjamin (1978) is careful to point out, this is not just about copying so as to learn; it is a form of copying and using the material stuff of the world in a radical and revolutionary way. With an understanding of the connections to the radical activism of their elders during the Pinochet dictatorship, the harbingers of the *Pingüino* revolution upheld a uniquely creative reassertion of civic rights in which students remade themselves, the streets of Santiago, and, ultimately, their failing education system. These two case studies suggest many things, not least of which is the context of young people having a significant place on the margins and in the midst of capitalist society in terms of what they bring to the schoolyard, to the shop floor, to the streets, and to families, to *colonias*, and to cities.

The Mexican and Chilean case studies are stories, which, in the words of John Paul Lederach (2010, 13), "... circle into the truth." Lederach's focus is that a certain kind of "moral imagination" (that is always within reach) must be strived for if we are to transcend conflict, violence, and inequality. It is not farfetched to think of children as possessing this kind of moral and revolutionary imagination so as to offset the excesses of capitalism's rapacious trajectory. According to Lederach (2010, 5), "... the moral imagination requires the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies; the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity; the fundamental belief in and pursuit of the creative act; and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence." This seems very much a process that is inherently within the capacity of young people's revolutionary work and play. Young people build on the knowledge of their social environments in order to overhaul space. They intuit the intersection points so central for their lives and are smart and flexible in their abilities to transform spaces radically and beneficially through work and play. By so doing, young people make the world anew. The question is are we, like the government in Bolivia and its audacious child labor law, willing to risk letting them?

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# Young People's Marginal Livelihoods and Social Transitions in Urban Brazil: Tale of Four Lives

# 23

Marit Ursin and Tatek Abebe

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## Abstract

In this chapter, the contextualized narratives of four boys coming of age in a street environment in urban Brazil will be analyzed, and the socio-spatial dynamics shaping their livelihood paths from vending on the city buses and begging in early childhood to minding cars and assaulting in young adulthood

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will be explored. The analysis reveals how the livelihood choices alter throughout their street careers – influenced by past encounters, present situation, and future aspirations – all tightly connected to numerous spatial, temporal, and relational processes. In this sense, the data shows how livelihood trajectories emerge in the intersection between individual experiences and attitudes and wider social, cultural, and economic contexts. Recent debates on young people, livelihoods, and conventional models of youth transitions are discussed against the backdrop of three key perspectives from the empirical material: the significance of social networks in earning livelihoods, the negotiations of risk and blurred moralities in involvement in illegal livelihoods, and the occurrence of vital transitions throughout the life course. The study indicates how social transitions for marginalised youth are rarely unidirectional, but instead fluid and dynamic processes underpinned by structural constraints within which their lives unfold.

Although young people's livelihoods are marked by and are responses to inequality and marginality, they are part and parcel of the wider urban environment, as they draw on great spatial mobility and broad socioeconomic networks.

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**Keywords**

Street youth • Youth transition • Informal livelihoods • Marginalization • Brazil • Longitudinal research

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## 1 Introduction

Youth transitions to adulthood have become a topic of heated debate within social sciences. A growing body of literature, including within human geography, has explored and problematized the myriad of ways in which conventional depictions of linear school-to-work transitions do not explain the lives of young people (Punch 2002; Worth 2009; Jeffrey 2009, 2010). It has been suggested that although young people in different parts of the world have diverse realities, the social experience of youth liminality, the ambiguous position that youth occupy between naturalized positions of childhood and adulthood, has received considerable attention (e.g., Christiansen et al. 2006; Evans 2008; Galland 2007; Jones 1995; Valentine 2003; Valentine et al. 1998). The term “forever young” (Westberg 2004) signifies the prolongation experienced by youth globally, epitomizing how it is becoming increasingly difficult for young people to leave behind the category of youth and attain respectable adulthood (Langevang 2007; Valentine 2003). Whereas Vigh (2003, p. 96) speaks of youth as a “social moratorium” and as being imprisoned in a socio-spatial time of limitations and marginality, Honwana (2012) uses the term *waithood* to refer to the extended transition period during which young people wait for pieces of their lives to fall together, arguing that youths' inability to access resources and become independent adults results from a breakdown in the socio-economic system that is supposed to provide them with opportunities.

Recent studies highlight how transitions require young people to navigate complex livelihood pathways to secure locally appropriate adulthood (Christiansen et al. 2006): Exploring the process of “social becoming” in Ghana, Langevang

(2008) reveals how young people's effort to manage the transition to adulthood is circumvented by urban poverty, unemployment, and structural adjustment programs. Chant and Evans (2010) argue that young Gambians are unable to marry and establish independent households because of urban poverty and lack of steady employment; hence they remain on the fringes of the adult world. The impediments of "successful" youth transitions to adulthood are in part compounded by – and mirror – the declining role of formal education as a path toward well-paying jobs (Jeffrey 2009; Mains 2011). Jeffrey (2009) reasons that the phenomenon of "educated unemployment" has undermined young people's efforts to obtain secure, well-paid white-collar jobs that match their aspirations, as opportunities for youth to benefit economically from schooling are disintegrating.

In the wake of neoliberal economic restructuring, scholars further suggest that waithood is an underlying force in diverse contemporary phenomena that impacts young people, including translocal and transnational migration (Mains 2011; Thorsen 2006), rebel recruitment, and religious mobilization (Honwana 2006). Katz (2004) suggests that disinvestment linked to neoliberalism not only changes local political economic relations but also disrupts processes of skill acquisition, arguing that young people no longer use the skills they have gained in childhood when they come of age. "Deskilling" or the relative disjunctions between what young people learn and what they need in adulthood (Katz 2004, p. 250) signifies contemporary crises in youth and social reproduction. Deskilling in cities is manifested in and intensified by the erosion of conventional livelihoods prompted by, among other things, the regulation of the informal economy, urban revanchist policies of disinvestment and dispossession, and growing inequalities (Swanson 2007) – all of which again alter conventional transitions into adulthood.

Recent works by geographers on urban livelihoods reveal and call for analyzing the complex albeit interrelated nature of informal livelihood strategies in young people's trajectories toward adulthood (Ansell et al. 2014; Gough et al. 2013; van Blerk 2008). Transitions for young people are not necessarily experienced in terms of competitions of formal education or involvement in livelihood strategies within the informal economic sector. This is striking because informal employment, a category considered as "nonstandard" in traditional literature, is in fact "standard" among young workers in the urban south (Shehu and Nilsson 2014, p. 1). Yet the significance of informal economic activities in shaping experiences of youth transition is rarely discussed within the literature on youth transitions. Van Blerk (2007, 2008, 2011) explores how young women pursue forms of livelihoods that transgress social, legal, and moral boundaries – including commercial sex work – and Abebe (2008, 2009) and Swanson (2007) focus on the social spaces of begging in the context of urban development in neoliberal cities. Although such livelihoods fall within the category of "informal sector," their degree of legality/illegality and morality/immorality and how youth appropriate this ambiguity are not fully elucidated. At present only a handful of studies examine young people's involvement in contested livelihoods like gangs (e.g., Rodgers 2008) and illicit drug trade (e.g., Frankland 2007). Livelihood activities like scavenging, leeching, and begging are seen from the narrow angle of generating intermittent income and are rarely accorded analytical attention within debates on social transitions. More specifically,



“research...on transition experiences from childhood to adulthood within the street, and how these processes relate to identities and future livelihoods,” is limited (Thomas de Benitez 2011, p. 35).

This chapter contributes to the new but growing body of literature that explores how transitions for young people are not necessarily experienced in terms of completion of formal education or even in involvement in forms of livelihood strategies that are accepted within the informal economic sector. It responds to recent calls made by human geographers regarding the importance of developing more fully the temporality of youth transitions and avoid a linear and static understanding of transitions (Ansell et al. 2014; Worth 2009).

In this chapter, the ways in which boys navigate their disadvantaged socioeconomic status as they grow up in urban Salvador, in Northeastern Brazil, are examined. Through individual vignettes on the time-space of four young men's lives (see Jeffrey and Dyson 2011), the intersection between social transitions and involvement in a portfolio of marginal livelihood activities on the economic fringes of the city is explored. It is examined how marginalized young men are, to use Long's (2000) words, “striving to make a living, attempting to meet their various consumption and economic necessities, coping with uncertainties, responding to new opportunities, and choosing between different value positions” (p. 196). The livelihood activities of young men not only elaborate the significance of marginal livelihoods to their experiences of social transitions but also how they view and relate to contested activities that occupy ambiguous moral positions within contemporary Brazilian society.

The chapter is structured as follows. First methodology will be outlined followed by conceptualizations of youth and youth transitions. Then contemporary social and economic realities that accentuate inequity and inequality within which the livelihoods of poor youth in urban Brazil need to be situated are discussed. The third section presents contextualized narratives of the lives of four young men who come of age in street environments, revealing both the commonalities and the specificity of their social transitions and how they navigate complex livelihood strategies within the informal sector of Salvador. In the final section, three issues that emerge from the empirical material that highlight the time-spaces and implicit experiences in young people's social transitions are discussed. These are the significance of social networks in earning livelihoods, the livelihood choices made throughout the life course, and the negotiations of risk in involvement in illegal livelihoods. Finally, the concept of social transition is proposed as it better captures the livelihood paths of youth in this study.

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## 2 Methodology

The empirical material presented here stems from a longitudinal qualitative research project, including three periods of fieldwork between 2005 and 2011. Although the study had a multi-method approach (see Ursin 2013), this chapter draws mainly on participant observation and interviews with eleven young men in

street environments. Through long-term involvement with participants, the grounds on which street children negotiate their livelihood pathways and how they develop informal social networks of relationships were explored. This calls for a longitudinal approach to tease out major trajectories over a period of time (Boyden 2006) in order to answer the question why young men are marginalized and how processes of marginality evolved historically (Staples 2007). Tracing livelihood pathways “entails determining how their livelihoods follow certain patterns, how these patterns change or remain the same with time, as well as how social variables like age, ethnicity and poverty intersect to influence their choices of strategy” (Abebe 2009, p. 279). Long-term engagement with participants also reveals how available social and economic opportunities, individual capacities and interests, and society itself change over time (see Evans 2010). This has implications for thinking about the interconnections of social transitions – not just from childhood to youth or from youth to adulthood but over the course of life.

Of the eleven key participants, four life narratives were chosen as they represent the diversity of livelihoods as well as the subtle patterns of social transitions experienced in the street environment. Personal vignettes are used to “convey the textured experience of youth” (Jeffrey and Dyson 2011, p. 2) and show how single lives may reveal insights not just into individuals’ experiences and attitudes but also of the wider society or social segment of which they are part of (Arnold and Blackburn 2005).

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### 3 Conceptualizing Youth Transitions

The theoretical concept of transition is debated in the academic literature on youth and livelihoods that perceives youth as “the age of transition” (Galland 2007, p. 4). Transition has come to encapsulate how youth is perceived – as something blurred, mobile, and *in process*, moving forward to adulthood. In the 1980s and early 1990s, youth researchers began to focus on main transitional patterns, dividing them into domestic transition and school-to-work transition (Coles 1995). Empirical material was compared with conventionalist view of “correct” transitions between youth and adulthood based on transitions in the global north, perceived as a formula for becoming good citizens. The World Bank keeps close to this view, defining the key tasks of people on the verge of adulthood as attaining economic independence and start a family, developing a healthy lifestyle, and exercising citizenship (as cited in Morrow 2013). Yet the appropriation of western ideals of youth transitions in settings that lack the socioeconomic resources for their realization renders the experiences of youth in non-western settings as “deficit” and “lacking.” Rather than ascribing to dominant pathways of transitions, many young people in Brazil, for example, evaluate their own lives according to their own aspirations and definitions of “proper” and “improper” transitions (Dalsgaard et al. 2008).

