Place, Age and Identity

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Introduction

This chapter considers how young people and older people use and occupy place to perform their identities, whilst highlighting how both young and older people can experience inclusion and exclusion in different places. In an increasingly globalising world, academic literature, both within and beyond the discipline of human geography has challenged static, homogeneous conceptualisations of place (Dicken, 2010). As a consequence, place becomes a 'process' (Massey, 1999), 'slippery' (Markusen, 1996) and 'relative' (Cele, 2013). In this chapter, we align ourselves with liquid approaches to place, drawing on understandings of place as 'meaning', as opposed to 'location' (Entrikin, 1991), emphasising the role of individuals' emotions, experiences and activities. Moreover, we seek to promote place, not as a passive backdrop to the everyday lives of young and older people, but as integral to social relations (Wiles, 2005).

When young people and place are discussed in the academic literature, it is typically in relation to young people's appropriation of public spaces such as parks and streets (for instance, Cahill, 2000; Gough and French, 2005; Matthews et al., 1999). Conversely, older people tend to be narrowly represented in the literature as confined to their own homes, hospitals, residential or nursing homes (Andrews and Peter, 2006; Schneider et al., 2019; Tanner et al., 2008; Turner et al., 2018; Williams, 2002). This fails to recognise the importance of outdoor spaces (such as parks, allotments and garden centres) and a more diverse range of indoor spaces (including theatres and shopping centres) for older people's identity creation. This chapter argues that young and older people's places are part of an imagined geography that privileges certain places, and thus inadvertently produces distorted notions of inclusion and exclusion. We therefore argue for a broadening of geographies of age that does justice to both young and older people's use of a diverse range of places.

Furthermore, this chapter highlights that there is need for a relational geography of age and place (Hopkins and Pain, 2007). One way of achieving this is to explore intergenerational relationships in different spaces and places. To explain, whilst separate bodies of literature have discussed either young or older people's engagement with places, it is seldom that bodies of literature explore how younger and older people unite in places. Indeed, when intergenerational relationships are considered surrounding place, it is often in terms of conflict (e.g. adults attempting to move young people on from particular places) (Penny and Room, 2012; Matthews et al., 2000). Consequently, we argue that there

is a need for a much greater understanding of 'joint inter-generational' geographies (Kjorholt, 2003: 273); that is, how young and older people utilise spaces in harmony and togetherness. This chapter begins with an overview of literature on young people and place, before moving on to discuss older people and place. Before concluding, the chapter highlights a small body of literature on intergenerational relationships and place. In this section, we tease out what researchers can gain through adopting intergenerational approaches to exploring place. This chapter concludes by contending that there is a need for further research that uncovers the diverse places used by young people, adults and older people, both separately and together.

Young People and Place

This section explores children and young people's experiences in a variety of places. The importance in doing so is clear when considering Kintrea et al.'s (2015: 666) argument that children and young people's aspirations can be 'shaped by place'. Historically, children have been conceptualised in two opposing ways, as devils and angels (Valentine, 1996). Dionysian and Apollonian views of childhood place children in the home. To explain, Dionysian views of childhood present children as troublesome and restrict them to the space of the home through curfews. Apollonian views place emphasis on exclusion from urban spaces, by emphasising rural idyllic childhood. Holloway and Hubbard (2001) support the notion that children's geographies are restricted, arguing that this is often related to assumptions that children are socially incompetent and unable to handle the rigours of navigating public space. As a consequence of the streets being depicted as inherently dangerous, children are largely restricted to occupying the space of the home or officially designated and designed playgrounds. Indeed, today's children have been nicknamed 'cotton-wool kids', and the 'bubble-wrap' generation, and it has been proclaimed that they grow up in walled gardens (Malone, 2007). Parents who seek to protect their children from life's dangers have been labelled 'helicopter parents' (Coburb, 2006) and are accused of preventing their children from taking developmentally important steps towards independence. Young people are thus not gaining the experiential knowledge to become street literate (Cahill, 2000). It should be emphasised that by imposing such restrictions on children's engagements with a variety of places, adult geographies are simultaneously naturalised.

