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Youth, Leisure and Home: Space, Place and Identity
Jeunesse, loisir et foyer: espace, lieu et identité
Juventud, ocio y hogar: espacio, lugar e identidad

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Résumé de l'article

Cette étude, à la fois qualitative et quantitative, porte sur les activités de loisir de 265 jeunes adolescentes et adolescents de la Tasmanie, en Australie, et la relation qu'ont ces activités avec leur perception sociale du foyer et du voisinage en tant que lieux privés et publics, cela dans le contexte pratique de leur vie quotidienne. Pendant que ces jeunes se cherchent une raison d'être et une identité dans un monde en constante évolution, dominé par la mondialisation de l'économique et de la technologie, nous examinons le matériel symbolique auquel ils ont accès, socialement et spatialement, à l'aide de méthodes de recherche novatrices comportant l'emploi de déclencheurs visuels et verbaux. Les résultats de l'étude ont permis de constater que les activités que ces jeunes choisissent, bien qu'elles reflètent les tendances mondiales en ce qui concerne l'utilisation des technologies de l'information et de la communication, se concentrent principalement sur l'élaboration de réseaux d'amitié dans leur milieu immédiat, principalement au foyer ou dans le voisinage. Les lieux de loisir qu'ils privilégient font ressortir clairement l'importance et l'idéalisation du foyer « traditionnel » et de l'environnement naturel dans la recherche de lieux privés où il est possible de se retirer et de réfléchir. Les résultats suggèrent également que les adolescents recherchent des espaces privés où ils peuvent s'isoler en sécurité ou mener des activités de groupe avec des amis proches, ceci faisant partie du processus d'affirmation de soi à travers la prise de conscience et la symbolique. Nous examinons l'échantillon des réponses, essentiellement conservatrices et fortement différenciées selon le sexe des répondants, dans le contexte des théories socioculturelles actuelles qui relient espace, lieu et identité.

YOUTH, LEISURE AND HOME: SPACE, PLACE AND IDENTITY

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1.   Introduction

The research discussed here explores the social and spatial contexts in which school age adolescents in rural towns in Tasmania, Australia, experience the global transformations of space, place and time in the late modern world, and the degree to which this impacts upon their leisure activities, their sense of self and of social belonging. We have taken as our starting point the search for personal identity and meaning among young people, who are struggling for their place in the postmodern world, as highlighted by Robertson's (1992) discussion of the universalistic and particularistic aspects of collective identity. Robertson argues that under globalisation "ways of 'doing identity' in any given period and place" though dominant are "certainly not consensual". As the entire world becomes more "compressed and singular", the bases of doing identity are increasingly but problematically "shared", even though "they may at the same time collide" (Robertson, 1992, p. 99). This involves what Robertson calls the tension between "relativism and worldism as both ideologies and experiences" (Robertson, 1992, p. 100). Technological and social change is inevitable, but the shape and direction of change, and individuals' reactions to change, are less easy to predict (Burkeman, 2000, p. 12). This underlines the importance of investigating empirically the differences as well as similarities in leisure activities and lifestyles between urban and rural youth, and different regions and cultures.

Individuals receive the mediated symbolic forms of communication technology in real time and space, as a situated activity influenced by social class and urban or rural residence. A key question therefore is how far the impact of a mediated world has led to sameness of social forms, cultural symbols and meanings and how

far differences, situated in the individual's immediate locale, remain. How do young people cope with "symbolic dislocation in a world where the capacity to experience is no longer linked to the activity of encountering" or to relate mediated experiences " to the practical contexts of everyday lives"? (Thompson, 1995, p. 209.)

The first aim of the research was to map out the practical social and spatial contexts of young people's 'everyday lives' as perceived by them (Lefebvre, 1991a, 1991b), and the leisure activities which they choose to pursue. Secondly, the aim was to examine what insights this might give into the search for identity and 'belonging' in a fast changing world, in which the self is seen as a symbolic project (Giddens, 1990, 1991). Thirdly, what does this tell us about adolescent conformity or resistance to the social constructs of youth and negative youth stereotypes (Roach Anleu, 1995) often presented by the media, and what evidence do we have of the bases of doing identity, which may in Robertson's term 'collide'? (Robertson, 1992.)

Although working within the structuralist tradition, we have moved away from what Thompson calls "an impoverished conception of the self in which the self is the product of an external symbolic system" towards the self as a symbolic project that the individual actively constructs. "It is a project that the individual constructs out of the symbolic materials which are available to him or her, materials which the individual weaves into a coherent account of who he or she is, a narrative of self-identity" (Thompson, 1995, p. 210). The project discussed is the beginning of a much larger, ongoing project, designed to identify some of the symbolic materials and narratives of self-identity available to young people in particular locales, especially in their use of physical and social space. Of course, these symbolic materials are differentially distributed by social class and rural or urban residence as aspects of cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). A central theme of Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction is that the dispositions or 'habitus' which shape individuals' ways of perceiving, acting and communicating are produced by the different social conditions under which they were acquired (Bourdieu, 1986, 1988, 1990). The usage of, and restrictions of, public and private spaces as reflections of social and economic institutions (Habermas, 1989) are also part of the symbolic materials which are available for the construction and presentation of self in everyday life (Goffman, 1958).