The structures within which pathways to adulthood take place for young people are far more diverse than traditional theories of transitions suggest. Although education and training have been prolonged, the growth in youth unemployment

and an extension in dependency on the family have become a growing concern (Valentine 2003). Leaving the family home is a process rather than a one-off event (Jones 1995), and the “changes associated with growing up may or may not be connected, and may occur simultaneously, serially or not at all” (Valentine 2003, p. 38). In the urban south, institutionalized and educational privileges – access to school, college, university, or vocational training, paid work, voluntary work, and traveling – lack considerably. Economic difficulties render youth to unemployment, underemployment, and prolonged waitness. The timescales for transitions from education to labor market are inherently different too, where young people living in poverty often work earlier and are more likely to work in the informal sectors compared to their counterparts in the global north (van Blerk 2008). PUNCH (2002) argues that although many young Bolivians experience relative independence and possibilities to generate income at an early age, interdependent livelihood strategies continue over the life course. Many young people in the global south also experience a rough interface between education and work. Education often requires work for financial and other reasons, and leaving school often involves poverty and the agency of the youth (Chant and Jones 2005; PUNCH 2002). Yet the often taken-for-granted linearity of transitions as a path from education to work, work to poverty alleviation, childhood to adulthood (Chant and Jones 2007, p. 196) overlooks young people’s overlapping, conflicting, and at times contradictory livelihood pathways.

Wyn and White (1997) underscored the interconnection between youth and transition, arguing that the term “transition to adulthood” suggests that young people make one transition to adulthood and that adulthood is a clearly defined status – a destination at which one “arrives” (p. 96). James and Prout (1997) suggest that growing up today involves several transitional processes rather than a one-off initiation process and that youth transitions extend “over considerable periods of time rather than being concentrated into ritual moments” (p. 248). Arnett (2000) has introduced “emerging adulthood” as a new life stage within psychology, echoing the dominant approach of stage theorizing, while Thomson and colleagues (2004) point out that transitions in the contemporary world often are uneven, that is, different groups have different experiences, or fragmented, which indicate that an individual’s different markers of adulthood are increasingly uncoupled from each other. The emerging consensus is that there is “no straightforward route to adulthood. Adulthood is not an end point at which people arrive, but rather encompasses composite positions that are achieved, a process of becoming that is continuous” (Langevang 2008, p. 2045). This perspective is crucial because it moves away from seeing youth as a rigid developmental life stage to instead examine the fluid meanings of childhood, youth, adulthood, conventional pathways to adulthood, as well as class and gender differences (Aitken 2001).

Describing young people’s experiences of educational failure and unemployment in the UK, Chisholm (1993) states that young people – mostly those with “risk biographies,” meaning those youth who run a greater risk of becoming marginalized than their economically privileged peers who have “trendsetter biographies” (Peterson 2011; Plug et al. 2003) – may experience “delayed, broken, highly fragmented and blocked transitions” (Chisholm 1993, p. 30). Social norms

determine what are considered deviant transitions (Jones 1995) such as school dropouts or illegal livelihoods. Yet, as van Blerk (2008) argues, rather than perceiving unconventional approaches to transition as failure, they can exhibit aspects of successful transition to adulthood, thereby providing us with a full range of experiences and processes involved in young people's lives.

Jeffrey (2010) questions how far transition literature has moved beyond some of the normative, teleological assumptions of life stage models. The concept of transition may obscure the complexity and fluidity of young people's lives (Langevang 2008). Christiansen et al. (2006) argue that transitions should not be perceived as stable and linear but rather as positions in movement heightened and highlighted by structural and generational forces – people can move and are moved along generational positions. Moreover, transitions consist of multiple paths rather than “along a single path or a predefined set of stages, yet the number of possibilities and life chances available to youth varies greatly” (Vigh 2006, p. 37). The following sections draw on these critical perspectives on transitions to describe the myriad ways in which social transitions play out for young men in contemporary Brazil.

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#### 4 Young People's Education and Work in Neoliberal Brazil

Brazil is the fifth most populous country in the world with an estimated population of 190 million, of which over 80% lives in urban areas (IBGE 2010). Post-industrialization and global shifts in production, consumption, and investment had significant consequences for labor conditions and land use, with a rapid urbanization and expansion of urban *favelas* (Kenny 2007). Following the implementation of neoliberal policies in the 1990s, levels of inequality and social instability have not only increased but also led to a deep transformation in the spheres of employment and livelihood options available for youth. These changes invoked a new set of strategies of socio-spatial control and criminalization of the poor, especially urban youth (Fernandes 2009). Privatization and neoliberal reforms have had multiple impacts in Brazil. Despite sustained economic growth (according to IBGE, the GDP Annual Growth Rate averaged approximately 3% from 1991 until 2014), the poorest of the poor in cities and urban areas are left behind, revealing inequity and inequality. As access to secure work opportunities declined from government due to structural adjustment programs, youth began to engage in alternative sources of livelihoods, activities that are unregistered and unprotected by state law (Hansen and Vaa 2004). This phenomenon is amplified by urban population growth for which people below 29 years of age account for half of the total population (IBGE 2010).

Brazil ranks as the most powerful and dynamic economy in Latin America and among the largest in the world. During President Lula da Silva's leftist government (2002–2010), the country experienced the end of chronic high inflation and a decrease in both the number of Brazilians living below poverty line and the abysmal income gap between the privileged minority and the poor majority. Yet, 52% of children in Northeastern Brazil lived below the poverty line in 2008 (Bush and

Rizzini 2011). Sociopolitical incentives such as the *Bolsa Família*, cash handouts directly to the poorest households with children who attend school and are vaccinated, have increased enrolments in schools, with 96% of poor children (aged 6–14) and 78% of poor youth (aged 15–17) enrolled in the school system in 2007 (Bush and Rizzini 2011) – though over half of the children aged 11–14 were in classes below their age level. Public school students encounter a neglected educational system with overcrowded classes, poorly remunerated and often untrained teachers, chronic strikes, and lack of resources (Kenny 2007). In Bolivia, Punch (2002) found that young people’s level of education depends on a range of multiple and interconnected factors, such as the economic resources of the family, parental attitudes, family composition, and role models. In Peru, the growing aspiration for education “is mediated by children’s material realities and by the social and moral obligations that shape their roles and responsibilities beyond the schoolyard” (Crivello 2011, p. 396). By the age of 18, nearly half of the *favela* youth in Fortaleza in Northeast Brazil were neither in school nor at work, undermining the argument of child labor as pulling young people out of school in urban Brazil (Cardoso and Verner 2006).

There have also been dramatic changes in the educational composition of the labor force in Brazil. While the great majority had 3-year schooling in 1985, this group represented the minority in 2007 (Menezes-Filho and Scorzafave 2009). At the same time, the unemployment rate increased over 10% among people aged 15–24, resulting in extreme competition on formal job positions that require low educational levels. For instance, when 600 jobs for sanitation workers were announced in Rio de Janeiro, over 20,000 men – mostly in their twenties – applied (Barker 2005).

A significant percentage of the urban youth population in Brazil depends on self-employment and livelihood opportunities in the informal sector. Recent data show that the informality rate in Brazil has declined, reaching 47.5% in 2007, while the northeast faced an informality rate of nearly 70% (Menezes-Filho and Scorzafave 2009), yet accurate unemployment rates are remarkably hard to establish (Sommers 2010). In order to reduce the informality rate, the Brazilian government implemented a new law in 2008, making it possible to formalize informal work by registering as *microempreendedor individual* (small-scale entrepreneurs). The registered entrepreneurs pay a monthly tax to access to benefits such as maternity pay, sick pay, and pension. The registration also facilitates the opening of bank account and loan applications. Although well intended, the majority of the entrepreneurs with low education continue to work informally (SEBRAE 2012).

People aged 15–24 perceived a higher and more volatile informality incidence in Brazil compared to their older counterparts, with an informality rate of nearly 60% (Menezes-Filho and Scorzafave 2009). Informality is considered a natural stage in early work life, but while poor young people remain in the informal sector, their nonpoor peers enter the formal sector already in their late adolescence (Cunningham et al. 2008). Bureaucracy inhibits many poor young Brazilians from gaining official employment, as they often lack legal documents such as birth certificate,

voter registration, and work permit, while corruption, patronage, and nepotism also hinder marginalized job seekers (Hecht 1998).

Informality in Brazil is socio-spatially structured, with poor neighborhoods – *favelas* – covering great parts of urban areas. Although the shacks have gradually been turned into brick houses, and access to water, sewage, and electricity is improving, *favelas* are *informal cities* where “social wounds” prevail (Hansen and Vaa 2004). They are mostly irregular settlements, exempted from paying property taxes, and often depending on illegal energy, water, cable TV, and Internet connections (Zalular 2012). In populous *favelas* the competition is intense and every available economic niche is capitalized. Opportunities of income-generating activities are limited by the low purchasing power of inhabitants – selling to each other is not very lucrative and affluent consumers rarely appear (Kenny 2007).

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## 5 Making a Living in the Streets

As a response to unemployment and underemployment, many *favela* inhabitants travel to wealthier areas in the city in search of informal income-generating possibilities. One such neighborhood is Barra, at the heart of the metropolitan area of Salvador. As a result of historical importance and urban development, contemporary Barra contains historical forts and churches intermixed with upper-class residential high-rise and five-star hotels. The wealth of Barra's residents, tourists, and traders generates opportunities, and many people from lower social and economic classes occupy sidewalks, bus stops, beaches, and squares.

Among these are young males who have come of age on the street, occupying public space through working, living, loving, and loitering. Antagonistic conflicts have emerged in Barra, often underscoring class and racial differences. Urban elites in Brazil tend to associate poverty with street crime, violence, begging, and urban decay (Reis 2005), and many affluent residents and business owners want to regulate the poor's access to the neighborhood. Using their sociocultural, economic, and political superiority, the residents are able to establish the poor as the society's “other,” stereotyping them as unruly and “out of place” (Ursin 2012). These segregationist strategies include cooperation with local politicians, the media, and the police and bear similarities to the hygienic racism in neoliberal regimes in urban Ecuador, which tends to marginalize indigenous street vendors and beggars (Swanson 2007; see also Hansen and Vaa 2004).

Young *favelado* men are often perceived as dangerous criminals (Caldeira 2000; Fernandes 2009; Goldstein 2003). In Brazil, hegemonic perceptions of poverty and crime are intersected. Being marginalized – *marginal* – signifies being “poorest of the poor” and an “outlaw,” a conflation that illustrates the level of the criminalization of poverty (Perlman 2009, p. 157). Reducing people's life story into “a societal risk” stimulates and justifies exclusionary and discriminatory actions – from invalidating their existence to hostile gazes and surveillance (Barker 2005). The Brazilian police employ a “zero-tolerance” approach, akin to New York City, which has proven to be inefficient in combating crime but beneficial in *dramatizing*

publicly politicians' and police forces' commitment to the elimination of street crime (Wacquant 2003). As a result, brutal – and sometimes lethal – police violence targets poor, young men as they are perceived to be the main source of deviance and violence (Caldeira 2000; Ursin 2012). By assimilating *marginais*, workers, and criminals, the enforcement of the class order and public order are merged (Da Matta 1991).