Whilst children are thus notable for their absence from public spaces, teenagers are often considered a ubiquitous presence in public spaces. Indeed, the popular press has the ability to create a 'moral panic' surrounding young people's presence in these realms (Pickard, 2014). The following sensationalist news headlines present young people, or 'hooded youths' as 'folk devils'; that is, as a bad influence on society (Oswell, 1998:36): *Shocking Moment a Hoodie-Wearing Youth throws a Lit Firework into a 'Random' Car on a London Street* (*Daily Mail*, 2018); *Shocking Moment Hooded Thug*

Threatens Children with a Knife Outside School (*The Sun*, 2018); and *Mother Dies after Attack by 'Hoodies' in City Centre* (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2005). Holloway and Hubbard (2001) have proclaimed that the presence of teenagers congregating on street corners, in bus shelters and in parks may constitute both an unconscious and a deliberate contestation of adult space. The authors continue to assert that use of such places may represent teenagers' attempts to define their own ways of socialising and utilising space, free from the adult gaze.

However, for many young people, being together and walking together in streets is solely a gesture of care and responsibility for their friends, in terms of keeping them safe (Horton et al., 2014; Wilkinson, S., 2015). This display of care and concern thus contrast markedly with popular representations of 'anti-social' young people in public places (see Brown, 2013). Nonetheless, it is this 'we-ness' of young people's mobilities - in which the focus of group members is directed inwards towards each other, rather than forming outward connection with others (Milne, 2009: 115) – that some police may find threatening in the 'hanging out' behaviours of young people. Some police consider young people to be 'unacceptable flaneur[s]' (Matthews et al., 2000: 279). Young people often feel stereotypically predefined as potentially deviant (Wilkinson, S., 2015); they believe they are perceived 'as a potential threat to the moral fabric of society and up to no good' (Matthews et al., 1999:1724).

As intimated above, police often seek to move on, and separate young people who are in groups (Wilkinson, S., 2015). Consequently, many young people are not always mobile in public places through their own volition. Their walking practices are often characterised by an experience of always moving on (see Horton et al., 2014); young people are often 'fixed in mobility', much like the young homeless people in Jackson's (2012: 725) study (see chapter by Bissell, this book). Whilst recognising that policing can sometimes constrain the scope for engaging playfully with place (Edensor and Bowdler, 2015), we contend that in some respects policing can enhance playful engagements with place. That is, many young people, rather than expressing frustration at constantly being ejected from parks (Townshend and Roberts, 2013), enjoy the 'geographical game of cat and mouse' (Valentine, 1996: 594). Whilst young people appear to have the ability to actively resist policing, by carving out new places (e.g. marginalised areas of parks) to assert their presence (see Hil and Bessant, 1999), it is important not to romanticise this. By reducing the visibility of young people in outdoor places, displacement may lead to young people occupying more covert and less safe spaces (Pennay and Room, 2012).

As can be seen thus far, there appears to be an imagined geography that privileges young people's use of certain places, such as streets and parks. In order to move beyond the current inadvertently distorted notions of inclusion and exclusion, this chapter now brings to the fore the importance of

other everyday spaces to young people's identity construction. For instance, redressing the focus on public places, Hodkinson and Lincoln (2008) have explored the importance of micro-geographies of the home to young people's identities, with a focus on the personal space of the bedroom. The authors highlight that bedrooms hold extensive significance for children and young people, partly due to the increasing range of technologies within the bedroom. Interestingly, Hodkinson and Lincoln (2008) tease out similarities between the bedroom and virtual places of young people's online journals / blogs, arguing that online journals also function as a form of personal space for their users. Akin to the bedroom, Hodkinson and Lincoln (2008) highlight that the interactive, multi-dimensional place of online journals is safe and personally owned and controlled. Young people utilise such virtual places as part of negotiating their transitions to adulthood, for instance, through exploring identity and generating social networks.