The livelihoods of young men in this research are shaped by the aforementioned social, economic, political, and environmental contexts. Four case studies portray the experiences of young men with social transition and strategies of growing up on the margins of society, in poor households, on the street, and in institutions. These portraits tell the lives of young men who are not qualified in terms of formal schooling and thus ill-prepared to fulfill the demands of the formal labor market. With insufficient formal education and documentation (birth certificate, voter registration, and work permit), they navigate limited employment opportunities within the informal economy, which has become a vital facet of Brazilian urban life. The streets represent a space that is beyond governmental authority, outside the rules of formal economy, and beyond formal development (Frankland 2007). In such contexts, earning livelihoods implies tension between constraint and creativity (Staples 2007), and street economies appear to be sites for the excluded population.

The livelihood alternatives of these young men are diverse – to quote Eduardo, one of the participants, they each have to find “their own distinct way of *correr atrás* (making an effort) to make a little bit of money.” The public space of Barra has high livelihood value, and the young men embrace the material abundance of the middle-class residents and tourists. Livelihood value includes resources – e.g., seasonal coconuts, mangoes, and jackfruits – begging, leeching, pickpocketing, and assaulting. As Gough and Franch (2005) suggest, understanding where young people move, where they don't move, and where they want to move to but can't is important to understand the meanings young people ascribe to urban space, the possibilities these spaces open up, and the multiple layers of social inclusion and exclusion (see also Winton 2005). However, livelihoods are not only socio-spatially defined but are also temporally structured (Ansell et al. 2014).

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## 6 A Tale of Four Lives

The following section provides the livelihood trajectories across the life course of four young men – Sandro, Robson, Joaquim, and Eduardo – all fictional names in order to protect their identities.

### 6.1 Sandro

Sandro used to work long hours, selling sweets on the city busses, to support his alcoholic father, abusive stepmother, and his stepsiblings. He slept occasionally on the street from the age of six. He spent years oscillating between his family's home



in the outskirts of the city, the streets of Barra, and institutions for children at risk. An NGO worker revealed that Sandro would appear at their doors whenever he was dirty, hungry, or tired, leaving the next day, rested and refreshed. Gradually the time he spent on the street increased, and he began sleeping in Barra more permanently. When work was not easy to access, Sandro reverted to begging, as he could not afford merchandise for vending. Begging can be divided into targeting strangers and approaching familiar people. The latter is characterized as leeching and is more rewarding as it involves some feelings of obligations when they have more time to establish an impression of “deservingness” (Staples 2007), for instance a tale about a particular hard night, a sick family member at home, or a potentially fatal drug debt. While leeching continued throughout Sandro’s street career, it typically gradually becomes less profitable during adolescence (see Abebe 2008).

As a teenager, Sandro used to work at a lucrative parking lot at a square in Barra. Sandro and a peer had monopoly over the spot during the most profitable periods of the day (afternoons and early night) and during the week (Thursdays to Saturday, taking Sundays off). This kind of entrepreneurship among poor young men on the Brazilian streets is documented as early as in the late 1970s (Ferreira, as cited in Rizzini and Butler 2003). To mind a car means protecting the car from being damaged or robbed. Still, there is a great ambivalence since many car owners feel that they are paying the minders not to rob their cars. Car owners who do not pay might be “penalized” by having the car urinated on, scratched, or robbed.

For many years, Sandro was one of the youngest on Barra’s streets. His young age, pale skin, and blond curls facilitated his survival on the street as this often evoked sympathy among middle-class residents and tourists. By remaining in the same neighborhood, he gradually managed to establish a network of *fregueses*, a term labeling the most considerate and helpful among their social acquaintances on the street (see also Hecht 1998). Doing honest work and avoiding hard drugs, he became regarded as trustworthy by many of the neighbors and local traders, despite his status as “street youth.” This enabled Sandro to receive daily homemade breakfast and lunch when working, borrow clothes from middle-class youth when going out dancing, store his clothes and valuables with residents and security guards, and even live in residential homes at times.

Sandro, as most of the young men in this study, preferred to work legally whenever possible. To create and sustain social networks was crucial in achieving *biscates* (odd jobs), which is informal and easy-entry work requiring little capital. Most of the *biscates* are given on a day-to-day basis, normally supplied by *fregueses*. Based on his social network at the parking lot, Sandro had several possibilities of *biscate*: He carried supplies of a street vendor and was paid in leftover food. He carried chairs and parasols of the beach workers in the mornings and afternoons and received a weekly salary. He washed a neighbor’s car regularly, receiving 50 *reais* every weekend. He also ran errands for several neighbors.

In his teens, Sandro lived with a homosexual middle-class resident in Barra, offering sexual services in exchange for shelter, food, money, and goods. In this period Sandro only appeared in Barra in the afternoon to drink beer and play soccer. The economic and material benefits did not, however, outweigh the social sanctions



he faced on the street environment in the long run, and he eventually moved back onto the street. Although this was the most obvious case of prostitution among the young men, several were engaged in casual or continual relations with sex clients, especially in their adolescent years. Nonetheless, they did not identify themselves as sex workers but perceived it as just one strategy out of many in dealing with poverty (see also Kenny 2007).

Sandro was offered a job on a regular basis in the informal sector, working night shifts at a hot dog stand. Unfortunately, the insecurity, irregularity, and unpredictability of street life interfere with the responsibilities of such jobs. Sandro was responsible for the revenue until the owner appeared the next morning, and, as he was repeatedly robbed while sleeping, he eventually got fired. In his early twenties, Sandro stole a bicycle. The owner of the bicycle turned out to be related to a drug baron in the area, making it dangerous for Sandro to reappear in Barra. With the help from a *freguês*, he rented a one-room shack next to his family's house. Although he expressed pride of having abandoned street life, he also underlined the extreme difficulties of getting by in his neighborhood of origin: *Biscates* were rare, and there were days he only had mangos and jackfruits to eat. He dreamt of buying a moped on credit to earn money by driving people up the hills in the *favela* he resided.

## 6.2 Robson

Due to physical abuse, Robson left his mother and stepfather's house at the age of seven. He spent his childhood years on the street and in several institutions. As the majority of the participants in this study, he never finished primary school and lacked formal education. However, periodic institutional life – public schools, activity centers ran by NGOs, orphanages, and juvenile detention centers – taught him basic mathematics and literacy, as well as recreational skills such as handicraft, scenography, theater, capoeira, and swimming. He proudly claims that he learned a little bit of everything in life.

In the two decades Robson spent on the street, he drew on different livelihoods, characterized by socio-spatial mobility as well as adventurousness. In his early years, he used to beg, shine shoes, and sell sweets. He found, as many of the participants, that foreigners showed less prejudice and fear toward him than Brazilians. When tourism began to develop in urban Salvador, Robson and his peers capitalized on offering tourists information, providing orientation on rental apartments, restaurants, and discos, as well as offering drugs and prostitutes. Robson continued to offer services as a “tourist guide” throughout his youth and young adulthood. This work was well regarded, as it involved contact with foreigners and a good income (Kenny 2007). He spent several years in the interior of the state, guiding tourists at a national park and working at a pizzeria ran by the family of a girlfriend.

When he returned to Barra, his girlfriend came along. In this following period, his involvement in pickpocketing and burglary increased. The former was

conducted in crowded places such as street parties and at the beach, preferably when people were drinking alcohol. Robson and some of his peers used to sit on the fence encircling the beach in Barra, having a strategic overview over the sunbathers and their belongings. “Unattended” goods were taken quickly. Robson preferred burglary to pickpocketing, as the risk of being caught was much smaller. He would enter residential houses, cars, boats, shops, and restaurants, alone or in a group, stealing money and valuables. Robson and his peers spent long hours from midnight to daybreak wandering the deserted streets, feeling mixed sentiments of hunger, crack cravings, and boredom (see Ursin 2012), systematically investigating, in a routinized manner, options for burglary.

In his mid-twenties he was caught stealing a golden necklace on the beach one Sunday afternoon. In retrospect he said he was reluctant to do it because of the high risk involved but did it anyway since his girlfriend was complaining about hunger. He explained that he spent over a year imprisoned, partly surviving on the money he got from selling the necklace he had swallowed to a fellow inmate. His girlfriend left him. When he was released, he promised never to return and strongly reduced his engagement in property crime. By this time, Sandro had left Barra and Robson became the new “co-owner” of the parking lot.

After a couple of years of minding cars in Barra, Robson's new girlfriend – a commercial sex worker – got pregnant. This prompted him to settle down and become a family man. With the support of his girlfriend's family, they built a small shack in a *favela* in the outskirts of the city. Residing in a house had its clear advantages when searching for a job – safe and predictable sleeping arrangements, bathing opportunities, and clean clothes. With a registered address, he managed to get a work permit. Unfortunately his crime record appeared on his work permit; thus it turned out to be a dead end: Who would choose a former convict among thousands of applicants? He continued to descend to Barra to mind cars to sustain his family, struggling to keep his drug use to a minimum and actually return home at the end of the day.

### 6.3 Joaquim

Joaquim became familiar with street life of Barra in his preteens, selling cheese on the beach. When his older brother was violently killed, Joaquim lost his motivation for school and eventually dropped out. He gradually started to spend longer periods on the street even though his mother urged him to come home, enticed by foreigners offering him food, clothes, and money. In his late teens – no longer perceived as innocent and vulnerable – he was expected to find a job. Joaquim was lucky, being offered an informal job at a kiosk. He was given a lot of responsibility, and in order to maintain this job, he had to abandon street life and live with the owner. Yet, during a street carnival, the temptations outweighed the economic benefits of working, and Joaquim abandoned his post to party. Although the owner forgave him, the work relation gradually deteriorated, partly because of Joaquim's

involvement in street life and partly because the local police convinced the owner that Joaquim should not be trusted.

After Joaquim lost his job, he lived at his mother's house and on the street interchangeably. He was periodically engaged in leeching, selling drugs, robbing, and assaulting. Leeching is a widespread activity in Barra, befriending tourists to get food, smokes, alcohol, and drugs. As opposed to begging where unhygienic appearance symbolizes deprivation and entice public pity, leeching entails a well-off look, being able to enter private parties, shows, bars, and restaurants. A common method is to join barely familiar people at street bars to take advantage of beer and smoke on the table. Many young men who leech guide tourists to other cities or islands and, thus, gain access to places they could otherwise not afford to visit.

Joaquim got involved in drug trafficking in Barra, representing one of the two major drug cartels in Salvador. Although it was lucrative, risks were high and some of his peers had been killed in disputes over drugs and territories. His drug use intensified this risk because it made it harder to prioritize distribution over personal consumption. Thus Joaquim, as most of the youth in the street ambience, avoided being a *traficante* with "full-time" engagement in drug trafficking but rather did an *avião* (drug delivery) whenever he was able to overcharge tourists. He would also do drug scams on short-term tourists, sell fake drugs (leaves, mashed pain-killers, etc.), or disappear with customers' drug money. The scams entailed "easy money" with little risk of being imprisoned.

Joaquim began to explore how he could master his matured physical appearance and "street image" to his advantage, engaging in assaults. Preferred victims were tourists since they often wore more valuables on them, had less socio-spatial knowledge (about safe and dangerous places) of Barra, and did not know him prior to the assault thus could not identify him when reporting to the police. He would start off by chatting and befriending potential victims and demand their valuables if they ignored him or shooed him away.

In his twenties, Joaquim spent several periods imprisoned, followed by months at his mother's home, vending merchandise at the city busses, before he ended up on the street again. He gradually felt more ambivalent about assaulting, often bragging about a successful assault the previous night before suddenly expressing a great concern about his increasing list of enemies, concluding that such activities belonged to the past. During the last fieldwork, a laptop disappeared from one of the tables of a street bar in Barra. Joaquim was the prime suspect, even though police failed to prove it. Shortly afterward, police planted drugs on him, and he received a long prison sentence. Behind bars, he continued to draw on the social network he had established in Barra to collect money through his mother for lawyer expenses to reduce the prison sentence.

## 6.4 Eduardo

After an ugly fight between his parents, Eduardo's mother went to São Paulo, leaving Eduardo, four at the time, his 2-year-old brother, and their father behind.

His father had to struggle to sustain his family economically in addition to raise the two boys alone. During his childhood Eduardo studied in the mornings and played with his peers in the afternoon, being in the company of his father only late at night when he returned from work.

Not long after his brother started smoking crack, Eduardo, by then fifteen, also got addicted. Their father enrolled them into a rehabilitation center, but they both ran away and ended up on the street in their neighborhood. To sustain their drug habit, they started to scavenge. Due to competition, their methods to acquire recyclables gradually moved from scavenging garbage to stealing public or private property. Copper – the most valuable material at the recycling deposits – was obtained by cutting down wires or robbing construction sites. Aluminum, also a precious material, was collected by dismantling public fences and signs after dark. Eduardo and his brother invaded verandas and backyards, stealing casserole dishes, buckets, and pieces of fences and staircases of aluminum or iron (in addition to shoes and clothes on clotheslines, which have street value).

Eduardo and his brother gradually gained a bad reputation in the area. While Eduardo chose to flee to the city center, his brother remained but got killed only a couple of weeks later. In the same period, their father died from cancer. Still having his formal documents, Eduardo managed to get a job as a *cordeiro*, securing the rope around the dancing masses at the annual street carnival. This eventually led him to Barra, and even though the seasoned street dwellers exerted their territorial rights through threats and attacks, Eduardo managed to settle down.

Eduardo knew he had received a second chance and was conscious about doing honest work in the new neighborhood. He wanted to scavenge garbage to recycle, as he noticed that the garbage of Barra had a much higher economic value than the garbage in the *favelas*. However, as a newcomer it was difficult to establish his own recycling territory, so he began minding cars. His foot was badly injured in a fight, and his deformed foot and his crutches became his new income strategy, being a proof of his “deservingness” (Staples 2007), enabling him to make a living out of begging. Deserving poor are children, elderly, and those with chronic illnesses or, as Eduardo, physical impairments, and undeserving beggars are able-bodied individuals with “bad habits” (alcohol, drugs) and those who can work but are unwilling to do so. To earn money by begging, Eduardo accentuated his physical deformity and homelessness by being poorly dressed and dirty.

Through minding cars and begging, Eduardo established a social network in his new neighborhood, and being able to identify himself as a law-abiding citizen was vital in this process. The *fregueses* gave him advice and protected him when confronted by the police, confirming that he was a worker and not a criminal. One of these *fregueses* promised to help him retrieve his personal documents lost as a result of street life and find a rehab center for him when he felt ready. However, the losses in Eduardo's life made it difficult for him to find the motivation to leave the street and drugs behind.

## 7 Making Livelihood Choices

The empirical material presented reveals how the livelihood choices the young men have made throughout their street careers are based on numerous *social*, *temporal*, and *relational* factors. The first key issue is the connection between livelihoods and personal identity formations, where the choice of livelihoods becomes an identity marker emphasizing belonging to (or distance from) the street culture. As seen in Sandro's story, he gradually detached himself from the responsibilities of family life to achieve independence on the street, marked by a change of livelihood from bus vending to street begging. Likewise, Joaquim chose street carnival over work commitment at the kiosk. Hence their livelihoods serve as an affirmation of personal significance and group identity (Wallman, as cited in de Haan and Zoomers 2005). They develop a portfolio of street skills, spatial knowledge, and social networks. Gradually they are acknowledged as seasoned and are spared hassle by peers. At the same time, they are acutely aware that their street identity draws upon a set of values and morals that are in conflict with the mainstream society, which would rather see them return to the *favelas* and become hardworking laborers. An essential part of coming of age in the street environment therefore involves dealing with conflicting versions of manhood, as discussed later.

The second aspect is temporality, where past memories, present situation, and future dreams intersect and shape livelihood choices – not rational planning based on vivid chronological strings of memories but rather recollections of the past depending on present concerns. Some of the decisions by Sandro, Robson, Joaquim, and Eduardo appear to be conscious, especially choices about avoiding illegal income-generating activities. However, impulsive acts also have a great impact, such as Sandro's bicycle theft and Eduardo's arrival in Barra as *cordeiro*. Their present concerns are also deeply interwoven with their personal identity formations, as mentioned above, and whether they identify more with the street environment or family obligations. Major turning points in Robson's livelihood trajectory were his prison sentence and becoming a father. Although the deep-seated poverty renders it difficult to plan ahead, the young men still envision futures with improved livelihood alternatives; either it involves investing in a moped, entering a rehab center, or being released from prison.

Livelihood trajectories are produced in response to interwoven present and future needs and aspirations that are complexly bound to changes in wider social, cultural, political, and economic contexts (Ansell et al. 2014). This is particularly evident in the contextual factors triggering street life in the case of these four young men, coming from homes and neighborhoods marked by violence and poverty. Furthermore, livelihoods are not neutral, but engender processes of inclusion and exclusion. The "historical repertoire" (de Haan and Zoomers 2005) available shapes which livelihoods they consider obtainable as street-based *favelado* boys and young men. The range of accessible livelihoods alters as they "grow out" of begging and shoeshining and into car minding, *biscates*, and assaulting.

Third, as livelihoods are profoundly relational, the livelihood choices made by the participants depend on their social relations, primarily with peers (as discussed

above concerning street culture) but also family, *fregueses*, and other customers. In these livelihood trajectories, family members appear when discussing economic and material commitments as sons, boyfriends, and fathers. Their family commitments are most present in early childhood when they return home on a regular basis, while such commitments are absent during youth years. To develop serious partner relationships influences the way they relate to the street environment and prioritize and make livelihood choices, as seen in the case of Robson. Because of his long-term relationship with a girl from a rural town, he finds a job in a pizzeria. Back on the street, he ignores his intuition and ends up imprisoned due to felt material obligations to his girlfriend.

Young people on the street develop social relationships with residents, long-term tourists, street and beach vendors, police officers, security guards, and employers and employees in supermarkets, restaurants, and hotels. Moving across urban space is not only important for seizing work opportunities but also for creating and sustaining the social relations on which they are highly dependent (Langevang and Gough 2009). To befriend people of higher social classes, who often initially show prejudice or fear toward them, charisma and social skills are vital. Through a range of partly inseparable activities, such as begging, leeching, favors, and *biscates*, such networks may provide alimentation, clothes, and sleeping and bathing arrangements. In this sense, although they experience social marginalization, their livelihoods are relatively profitable as they often earn more than their counterparts in the *favelas* due to their great spatial mobility (oscillating between Barra, institutions, and family and friends in the *favelas*) and relatively broad socioeconomic networks. Such networks may also involve safety nets: When poverty or indifference might encumber the help of family and friends, they may resort to loyal *fregueses*, as when Sandro had to find a new home or when Joaquim's acquaintances contributed to a lawyer's fee. This has important implication in how spatiality shapes livelihood activities and possibilities of the young men.

Having a broad network of *fregueses* makes it easier to avoid illegal activities as the income-generating opportunities increase, "moving between interconnected networks, as they are engaged in the politics of survival and the quest for social becoming" (Vigh 2006, p. 50). At the same time, avoiding (visible) illegal activities becomes crucial in maintaining these relationships based on trust. Although crime and violence are barriers to increasing social capital, some young men manage both to nurture positive relationships with *fregueses* and to be involved in street crime by strategically targeting unacquainted victims or doing such activities outside Barra (for a detailed analysis of the trust relations between the young men and the surroundings, see Ursin 2012), which touches upon negotiation of risk in livelihood choices.

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## 8 Negotiating Risk and Illegality in Marginal Livelihoods

The above case studies reveal how many young men who originate from the socio-spatially marginalized *favelas* make a living in rich neighborhoods by scavenging, leeching, and robbing. Although these are activities that, at first sight, are

characterized by marginality in that they are socially and morally condemned, they are also tightly interconnected to and highly dependent on interactions with mainstream society. These include middle-class residents who might be robbed, vendors to receive leftovers from, and tourists to sell drugs to. Most of the livelihoods they carry out also fulfill different vital functions in society, yet they are not recognized and respected. Scavenging involves the economic and environmental benefits of recycling. Guiding (leeching) introduces tourists to new parts within and outside the city. Dealing provides drugs among the middle-class residents and tourists. Car minders make the streets safer, not primarily because they watch the cars, but because the practice enables social bonds between the street population and the upper-class residents. In this sense, the young men occupy a position of betwixt and between, where they are economically marginalized yet inextricably bound into society (Perlman 2009).

To elucidate fully the participants' complex and dynamic livelihood pathways, it is essential to contest hegemonic discourses on formality, morality, and criminality. As seen in the empirical material, the boundary between illegality and legality becomes blurred in street environments. Begging can result in assaults when passersby are hesitant to give. Scavenging often ends up as burglaries and vandalism in deserted areas. When vending gum and cigarettes, many also offer drugs. The boundary between guiding and leeching is nonexistent. Guiding sometimes involves providing drugs and sexual services or might end in thefts, robbing drunken tourists at the end of the night. By minding cars, the young men paid attention to valuables left inside the parked cars, sometimes returning at nocturnal hours to steal it. When asked about involvement in illegal activities, stands on morality and immorality were highly fluid, often justified in the perceived responsibility of the more affluent surroundings to share their material resources with the poor. However, middle-class residents and tourists were not equally targeted by property crime – those who showed respect rather than arrogance or fear are often spared (Ursin 2012). In this sense, the street environment contains its own set of moral values. Their livelihoods, sometimes violent and often deemed immoral, are part and parcel of contemporary Brazil and are a response to and a reflection of institutional violence, corruption, and nepotism and where police brutality, connection friendship, and bribery in all levels of society are integral aspects of accumulating wealth. Indeed, involvement in illegal livelihoods is a resistance mechanism of counteracting marginalization and acute exclusion. Rather than to be perceived as “perverse livelihoods,” it should be emphasized that the livelihoods tend to emerge in “perverse contexts” (Rodgers 2005).

A key issue in making illegal livelihood choices is risk calculations. This does not involve a risk of famine and vulnerability to livelihood shocks that are common in livelihood studies (e.g., Weldegebriel and Prowse 2013) but rather a risk of punitive measures including prison sentences and violent reprimands. When Robson prefers burglarizing to assaulting and Joaquim chooses to do an *avião* rather than to be a *traficante*, criminal codes and hegemonic perceptions on legality and illegality are ignored while chances of impunity are measured. The risk calculation of imprisonment depends on their (documented) age, previous crime

record, and personal experiences and attitudes. Although many had served time in juvenile prison, this was not considered “real prison.” Turning 18 – the legal age of majority – greatly impacts how they calculate risk, knowing that they now will be sent to federal state prison (yet some manage to convince the authorities that they are minors due to lack of documentation). Authorities also count the number of served prison sentences – the first convictions often result in short sentences, while “regulars” eventually receive long sentences, as Joaquim who eventually got 15 years for small-scale drug trafficking. For Joaquim, prison life slowly became a natural part of his lived reality, while in Robson’s case, the horrors of his first prison experience worked as a “critical moment” (Thomson et al. 2002), only engaging in low-risk illegal activities thereafter.