Hollands (1995) likewise discusses the importance of the bedroom for young people, yet in the context of going-out rituals such as finding outfits to wear, listening to music and crafting a positive affective atmosphere prior to entering bars, pubs and clubs. Indeed, Samantha Wilkinson (2017) has similarly highlighted how, due to their familiarity with the micro-geographies of the space of the home, some young people 'socially sculpture' their experiences (Moore, 2013). Put another way, young people can take control over their experiences of lightness and darkness in the home, by staging atmospheres (Bille, 2015), in order to influence their experiences of drunkenness. For example, in Wilkinson's (2017) study, one participant suggested that the practice of lighting candles is 'a tool' (Bille and Sørensen, 2007: 263) to exercise a 'gentle suggestion' (Sumartojo, 2014: 62) to friends that she desired the night ahead to be low-key. The work of both Hollands (1995) and Wilkinson (2017) highlights that places are not fixed and static, but are continually (re)produced and performed.

Another example of moving beyond the privileging of parks and streets in the academic literature, Catherine Wilkinson (2015), using a case study of a youth-led community radio station, KCC Live, based in Knowsley, neighbouring Liverpool, UK, finds that this place comes to feel like home for the young volunteers at the radio station. Writing later, Wilkinson (2017) explores the 'hyperdiversity' of the young people at the radio station. She finds that, although young people who volunteer at the radio station live in a variety of neighbouring towns, some of which are positioned as rivals, at the place of the radio station they are united by their shared interests and put their differences aside. Thus, being in the place of the radio station stimulates the development of relationships across difference and diminishes binary distinctions between 'us' and 'them'.

Another less commonly explored place in the literature, in terms of its importance to young people, is the shopping mall, a place blurring the boundaries between public and private. Matthews *et al*. (2000)

highlight that the shopping mall provides a convenient place for hanging out, but they highlight that this is not unproblematic, with many adults perceiving the public and visible presence of young people as uncomfortable and inappropriate. By locating themselves in shopping malls, Matthews et al. (2000) argue that the spatial hegemony of adulthood is brought into question. That is, for young people, the mall occupies as an important cultural space, going beyond its functional form. However, being present in, and occupying, a place beyond the realm of the home, can create feelings of uncomfortableness for some adults, who may seek to move such young people on. Nonetheless, Matthews et al. (2000) highlight that young people are not simply passive, and can contest attempts to be moved on, in an attempt to protest against their marginality. Another author to explore young people's experiences in shopping malls is Tani (2015). The author analyses hanging out as an interaction between the location and young people. She contends that the space of the shopping mall offers affordances to young people for hanging out, affecting their ways of being. Yet, equally, young people give new meanings to place by hanging out, turning it into more than just a physical setting for hanging out. To explain, the shopping mall has the capacity to shape young people's practices and experiences, and likewise the young people can contribute to the (re)production of place.

Building on the above body of literature, we contend that in order to move beyond the current limited imagined geographies of young people, and thus restrictive ideas of inclusion and exclusion, future research must be conducted into young people's engagement with a diverse range of indoor and outdoor places. Having explored young people and place, this chapter now turns to engage with older people's use of place.

Older People and Place

There is an assumption that as people get older and their mobility decreases, their geographical worlds shrink and they are less likely to be involved in outdoor activities (Wiles et al., 2009). It is thus unsurprising that, as with young people, there appears to be an imagined geography that privileges older people's use of certain places; in this case: home, residential homes, nursing homes or hospitals (Andrews and Peter, 2006; Schneider et al., 2019; Tanner et al., 2008; Turner et al., 2018; and Williams, 2002). In this section, we will explore the importance of home, the wider community, gardens and allotments for older people's identity construction. Moreover, this section will bring to the fore the impact of globalising processes on older people's relationship with place, along with discussing the significance of virtual communities.

Wiles et al. (2012) explore the meaning of the phrase 'aging in place' to older people in New Zealand. This term is used to refer to remaining living in one's own home with some degree of independence, as opposed to in residential care. The authors argue that aging in place has the practical advantage of