The greatest risk of being involved in illegal livelihoods is violent reprimands and homicides by the police, militias, or drug cartels (Ursin 2012). Participants are aware that by engaging in illegal livelihoods, their list of enemies accumulates. At the same time, their status as “disposables” is also reinforced as they mature and are increasingly rendered as dangerous criminals (Fernandes 2013a, b). The livelihood paths in this study suggest that the risk levels of livelihoods are highest between the mid-teens and early twenties. For some, violent deaths of peers or their own ill fates with drug cartels and police trigger concern of where they are headed. For others, new family obligations are irreconcilable with such risks. As young men they struggle to find suitable livelihoods, constantly negotiating risks with income possibilities. In most cases, although involvement in illegal livelihoods is reduced in their mid-twenties, livelihood choices continue to be largely based on risk calculations rather than hegemonic ideas of immorality and illegality; thus many continue to engage in low-risk illegal livelihoods.

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## 9 Rethinking Transitions

The preceding discussion reveals how the lives of young men who come of age on the street contradict the traditional transitions model, as many of them leave parental homes, enter the work sphere, and become economically independent as children, yet still struggle to be recognized as adults. Growing up poor and male in urban Brazil, the available discursive versions of manhood are limited to the *trabalhador* (the hardworker laborer) and the *bandido* (the outlaw) (Barker 2005; Dalsgaard et al. 2008; Goldstein 2003), where the latter is tightly connected to street culture and drug trafficking (Zalular 2012). When Robson returns to the *favelas*, he approaches the more conventional ideas of manhood. Being housed and having a formal address may increase his livelihood options. But as he experiences, access to the formal job market is not a matter of course. To provide for his family, Robson continues to depend on his social connections on the street, minding cars. As this version of adulthood is based on images of honesty and morality, it entails avoidance of (visible) illegal income opportunities. Thus his income becomes heavily reduced, making it difficult to fulfill his economic responsibilities. Furthermore, in discussing adulthood, many of the research participants emphasized a desire to



become and to be considered a *cidadão* (citizen), not only in the sense of formal employment but also in a wider sense, bearing rights and responsibilities to full participation in society (Jones and Wallace 1992). Belonging to a sociopolitically and economically marginalized class, some aspects considered essential in youth transitions – such as culture and political participation (Chisholm and Hurrelmann 1995) – remain inaccessible throughout life. Thus, despite their aspirations, structural conditions obstruct conventional transitions into adulthood.

A traditional approach would characterize the young men's transitions as nonlinear, delayed, broken or blocked (Chisholm 1993) while involvement in marginal livelihoods causes the transitions to be deemed “improper” (Dalsgaard et al. 2008), deviant (Jones 1995). However, engaging in unconventional livelihoods does not represent failure but rather alternative transitions to adulthood (van Blerk 2008). As Valentine and Skelton (2007) suggest, the traditional transition model has placed too much emphasis on “normal” development, arguing that “not all young people either aspire to all of these ‘norms,’ or achieve them in a form that can be measured or acknowledged in conventional ways” (p. 105). Marginalized young people in contemporary Brazil will neither achieve nor should be expected to achieve adulthood based on linear notions. Their lives underscore the importance of a “multiplicity of futures” in grasping the complexity and diversity of transitions (Worth 2009; Jeffrey 2010).

Locating youth transitions at the heart of unconventional transitions makes it necessary to further unravel the concept of adulthood itself (Evans 2008). All too often adulthood is taken for granted as a self-explanatory, permanent, and universal category within transition studies, yet the social construction of adulthood needs to be explored in the same manner as we scrutinize the social construction of childhood (Hopkins and Pain 2007). If childhood and youth are transitory phases – states of “becoming” – then adulthood is the “arrival” (Wyn and White 1997, p. 11). In this way, young people are seen as both “not adult” and as a deficit of the adult state of being. The notion of youth as a temporary period “valorizes ‘adulthood’ as a norm and ‘finished article,’ as a ‘state of human being’ that incomplete, immature, and hence, inferior humans have to aspire to. . . become” (Horton and Kraftl 2005, p. 135). The livelihood paths in this research reveal how adulthood should not be perceived as an end point but rather embraces multiple positions that are achieved in a process of becoming that is continuous (Langevang 2008). The complexities of the young lives presented here reveal the ambiguous positions occupied and the various and varying livelihoods, possibilities, and responsibilities encountered, not only in childhood and youth but also in young adulthood, emphasizing adulthood as transitory, multiple, and dynamic. Thus it makes little sense compartmentalizing childhood, youth, and adulthood.

Analyzing the stories of Sandro, Robson, Joaquim, and Eduardo reveals that vital transitions occur throughout the life course, tightly interconnected to their present beings and future becomings. Rather than seeing these transitions as symbolizing the threshold to adulthood, they should be uncoupled from the concept of “youth transition” as it tends to “freeze young people in fixed categories” (Langevang 2008, p. 2046). By focusing on social transitions “linked to changes

in a person's appearance, activity, status, roles and relationships, as well as associated changes in use of physical and social space" (Vogler et al. 2008, p. 1), the academic debate becomes less confining, stepping away from conventional ideas and embracing temporal, spatial, and socioeconomic differences in transitions.

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## 10 Conclusion

We explored the complex pathways of young people navigating social-spatial exclusion and livelihood possibilities. Young people on the street do not only experience major "turning points" as they navigate their ways into youth and adulthood but also often undergo subtle and minute forms of transitions. These minor transitions need to be acknowledged and considered "good enough" in their own right and be theorized more fully. Policy initiatives tend to focus on formal employment and education, ignoring less formal means of meeting youth employment and learning needs, thus overlooking the degree to which young people are already economically active in the informal sector (Gough et al. 2013; Shehu and Nilsson 2014). Although the livelihoods of the young people discussed here are unconventional, socioculturally marginalized, and deemed illegal or immoral by society, they are vital for them to secure money, develop survival strategies, and acquire social networks (Rodgers 2005; van Blerk 2008). Young people move between, across, and through different forms and spaces of transition. A key feature of these transitions is the intersection of social, spatial, relational, and temporal processes. For many young people, transitions involve navigating complex yet mundane behaviors, ideas, norms, rules, laws, and relationships connected to earning a living. Whereas young people's livelihood choices convey a classical tension between constraint and creativity (Staples 2007), their involvements in immoral or illegal livelihood strategies need to be framed in the context of what pushes them to the margins of society in the first place – turbulent and violent home environments, limited educational opportunities, poverty, and inequality. Transition for these young men is rarely unidirectional, one-off, and complete – it is dissected, fluid, and dynamic, underpinned by broad structural processes that shape their life chances and within which they navigate constrained choices.

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# Undocumented and Documented Homeless Youth in the US Labor Force: Economically Useful and Politically Disenfranchised

Amy Donovan Blondell

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## Abstract

Young, vigorous, mobile, and largely unattached, undocumented and documented homeless youth constitute a flexible labor force which is largely invisible, economically useful and politically disenfranchised. This chapter offers a labor analysis of homeless youth participation in multiple economies, an understudied area in the U.S. literature. Drawing on extensive participant observation with homeless young people, including unaccompanied minors, this chapter takes its foundation

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from qualitative, quantitative, and geospatial research conducted in Guatemala, the Mexico-US border, and the West Coast of Canada and the United States. This research includes two longitudinal participatory research studies: the Youth Trek study, a mobile health study addressing migration, work, and wellbeing; and the Labor Memoir Project, a mapping and journaling workshop on employment and income-generating activities. This chapter explores historic political and economic shifts that have resulted in deindustrialization and growth in informal sector work, and presents three key arguments. First is the twin phenomena in which informal sector work has become increasingly formalized, while formal sector work has become increasingly informal and less structured, with zero hours contracts and wages insufficient to meet housing costs. Second, laws governing minor rights of consent, including labor laws, limit the ability of homeless youth to seek a livelihood through traditional employment, increasing their vulnerability as a work force and reliance on the informal sector, including jobs doing day labor construction, domestic work, sex work, caregiving, and seasonal agricultural work such as in the cannabis industry. Third, local and international unions, youth worker organizations, nonprofits and NGOs are increasingly making efforts to empower and organize informal sector workers to contest exploitation and improve labor conditions.

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### Keywords

Homeless youth • Informal economies • Child labor laws and minor rights of consent • Political economy • Work and poverty • Undocumented workers • Deindustrialization and globalization • Organizations of youth workers • Unions • NGOs and nonprofit organizations

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## 1 Introduction

In her article entitled, “Framing the Underclass,” political anthropologist Joan Vincent critiqued the usage of the term “homeless” population, arguing that the focus on the absence of a home has deflected attention away from processes of immiseration, the root causes of poverty (Vincent 1993, p. 227). Rather than focusing on “homelessness,” Vincent argues, the focus should be on why people are not able to sustain a permanent place to live and more specifically upon economic conditions and wages.

In critiquing the fiction of a tripartite class system in the UK and USA, Vincent draws upon the work of Stuart Hall.

... mass unemployment as a permanent feature; at the bottom the permanently unemployed and the marginals, on welfare (or, in the United States, destitute); in the middle, the regularly employed (but often underemployed) increasingly divided by enterprise sector, gender, and race; and at the top the few of increasing wealth and income. (Vincent 1993, p. 225, citing Stuart Hall’s 1998 text *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*. London: Verso.)



Vincent applies classical political economy to explain how market shifts produce poverty as a matter of course (Vincent 1993, pp. 227–228). When demand decreases, or it makes economic sense for a corporation to move a manufacturing plant to a location where labor costs are lower, factories are closed, and many formal sector jobs are lost. With these factory closures, other businesses that served and were supported by the communities of workers in the area also close. Since the Reagan/Thatcher era, unions have been weakened by legislative changes. International trade agreements were passed and limitations on the maneuverability of corporations were lifted, and in both the USA and the UK, this resulted in significant deindustrialization (Bluestone and Harrison 1982). These economic shifts, often referred to as the globalization of capital, have been met by the increasing globalization of labor. Enabled by new technologies, unions coordinate strikes protesting working conditions in different world locations, where manufacturing plants are owned by the same corporation. Workforces have often been highly segmented, and a number of labor unions have a history of racism and sexism in practice if not in philosophy. As Linda McDowell has emphasized, historically, women workers and immigrants, with and without work permits, have often occupied the most underpaid and vulnerable positions (the last to be hired and the first to be laid off) (McDowell 2016). Today, many unions represent very multicultural and sometimes multinational workforces, advocating and organizing in the interest of documented and undocumented workers alike. The film *Bread and Roses* offered a cinematic representation of the Janitors for Justice campaign in Los Angeles, illustrating the complexities of this work (Loach 2000), which is fundamental to many of today's active unions including Service Employees International Union (SEIU) (2016), La Fuerza Unida (2016), the United Farmworkers (2016), and Unite Here (2016).

The unemployment and economic devastation that befell American industrial towns has been documented in terms of the impact on health and well-being of residents (Pappas 1989). In the film *Roger and Me*, documentary filmmaker Michael Moore chronicled the relocation of one of the largest US auto manufacturing plants and described the consequent decline of his native Flint, Michigan, offering a highly accessible explanation and understanding of the local impact of global economic shifts. The film showed how newly unemployed residents were forced to create cottage industries to gain basic sustenance for themselves and their families (Moore 1989). In US industries where workplaces are unionized, working conditions such as wages, shift lengths and consistency, minimum number of work hours, rate of overtime, and other issues like health insurance are determined through a process of collective bargaining during which union representatives meet with management to negotiate mutually acceptable terms. As legislation has been passed which makes it more difficult for unions to organize and operate in the workplace, unions have become much less pervasive in the USA. The weakening of unions in conjunction with the increased globalization of industry, and relocation of factories to countries where labor costs are lower, has meant that there are far fewer unionized industrial jobs with solid pay and benefits available to young people as they come of age.

As a result of deindustrialization, many people who once earned a family wage, in unionized industries like steel and auto manufacturing, became unemployed and

many eventually came to work in poorly paid service sector employment, such as jobs in restaurants, janitorial work, and retail (Sassen 1990). Unemployment and underemployment are often antecedents of homelessness.

Both Detroit and New Orleans, two US cities which have endured devastation, figure prominently into the narratives of homeless youth as places of opportunity. Deindustrialized Detroit, which was crushed economically by closures in the auto industry, has many miles of foreclosed upon homes. This economic devastation has ironically created housing opportunities for homeless squatters. The devastation of Hurricane Katrina left areas of New Orleans uninhabitable. In the years since the 2005 hurricane, some of these areas have become destination locations for homeless young people seeking housing.

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## 2 Work in the Informal Economy

The informal economy represents a significant range of types of work – some are legal activities (like caregiving), some are illegal activities (like selling drugs), and others, referred to as the “gray economy,” are quasi-legal. An example of the latter might be doing yard work, babysitting, or tutoring, without reporting earnings. Not reporting or underreporting of income is illegal if it is greater than an amount specified by law. Taxes must be paid on income received, and failure to report income and pay taxes is tax evasion and is punishable by law. What qualifies the work as informal sector work is that it is “off the books,” typically paid in cash, without benefits, and often not reported for income tax purposes by the employer or worker. Since informal sector industries operate outside of systems of reporting, regulation, and taxation, the size of these industries and their portion of the overall market are difficult to measure.

Since the formal sector of the economy is easier to define and measure, and the informal economy is, by definition, not official and therefore less visible, it is more challenging to comprehend. An understudied area, the importance of informal economies is often under-recognized and misunderstood. Economist Friedrich Schneider estimates that America’s shadow economy that does not include illegal activities, but does include, “the transactions [that] involve the legal production of goods and services,” is worth “in the ballpark of \$1 trillion,” nearly 8% of the US gross domestic product (GDP) (Barnes 2009). The enormity of these industries should be understood as they also employ many people and generate much needed income. Informal economies do not exist in a vacuum but rather operate in tandem with formal economies. While free of structures of regulation and accountability that apply to workplaces in the formal economy, informal sector jobs have a range of working conditions from good to fair to poor. Like formal sector positions, these jobs are characterized by different degrees of freedom and autonomy as well as coercive elements. Even less studied than underground and informal economies is the question of who supplies the labor power to run them. Homeless young people are what are sometimes called a flexible labor force because they are young, because they are mobile, and because they are in critical need of essential resources.

Informal sector jobs have many disadvantages, for example, “workers in the informal economy are less likely to benefit from employment benefits and social protection programs” (ILO 2002). If dismissed, the worker cannot collect unemployment benefits, and without workers’ compensation and disability insurance, it is difficult to get coverage for wages lost if one is hurt “on the job” or has to leave work as a result of a disability. Since “A higher preponderance of impoverished employees work in the informal sector” (Carr and Chen 2001), these workers have fewer private resources to marshal in the case of accidents or abuses in the workplace.

Both Barbara Ehrenreich and Carol Stack have offered nuanced critical assessments of the working conditions experienced by low wage service sector employees working in the formal sector. In her book *Nicked and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, Ehrenreich takes positions as a restaurant server, housecleaner, and retail worker and offers a detailed description of the daily challenges of navigating working conditions and trying to sustain a livelihood from low wages (Ehrenreich 2002a). In reporting on these working conditions, Ehrenreich underscores and criticizes the absence of a pay ethic to match the work ethic (Ehrenreich 2002b). Addressing the work lives of youth working in a famous fast food franchise, Carol Stack found that low wages were only one part of the problem in formal service sector work. Young people received little to no information ahead of time about what hours they would be working in the coming week. Not having a consistent work shift pattern from week to week, and sometimes receiving insufficient hours (what is sometimes referred to as having zero hours contracts), makes it difficult for young people to predict their schedules in a way that would allow them to attend school or commit to a second formal sector job (C. Stack 2002).

Formerly workers in industries with strong unions, like the steel and auto industries, often had wages that could support a family (Rubin 1976), but with deindustrialization, poorly paid service workers often have to work more than one job. One of the advantages of informal sector work is often more flexible hours, so when formal sector jobs become more variable and unpredictable, like jobs in fast food restaurants Carol Stack and her co-investigators studied, it is more likely that these workers will look to informal sector jobs to compensate for needed income. As Ida Susser has illustrated ethnographically in *Norman Street*, her intensive study of a working class community, participation in multiple economies for economic survival has become normative in working class communication (Susser 2012).

In work that builds on Carol Stack’s research on the critical importance of social networks in providing for daily sustenance including nutrition, housing, and child care (C. B. Stack 1974), Susana Narotzky has described a method of “following the provisioning paths” as a way of understanding mechanisms of survival in working poor communities. She explains that “. . .different people or groups will be positioned differently as to their general ability to use market paths, as distinct from non-market paths (state, community, kinship). . .even with extreme informal provisioning (for example urban foraging practices such as garbage collecting, begging, petty theft and so on) not everyone has the same opportunity of access” (Narotzky 2005, pp. 82–83). For an extensive discussion of the economic activities of homeless youth including descriptions of many income and resource generating

activities and participation in multiple economies – transactional, voluntary, informal, and formal – please see chapter in this volume entitled “Homeless Youth Labor Continuum: Working in Informal and Formal Economies from Highland Guatemala to San Francisco, California” (Blondell [in press](#)).

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### **3 The Political Production of Marginalization: Laws and Policies That Drive Homeless Young People Further Underground**

In the US context, Joan Vincent (Vincent [1993](#)) and Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward have addressed how American notions of “the worthy” and “the unworthy poor” are used to justify policies of neglect (Piven and Cloward [1993](#)).

Barbara Harriss-White has focused on the social attitudes related to which groups are considered to be “the deserving” or “the undeserving” among the poor in her work on the social and political production of poverty in India. She notes that the groups of individuals that are considered the least worthy of charity, material and financial assistance by organizations and individual donors, are those that are the most economically useful to the economy, like those who work in the sex industry or the large number of unhoused men who work in low wage construction (Harriss-White [2002](#), p. 7). Harriss-White also writes that some of the income-generating activities of destitute people, like begging, are criminalized. Police round-ups, extortion, and multiple incarcerations disrupt the personal and economic lives of impoverished people, making them even poorer. In this way, she illustrates how poverty is intensified, exacerbated, and produced, through the enforcement of laws criminalizing the economic activities of impoverished people (Harriss-White [2002](#), p. 5). In the US context, Don Mitchell writes about the ways that these laws policing public space directly threaten homeless people, threaten the public space, and result in general disenfranchisement.

anti-homeless laws being passed in city after city in the United States work in a pernicious way: by redefining what is acceptable behavior in public space, by in effect annihilating the spaces in which the homeless must live, these laws seek simply to annihilate homeless people themselves. . . (Mitchell [1997](#), p. 306)

Public space is always a negotiation (Goheen, 1993). It is both a site for continual negotiations of the nature of “the public” and democracy (Mitchell, 1995) and itself a product of these negotiations (Zukin, 1995). The proliferation of anti-homeless laws ups the ante in these negotiations by seeking explicitly — and within the realm of law — to remove some people from the negotiators’ table. These laws have as a goal — perhaps not explicit, but clear nonetheless — the redefinition of public rights so that only the housed may have access to them. (Mitchell [1997](#), p. 328)

In many US cities, homeless youth are burdened with bench warrants (court orders for their apprehension) for nonpayment of fines when cited for violation of what are sometimes called “quality of life” ordinances (National Law Center on

Homelessness and Poverty 2014, p. 34). These municipal laws criminalize sitting or lying on the sidewalk, panhandling or asking for money in certain areas, as well as staying in boarded up and abandoned buildings, i.e., criminal trespass. In order to avoid arrest for these outstanding warrants, homeless youth keep moving.

In a recent conference of the Consortium of Street Children, themed, “I move therefore I am not,” underscores the significance of mobility as a strategy of disentanglement, a mechanism for resisting and potentially escaping containment, or circumnavigating local authorities and prejudices. The absence of a sufficient social safety net and the enforcement of laws and policies that criminalize and displace result in a reality, for homeless youth, of continuous displacement and movement as a survival strategy. This over determined relocation increases the likelihood that homeless youth will depend upon on work which requires mobility. For homeless youth a number of factors converge – the desire of many homeless youth to keep their whereabouts unknown, their desire to strike out and have new experiences, the necessity to seek opportunities for income generation and support, laws and policies that criminalize and displace, and the critical absence of sufficient social service support, all convene to constitute both citizen and undocumented homeless young people as a labor pool for certain economies.

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#### **4 Limits on a Minor’s Rights of Consent to Shelter and Work Further Marginalize Homeless Youth**

The laws and policies that govern shelter use have an impact on homeless youth who use them. State laws vary as to how long minors can consent to their own shelter before parental notification and/or parental consent must be secured by shelter personnel. This can vary from a number of hours to a number of weeks. As a result, homeless youth often give false names and make up fictitious contact information for their parents, guardians, and caseworkers. Also, it is not uncommon for homeless youth to use up the days that they are allowed to consent to their own housing and then move on to a different shelter or different state when their allotted days are complete, rather than risk notification of guardians (Donovan). In states where the amount of time that the youth can consent to shelter is highly limited, the youth shelters may be fairly empty (Donovan and Scandlyn 2008). Furthermore, shelter agencies may institute policies which require youth to sign that they agree to accept the consent of parents or guardians for their shelter stay, thereby abdicating their right to consent to shelter independently. In this way, state laws and shelter policies may actively discourage shelter use. Young people often leave shelters when staff explain that they are going to contact parents, guardians, or caseworkers or when they know that staff will learn that their names and home information are fictitious. For a more detailed description of the impact of minor consent laws, please see chapter in this volume (Blondell [in press](#)).

In the USA, the right of minors (who are eligible by citizenship or residency) to consent to work is a significant issue for homeless youth. In order for a homeless youth to support her or himself, through legal means, and through formal economy

jobs that are “on the books,” s/he has to work a significant number of hours. The number of allowable work hours may sometimes be extended by parental consent, but since many homeless youth have intentionally run away from home, this is not an acceptable requirement for many who want to preserve their autonomy. According to homeless researcher, Dorothy Miller, runaways are forced to live as fugitives as they have the quasi-criminal status of “status offenders” by virtue of the fact that they are minors who are not within the geographical domain of the their caseworkers, guardians, or parents (Miller et al. 1980).