the security and safety of home. Home is seen as a refuge or base from which to go out and participate in activities. The authors highlight that aging in place is connected to a sense of identity and this extends beyond the home to the wider community; for instance, the proximity and reliability of health or other services (such as police). Moreover, with a similar focus, Tanner et al. (2008) highlight that home is much more than a physical environment; older people and places are engaged in a reciprocal relationship through which home becomes a place of significant personal meaning. With a focus on recipients of a home modification service, Tanner et al. (2008) explore the impact of modifying the home on older people's experience of home as a place of meaning. The authors contend that home modification can both improve safety and comfort for the older person at home, whilst simultaneously strengthening the home as a place of personal and social meaning. To elaborate, by strengthening home as a place of security, safety, and comfort, the continuation of habitual personal routines and rituals are enabled; it is through such mundane everyday practices that people are linked to their homes, and self-esteem and identity are consequently reinforced. However, the authors note that if older people are not involved in decision-making surrounding home modification, the impact on the meaning of home can be detrimental. Importantly, Wiles et al. (2009) highlight that the home is not a homogenous category; that is, even within the space of the home, older people tend to have particular places that they choose to spend most of their time, due to factors such as comfort and practicality. The importance of particular micro-geographies within the home is an area of research warranting further attention.

Moving beyond the boundaries of the indoor home, the work of Bhatti (2006) and Milligan et al. (2004) is important to discuss. Bhatti contends that whilst the indoor space of the home is now well explored in literature surrounding older people, the garden has been somewhat neglected. Bhatti seeks to redress this, contending that for individuals experiencing changes in later life the garden figures strongly as a place from which to engage the outside world and challenge ageist ideologies. Rather than being a separate sphere to the home, he argues that gardens are an important part of older people's sense of home, and gardening - as a form of bodily action and power - is significant in home making. This relates to the notion that there are a number of psycho-social and health benefits for older people if they continue gardening, particularly being able to control their own physical space (Bhatti, 2006). Moreover, Milligan at el. (2004) draw on research conducted in northern England to examine how communal gardening on allotments and in domestic gardens may contribute to the maintenance of health and wellbeing amongst older people. They illustrate the sense of achievement, satisfaction and pleasure that older people gain from gardening. However, the authors recognise that whilst older people continue to enjoy gardening, the physical shortcomings attached to the aging process means they may increasingly require support to do so. They contend that communal

gardening on allotment sites are inclusive places in which older people benefit from gardening activity in a mutually supportive environment that combats social isolation and contributes to the development of their social networks.

What is not brought to the fore in the above work is the impact of global processes on changing relationships to aging in place. This is important to consider since older people tend to have high levels of attachment to place (Wiles et al., 2009). Indeed, Phillipson (2007) explores how globalisation is creating new social divisions between those who are able to exercise choice over their residential locations, which are consistent with their biographies and life histories, and those who experience marginalisation or who are rejected from their localities. Philippson (2007) asserts that the impact of the global on the local may be of particular significance for older people given the duration of time they may have resided in the same community, along with the extent to which their mobility may at some point be somewhat restricted to defined territorial boundaries. Interestingly, with increased flows and connectedness facilitated between people by globalising processes, Kanayama (2003) explores how older people in Japan are becoming part of virtual communities. The author reveals that both the immediacy and asynchrony of computer-mediated communication helps older people to construct real human relationships in the virtual community, including social connectedness to others, as well as supportive and companionship relationships. Kanayama contends that older people are able to create a sense of greater propinquity by sharing stories and memories. Having explored older people's relationships with both physical and virtual places, this chapter turns to highlight the need for engaging with intergenerational relationships and place.

Intergenerational Relationships and Place

By segregating age categories, rather than combining an interest in different generations, much of the existing literature can be accused of marking sharp distinctions between the 'young' and the 'old' (Hagestad and Uhlenberg, 2005), and thereby failing to consider how different generations occupy and perform in space together. We now turn to offer examples in which intergenerational approaches to age and place can be seen to allow for a more inclusive and holistic view of age and place, without fetishising the social-chronological margins (Hopkins and Pain, 2007).