A youth may go through the legal process of becoming an emancipated minor in the courts, conferring adult status and rights, but this requires that the young person prove to a judge that s/he has been self-supporting through legal means (Miller et al. 1980). Given the cost of living in many US cities, it is highly unlikely that a minor could earn enough to support themselves through part time work in the formal economy. Even if some homeless youth were able to prove this, very few would electively participate in a judicial process of this kind or be able to access the legal assistance to help them through the process.

The inability to work a sufficient number of hours to support oneself makes it largely impracticable for homeless youth to survive without working “off the books” in informal economies, whether they are doing a legal type of work, like pet sitting or busking/playing music for money, or illegal types of work, like selling drugs or sexual services. In this sense, work restrictions on minors, child labor laws, often result in homeless minors becoming far more reliant on economies in which there is little accountability and exploitation is more possible. With the exception of undocumented minors who may have secured false identification or work permits, undocumented homeless youth are always reliant upon informal economies for employment. As a result, both documented and undocumented homeless young people are living largely off the grid, working side by side in many of the same informal economies, whether that be housecleaning or other domestic labor, doing seasonal agricultural work, selling goods or crafts, or illegal modes of generating income. For a discussion of a wide range of income and resource generating activities, please see chapter in this volume entitled *Homeless Youth Labor Continuum: Working in Formal and Informal Economies from Highland Guatemala to San Francisco, California* (Blondell [in press](#)).

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## **5 Day Labor: An Informal Economy Employing Many Homeless Youth**

“Day labor” is a term used for a wide variety work, some of it highly skilled. Bricklayers, landscapers, painters, and others may work on construction sites or in private homes for cash wages which are negotiated prior to the job and usually paid at the end of the job or at the end of the day’s work. Day laborers are doing legal types of work, but they are doing these jobs in an unreported manner. Many homeless young people, particularly young men from Mexico and Central America, work in day labor (Quesada 1999). For a description of a Guatemalan homeless

young person's experience doing day labor construction as an undocumented worker in Mexico City, see chapter in this volume, "Homeless Youth Labor Continuum: Working in Formal and Informal Economies from Highland Guatemala to San Francisco, California" (Blondell *in press*).

As UCLA scholar, Abel Valenzuela explicates, day labor "is not an easily defined occupational category . . . [it] does not exist in the Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC) or the Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC) used by the United States Bureau of the Census and other government agencies that monitor labor statistics, such as the Department of Labor" (Valenzuela 2000, p. 4). It is therefore impossible to know the number of people this informal economy employs or the amount of revenue it creates. In spite of this paucity of data, Valenzuela created a questionnaire and "surveyed 481 immigrant day workers in 87 distinct hiring locations in different areas of Southern California" (Valenzuela 2000, p. 1). These sites are often located near large hardware stores where contractors and local residents buy their building supplies. Although his study included workers 18 and older, he found "a relatively young workforce. . . with 37.9% between the ages of 18 and 27. . . . More than half the day laborers have been in the United States fewer than 5 years, with less than one year 29.4%, and 22.9% 1–5 years" (Valenzuela 2000, p. 1).

In the following passage, Valenzuela characterizes day labor and some of its hardships:

. . . cyclical variations related to weather and seasonal periods, the ups and downs of the construction or home improvement industry, and the uncertainty of being selected by prospective employers. At hiring sites, it is not uncommon to see a swarm of men around a car aggressively pointing to themselves in their efforts to get noticed and thus hired. Attempting to get hired in public, usually on sidewalks, parking lots, or streets is physically dangerous. [Nevertheless] Day labor work is flexible and easy to enter. (Valenzuela 2000, p. 9)

In addition to describing hardships, Valenzuela also gleaned from the responses of his interviewees many of the powerful incentives for entering and continuing day labor.

. . . why day labor may be preferred to other types of jobs in both the formal and informal labor markets. Day labor work affords workers a diversity of jobs and work experiences, where else can you learn or receive experience in roofing, dry wall, landscaping, and painting in the same week or month. Learning these trades provide prospects for future employment outside of day labor and certainly within this market. Day labor work is flexible, you seek work when you want or need it. Prospects for employment in day labor work exist on a daily basis to whomever seeks it, temporarily offsetting unemployment, underemployment or an upcoming rent check or other bill. Day work allows workers to choose jobs they like, forsaking those that are paid poorly or are particularly arduous. A day laborer can easily walk away from a job without fear of reprisal or firing, only losing that day's wages. (Valenzuela 2000, pp. 13–14)

One of the most powerful findings of his study was that "day labor employment prospects may be better than what this type of work generally suggests – desperate, last ditch efforts at seeking employment." (Valenzuela 2000, p. 14)

Because day labor is an informal sector job it is often viewed as a stopgap measure. Valenzuela found that by contrast, day labor was a source, for many, of



fairly consistent employment. Valenzuela asks whether the day laborer is “a value entrepreneur or a disadvantaged (survivalist) self-employed worker.” (Valenzuela 2000, pp. 13–14)

“... [E]ven though most day laborers have worked in this market for less than one year, a full quarter have done so for more than six years. Ninety percent of all respondents only worked as day laborers full-time.” (Valenzuela 2000, p. 13) He concludes from analyzing the findings of his study that day laborers are both “value entrepreneurs and disadvantaged (survivalist) self-employed workers,” as “... day labor offers options and attributes not easily obtained elsewhere.” (Valenzuela 2000, pp. 13–14)

... [E]ven though day labor work on average earns a worker poverty level earnings for the year tax free, hourly wages, yearly earnings, and other factors suggest that this type of work pays at rates higher than minimum wage, the prevailing wage for low skill jobs in the formal market. As a result, day labor work competes favorably, if not better, than other low skill and immigrant concentrated occupations. ...

As in the example of day labor, many jobs in the informal sector offer more compensation than low paid formal sector work. However, there are few protections for workers in these contexts and few means of redress or recourse, save criminal sanctions, for exploitive labor conditions. In recent years, there has been a rise in US cities toward the creation of nonprofit organizations whose goal it is to formalize aspects of the informal economy. These organizations work to improve industry standards in areas such as day labor construction and domestic work, helping workers to develop contracts and agreed upon terms of labor with employers.

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## 6 Formalization of the Informal Sector

### 6.1 Workers Helping One Another to Improve Working Conditions

San Francisco is a sanctuary city, meaning that local authorities, as a matter of policy passed by the Board of Supervisors/City Council, do not assist the federal immigration police (Wikipedia 2016). In “sanctuary cities” there is reduced coordinated surveillance of immigrants. San Francisco is home to a number of organizations that promote the rights of undocumented workers in a variety of workplaces. An example is the nonprofit San Francisco Day Labor Program (2016), which also represents a shift toward the formalization of informal work by facilitating a connection of day laborers with employers and creating a structure of accountability. People needing assistance with moving, gardening/landscaping masonry, tiling, plumbing, painting, general construction, event set-up, janitorial, etc., can request workers with specific expertise, request communication facilitation or translation services, agree to pay a set hourly wage (currently \$20–\$30 per hour depending on skill level required and heaviness of the work), and pay for services in a way that prevents exploitation and significantly reduces the chance of employers cheating through nonpayment or underpayment for work performed. Workers independently register with the



organization when they want to work. The employment agreement is between the worker and the employer, however; workers are still not eligible for unemployment or workers' compensation, and employers are encouraged to check their homeowner's, renter's, or business insurance policy for coverage of the worker should an injury occur on the premises (San Francisco Day Labor Program 2016).

In the contemporary US context, feminists and others have addressed the idea that what Frances Shaver has called "relational labor," such as caring for the sick or for children, is more often performed by women and is often unpaid or underpaid (Shaver 1994). Even when work is performed for set wages, it may also be affected by factors that result in an element of coercion. In Shellee Colen's interviews with immigrant nannies working for families in New York City, the nannies explained that the families who employed them were in a position to exact more caregiving hours than agreed upon, because the employers knew that the nannies would fear that if they were not generally compliant, their sponsorship as immigrants might be at risk. While these nannies were compensated with wages, and also received in-kind transactional payment for their labor through the provision of room and board, nannies were sometimes asked to provide additional labor hours that it can be argued, were secured somewhat coercively because their immigration status was in the balance. The nannies were aware that the limited work permit they received in these positions could eventually lead to residency and the ability of these women to send for their own children and families to live in the US with them (Colen 1995). Also, the very real bonding that often happened between nannies and the children they cared for made it more difficult for the nannies to set limits, including regarding their work hours.

Similarly Bridget Anderson, working in the UK context, has documented the efforts of Filipina migrant domestic workers not only to support one another in abusive domestic labor situations (which can lead to the homelessness of the domestic worker) but also to offer general social support and job connections and housing when needed. Legal aid was also extended to these domestic workers through the creation of several formal support organizations, and ties were formed with local unions fighting for the improved labor conditions of domestic workers (Anderson 2000, pp. 94–95).

In San Francisco, the organization POWER, People Organized to Win Employment Rights, which merged with Causa Justa: Just Cause in January 2015 (Causa Justa 2015, 2016; POWER 2014), developed a program called the Women Workers Committee, in which domestic workers provided outreach to nannies and housecleaners at playgrounds and bus stops. They not only assisted the other workers with translation in verbal negotiations with employers, but also helped the workers both to clarify terms of work and to establish written agreements and employment contracts (POWER 2014). The domestic workers organization La Colectiva is promoting the passage of a specific piece of legislation, the California Domestic Worker Bill of Rights, which would formalize labor protections for informal sector workers that are standard for formal sector workers. These include: the rights to overtime pay, notice prior to termination, workers' compensation insurance, reporting time pay (when an employee shows up and the employer

cancels the job), paid vacation and sick days, Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) protections, an annual cost of living wage increase, and other basic rights like the right to cook one's own food and receive at least five hours of uninterrupted sleep (LaColectiva 2016a, b).

Young Workers United is another San Francisco-based organization run by and for young people, both documented and undocumented, who are working in the service sector, mostly in restaurants, fast food, and retail stores. In addition to helping individual workers with their grievances, the organization dramatically improved working conditions for all workers, especially low wage earners, by putting a significantly increased and inflation indexed minimum wage and improved sick leave policy on the ballot, which San Francisco voters passed into law in 2014 (Young Workers United 2016). Any young worker can attend a Young Workers United meeting, describe a labor issue with which the worker is contending, and get assistance from the other member workers. The organization helps the worker both through direct action and administrative methods. The organization also assists individual workers as they confront abusive managers and make demands, sometimes flyering, leafletting, and picketing establishments to call public attention to locations where there has been a pattern of abuse. The organization won the right to accompany members to city and state labor hearings where individual cases are heard and workers may be awarded compensation, if abuses are substantiated. This is helpful for many young workers, perhaps especially undocumented workers who may need translation services and help navigating the bureaucratic legal system, or who may fear that employers will report them to federal authorities for deportation, when they seek restitution for such things as unpaid overtime wages.

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## **7 The Relationship Between Formal and Informal Economies and the Impact on the Youth Labor Force**

What happens in the formal economy can effect what happens in the informal economy, and what happens in the informal economy can also influence what happens in the underground economy. Formal and informal economies are not distinct from each other, and a segment of the labor force moves between the two economies, sometimes employed by both. For example, in describing the impact of an international boycott on Bangladeshi garment manufacturers, Jo Boyden and Victoria Rialp's report for UNICEF identified the unintended consequences of the boycott. When Bangladeshi factories dismissed the majority of children in their workforce, fearing that an import ban in the USA would decimate their export market, the youths' response was to move into other economies, often underground and more hazardous, in order to replace their lost income (Boyden and Rialp 1996).