Interest in harmonious intergenerational relations can be seen in the popular Channel 4 television programme *Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds*. The concept of this programme is that ten elderly volunteers, residents of the St Monica Trust retirement home, UK, are introduced to ten pre-school children for six weeks, as the retirement village opens a nursery where classmates range from three to 102 years old. Every day, the two groups spend time together, undertaking tasks aimed at fostering a relationship between them. The goal is to discover if the physical and mental health of older people may

be improved by such an association. Viewers have been able to witness a widower, who formerly was very fixed and static in the home, sat in his chair, become 'very much alive'. The show demonstrates that the intertwining of the lives, and by extension places, of the young and old has positive consequences. Furthermore, Boyd (2019) brought together young children, young people and the over 65s in an 'intergenerational craft café' in Liverpool, UK. The intergenerational café concept is built on the idea that early childhood is a transformative period when young children start to develop attitudes and skills that can last a lifetime. The author discusses the café as a space for sharing knowledge, as each month, those over 65 display a different sustainable skill, such as sewing, knitting and baking. Boyd highlights that the place of the café offers an arena to challenge stereotypes and stigmas, such as that old people are 'smelly or boring'.

Further, Hopkins et al. (2011) draw on research conducted with young Scottish Christians and their guardians to explore the influence of intergenerationality on their religious identities and practices. The authors contend that intergenerational relations must be understood as part of place-based practices that are central to both the development and experience of young people's religious identities. The authors highlight how transmission in intergenerational religiosity is situated in particular places, such as the home, but also in less obvious places where young people and their parents interact, including car journeys, on the route to church or walks in the countryside. This study is important for moving beyond stereotypical imagined geographies, to highlight the importance of banal, mundane, places for the development of intergenerational relationships. As can be seen, in comparison to studies highlighting generational discreteness, intergenerational studies can provide more nuanced understandings of everyday spatial processes (Hopkins et al., 2011).

Moreover, with a focus on an underexplored space of identity construction, children's huts in Norway, Kjorholt (2003) proposes a 'joint inter-generational' geographies approach. The author contends that children, in order to create a place to belong, need to craft their own special places during middle childhood. Children in Kjorholt's study made clear that their identities as autonomous individuals are constructed through a gendered generational relationship, comprised of males. That is, the young men's social practices in forests highlight continuity between generations of men in terms of how they use the space. As an integrated part of everyday life, knowledge of how to use the place is transmitted between generations. Continuity and integration with adults is thus a fundamental characteristic of the young men's stories. The work of Kjorholt is refreshing for making explicit intergenerational relationships in particular places that signal co-operation and reciprocity across generations, thereby redressing the emphasis in the literature and in the popular press, highlighted previously, on conflictual relationships between generations (Hopkins and Pain, 2007).

Conclusions

To conclude, as we have argued throughout this chapter, places are very important for young and older people to perform their identities. We have highlighted that there are many different experiences in places, and some of these may compete or conflict (Wiles, 2005). Moreover, we have sought to make clear that places are not static and passive, they are relational and active, with the ability to shape, and be shaped by, people's practices and experiences (Valentine, 2001). Nonetheless, this chapter has highlighted that certain places, such as streets and parks, have been prioritised in the academic literature when discussing young people's use of places (Cahill, 2000; Gough and Franch, 2005; Matthews et al., 1999). Meanwhile, particular places, such as the home, care homes, and hospitals have received most attention when older people's relationships with place are discussed (Andrews and Peter, 2006; Schneider et al., 2019; Tanner et al., 2008; Turner et al., 2018; and Williams, 2002). This is not to downplay the importance of such places for young and older people, but to argue that young and older people's places are part of an imagined geography that privileges certain places, and thus inadvertently produce distorted notions of inclusion and exclusion. We thus urge future researchers to bring to the fore young and older people's complex relationships with a diverse range of often-overlooked places.

In this chapter, we have highlighted the importance of understanding how intergenerational relationships are bound up with place. Largely, when intergenerational relationships surrounding place have been explored in the literature and popular press, it has been in relation to conflict between generations (Hopkins and Pain, 2007; Matthews et al., 2000). This chapter develops Kjorholt's (2003) ideas, to argue that there needs to be a much greater understanding of 'joint inter-generational' geographies. That is, we must bring to the fore the ways in which young and older people utilise places in mutual and supportive ways. Put simply, there is a need for further research that uncovers the diverse places used by young people, adults, and older people, both separately and together. Doing so, may go some way towards challenging the stereotypes and stigmatisation associated with particular age groups, and explore alternative ways of being a child, adult, or older person (Hopkins and Pain, 2007).

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