Some 20 years after publishing this UNICEF report, Boyden directs the longitudinal Young Lives study in four world locations: Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam, following 12,000 children (many of them working children) over 15 years (Young Lives 2016). Young Lives, which has published over 400 papers, documents the welfare and livelihood of these youth as they come of age detailing the

challenges and problems they face as well as their resilience. An example of one of the income-generating activities documented in the Ethiopian context by Young Lives Researcher Gina Crivello is the cottage industry in which mothers cook home-made meals that are then distributed by their children in the community (Crivello 2015).

Virginia Morrow, also of Young Lives, addresses the working conditions of youth underscoring the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Child.

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to protection from exploitation at work (nobody could argue with this) but it is also possible to draw upon the UNCRC to argue that children have the right to dignity at work (as well as to school systems that respect their dignity) and to have their views about matters that affect them taken into account. (Morrow 2010, p. 438)

Along with other academics documenting the lives of working children, Morrow appeals to the International Labor Organization to acknowledge the need to “take into consideration the views of children and their families’ (ILO 2010, p. 2).” She articulates request, “to respect children as workers in their own right, and to explore the unintended consequences of policies to eradicate child labour.” (Morrow 2010, p. 438)

Morrow explains how an amendment, to protect working children, was not retained in the final version the International Labor Organization’s 2010 *Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016* (ILO 2010)

. . . a sentence in an earlier draft of the Roadmap suggested that ‘no child should be removed from child labour without adequate protection and service provision’ – this has disappeared from the final version. (Morrow 2010, p. 438)

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## 8 The Organizing Efforts of NGOs and Working Children’s Organizations to Improve Children’s Working Conditions and Rights

The international youth advocacy organization, Save the Children promotes actions which conform to the “best interest of the child” and a “do no harm” approach. The organization’s position paper expressly states that the organization does not support actions that could “. . .increase risks to the health or safety, for example, by removing them from their sources of livelihood without measures that guarantee their survival through livelihood support interventions. . .” (Save the Children 2013, p. 17).

Documenting the efforts of Peruvian movement of working children, founded in 1976, Jessica Taft has written that “In contrast to abolitionist approaches that call for an end to child labor, this movement and others like it have emphasized working children’s leadership on this issue, and the need to end the economic exploitation of children, rather than all forms of children’s work” (Taft 2015).

Addressing a Peruvian movement of working children, Dena Aufseeser described the organization's reception at the Hague conference, in which the ILO was formulating the previously mentioned Roadmap, "what is especially interesting about anti-child labor campaigns is that they often occur despite various efforts of working children's groups to explain why they see a focus on minimum age laws as problematic. In the case of the Hague conference, for example, representatives from Peru's child workers movement were not allowed to come. In fact, their adult collaborators were also discouraged from attending. So again, in situations where children want to participate in formulating plans and policies regarding their well-being, they are often limited in such efforts" (Aufseeser 2015, p. 3).

Offering a contrast to the failure to include youth workers' organizations in meetings at the Hague, Dena Aufseeser reports on the efforts of youth workers to reshape child labor legislation in Bolivia.

In December of 2013, representatives from . . . [the] Bolivian Union of Child and Adolescent Workers] met with members of Parliament to discuss revisions to the code for children and adolescents. At this meeting, they asked the president to remove the minimum age restrictions on their work. They said they wanted legal protections for their work. Much of their work is to help meet household needs and pay school fees. They need to continue this work, and want the government to protect them from exploitation rather than hinder their efforts to help themselves and their families. By pretending they don't exist, the state can't ensure kids' safety and rights, making them society's most vulnerable workforce. Children are therefore paid less for doing the same job as an adult, they are more susceptible to abuse, and have no recourse when their rights are violated (Aufseeser 2015, p. 3). [In July 2014, the] Bolivian government lowered the minimum age of labor. . . , [stipulating that] . . . work must not interfere with school attendance, . . . by recognizing children's right to work, it provides new protections for child workers and sanctions employers who fail to respect those protections (Aufseeser 2015, p. 4).

For a discussion of exploitive working conditions, such as workplace violence and sexual harassment, experienced by homeless young people working without legal recourse in informal economies, please see chapter in this volume, "Homeless Youth Labor Continuum: Working in Informal and Formal Economies from Highland Guatemala to San Francisco, California" (Blondell [in press](#)).

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## **9 The Effect of Legalizing the Cannabis Industry: An Indicator of the Enormity of Scale of the Informal Economy**

It is difficult to find estimates of the total magnitude of illegal "underground" economies, or even one type of illegal market, like the production and sale of illicit drugs. The business of growing and selling marijuana is only one of many informal, and until recently, illegal economies that make up the illicit drug market. However, some concept of the enormity of scale of the drug economy can be derived by looking at the figures that have been recently released estimating the revenue produced by the **legal** marijuana/cannabis trade.

The legal marijuana trade in the USA is constituted of medicinal use in several states and legalized recreational use in the two states of Colorado and Washington. In 2014 alone, the legal marijuana industry brought in 2.4 billion dollars, an increase of 74% in one year, with predictions of 11 billion dollars by 2019 (Weigant 2015). In attempting to gauge the magnitude of employment that this industry creates, one estimate predicted that if California legalizes adult recreational marijuana use, one million new jobs would be created [or made legal] over 8 years (abc10.com 2015). Some of those jobs already exist, but since they are part of the informal economy, they are not counted. Because this is largely an illegal economy in California, at present, it is difficult to know how many people are currently employed by this large agricultural industry.

Now that two of the US states, Washington and Colorado, have legalized growing and selling marijuana, the sale of marijuana is now taxed in those states. Gardeners, trimmers, and others assisting with the growing and vending of marijuana can now work as formal sector employees enjoying some of the benefits of legal work. Whether wages will remain constant, increase, or decrease and whether homeless youth will continue to seek employment in the industry as legalization occurs remains to be seen.

While illegal and informal economies are often understudied and have commanded less scholarly attention than legal economies, the industries may be very large and have significant numbers of employees. As an indicator of the enormity of the marijuana economy alone, in the state of Colorado, tax revenue from the sale of marijuana reached 70 million dollars in 2015 (and is expected to reach 125 million by the end of 2016). Nineteen million dollars of this new tax revenue is earmarked for public education, more than doubling the state's current investment of 13 million dollars. Seventy million dollars in tax earnings on marijuana is almost double the tax revenue from all Colorado alcohol sales combined (which is almost 42 million dollars) (Grenoble 2015; Keyes 2015), and an industry group has reported that legalization created more than 10,000 new jobs in the first 6 months after recreational marijuana became legal (Sarich 2014).

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## 10 Conclusion

By virtue of their youth, vigor, largely unattached status, and critical economic need, undocumented and documented homeless youth constitute a labor force that is both more resilient and more susceptible to exploitation. This chapter highlights the high degree of flexibility and mobility of homeless documented and undocumented youth, which contributes to their usefulness as a labor force for certain economies, especially informal economies. They are ready workers for informal sector jobs largely because as a group they are not interested in compromising their whereabouts to authorities. Whether they are migrant youth coming from Mexico or Central America or youth from the USA, these young people have purposefully left households in search of a different life. Just as unaccompanied minors who lack legal paperwork have to work off the books, documented homeless youth are status

offenders, and as such, have a quasi-criminalized status. Both groups must generate needed income and resources without a paper trail and often work side by side in informal sector jobs. As young people with pressing essential needs and few financial resources, limited legal rights to work, or to consent to shelter services, homeless young people are largely disenfranchised with few rights and little means for recourse. Like child and youth workers in many other world locations, this combination of being economically useful and politically disenfranchised positions them as a particularly vulnerable work force.

The challenges of homeless youth in the USA are compounded by the economic realities faced by the general population of adolescent and young adult workers, specifically the disappearance of industrial jobs and the proliferation of low paid, zero contract, service sector work. These jobs often do not provide sufficient work shifts or wages adequate to support stable housing in many of the US cities, which are destination locations for homeless and runaway youth. Corporations relocating their manufacturing plants from the USA to geographical locations with lower labor costs have resulted in a shrinking of the formal industrial sector, with fewer unionized job opportunities for young people coming of age. With little chance of securing employment with solid pay, guaranteed work shifts, and benefits, young people have become increasingly reliant on low paid service sector work. Service sector employees increasingly find themselves in formal jobs with working conditions that were formerly associated with informal sector work. This informalization of the formal sector has made employees more reliant on work in the informal sector to supplement inadequate hours and pay. Homeless young people are more likely to live and work “off the grid” finding employment in informal sector work like seasonal agricultural work, domestic work, and day labor where compensation may sometimes be somewhat better than low wage service sector jobs. These jobs, being “under the table,” seldom offer any protections from exploitation. In many US cities, such as San Francisco, nonprofit organizations have begun to organize informal sector workers, helping them to formalize their terms of work – establishing contracts and formulating working conditions through written agreements with employers. Similarly, it is not uncommon for unions to organize on behalf of a labor force that is made up of both documented and undocumented workers. Organizations like San Francisco, based Young Workers United have taken the extra step by expanding their ability to advocate for other youth workers in labor board grievance hearings and by drafting and campaigning for the passage of higher minimum wage laws and more permissive sick leave policies, improving conditions for all workers.

There are a number of laws and policies that increase the marginalization and criminalization of homeless individuals including youth. Many US cities have experienced what has sometimes been referred to as the destruction of the commons, through the policing of public spaces that were designed for the use of all inhabitants. “Quality of life” ordinances have been passed criminalizing activities in the public domain, which both marginalize and criminalize residents who lack permanent housing and rely on public spaces. Homeless individuals are burdened with bench warrants which often lead to their displacement and sometimes arrest.

Laws limiting the right of minors to consent independently to full-time employment in the formal economy cause homeless youth, who must generate needed income and resources, to rely more heavily on informal sector work, both legal and illegal. Informal economies are largely understudied and underestimated markets. These markets affect and are affected by formal economies, and there are many workers, with varying degrees of social marginalization who work in multiple economies, both formal and informal. In an international context, an example was given of how well-meaning efforts to end child labor in the garment manufacturing sector in Bangladesh resulted in driving youth workers further underground and increasing their reliance on more precarious and sometimes hazardous forms of work. Peruvian and Bolivian minors organizing for the improvement of working conditions, have been lobbying, with some success in Bolivia, for the legalization of youth work, which would provide youth workers access to systems of redress for exploitative working conditions. NGO's and scholars addressing the livelihoods of youth workers have cautioned against strict abolitionist approaches in child labor laws, which often result in increased vulnerability and economic precariousness on the part of youth workers and their families.

In the US context, stipulations of state law and/or individual shelter policy requiring notification and consent of parents, guardians, and/or caseworkers make it impossible for homeless young people to consent to their own shelter for significant enough periods of time to become settled in an area and economically self-sustaining. In this way, the laws and policies that govern shelters contribute to the almost continuous displacement and relocation of homeless youth.

Homeless young people, both documented and undocumented, constitute a labor force. Largely because of their limited rights and criminalization as status offenders, and as workers without they are forced to work "off the books" in informal sector work. With no paper trail, they can maintain their autonomy and avoid being returned to settings which they purposely left. In this way, undocumented and documented homeless youth constitute a labor force that is both more resilient and more vulnerable to exploitation.

As emphasized by Joan Vincent, focus should be less on conditions of homelessness and more on ensuring that wages are sufficient to maintain a livelihood which includes stable housing. For the lives of homeless youth to improve in a sustainable way, limits on their right to work need to be reassessed so that they can pursue full-time employment in workplaces protected from exploitation.

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