Ways in which individuals draw on symbolic resources to construct their sense of self will depend on the material conditions of their lives, their expectations and their evaluations of experiences, as well as their aspirations and ideals. These are of interest to us in our research. We seek to find out how far the symbolic materials needed for self-formation are produced within the context of face-to-face interaction in the immediate physical locale of home and neighbourhood, and how far by interaction with the technologies of electronic communication media which both informs them and at the same time 'constructs' them globally as a consumer group of popular culture (Strinati, 1995). The activities which young people **choose**

to do in their leisure time (their lifestyle choices), rather than activities which adults make them do (such as attend school) may give us some clues. Their perceptions of home and neighbourhood – the locales in which they live their everyday lives – may also give insights into the symbolic materials and ideologies from which they construct a sense of self, in a mediated world of space/time compression (Harvey, 1989).

2.   Adolescent leisure activities in sociospatial context

The pervasive influence of television, computer and mass information/communi-cation technology, with associated pressures to global consumerism and social commodification, have impacted particularly on youth who have been characterised as the vulnerable "casualties of change" (Eckersley, 1988). Young people often feel pressured to perform and to consume in ways which may threaten their sense of individuality, efficacy, and self-worth, in a world which has become more and more competitive (Moon, Meyer and Grau, 1999). All aspects of youth culture in terms of music, entertainment, dress, leisure activities, jargon and aspi-rations for 'celebrity' are affected by the cult of novelty and intranscience since "the major determinant of popular culture is the need for the cultural industries to make a profit" (Strinati, 1995, p. 260).

However, young people are not passive but active recipients of the mediated symbolic forms of mass communication, and they "struggle to relate them to the context and conditions of their own lives" (Thompson, 1995). In this making of meaning, the formative childhood and adolescent experiences of situated space and place (Cooper-Marcus, 1995, p. 22) often trigger deeply held beliefs and cultural values about actual and desired lifestyles. These global and local readings in Robertson's (1992) words, may be 'shared' or may 'collide' in fast changing societies. There is also a cultural as well as personal need to identify with a 'special' territory as 'place' (Read, 1996, p. 125). In Australia, this discourse has particular resonance in relation to somewhat romantic notions of 'bush' and 'country', the loss or decline of rural communities, and the significance of "emotionally contested places" (*ibid.,* p. 125). Current re-assessments of the importance of the relation-ship between 'nature' and 'society' also throw "particular light on the topics of time and space which have so much entered recent social scientific debate" (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998, p. 29). Studies of adult recollections of childhood 'places' and 'landscapes' have shown that inner landscapes and private places are carried from childhood into adulthood and come to represent the experiences and meanings of childhood, and view of the world (Sebba, 1991, p. 397). In Sebba's study, "despite the heterogeneous nature of the participants in terms of sex, age, character and the environments in which they grew up, 96.5% of them indicated the outdoors as the most significant environment in their childhood" (Sebba, 1991, p. 400). Descriptions of physical characteristics of the environment were presented

as 'active factors' in terms of identity creation and not merely as background. Despite the diversity of scenes and activities the adults saw themselves in their recollected places as they "really were".

In studying adolescent leisure activity in spatial context, this research brings together sociocultural theories from different disciplines, especially sociology, psychology and geography (Smith, 1993, p. 95). The ways in which home, neighbourhood and the natural environment are conceptualized and visualised by youth as sites for social and leisure activity are of particular importance (Smith, 1992, p. 107). Conceptions of home, as a 'safe haven' amid the pressures of the postmodern world have been examined by a number of writers (Rybczynski, 1986; Arien, 1993; Cooper-Marcus, 1995). Rybczynski (1986) for instance discusses the contrast between the demands of the 'modern world' and our nostalgic 'traditional' view of lifestyles we want to preserve, and argues that concepts of domestic well-being, emotional and psychological security have not changed much over the centuries, despite technological changes. Douglas (1993) disagrees, discussing significant tensions experienced within the modern home. These result from controls over domestic behaviour and relationships, and represent a 'tyranny' from which it is understandable some young people wish to flee (Douglas, 1993, p. 262). This is heightened by the lengthening years of schooling and economic dependence promoted by government policies which mean that young people are tending to live in the parental home longer than ever before (Winter and Stone, 1999; ABS, 2000). Potential intergenerational tensions make important the achievement of private space and 'hiding places' in both the natural and built environment and "for some children their bedroom becomes a special place for withdrawal and reverie" (Cooper-Marcus, 1995, p. 27).

Space and time to 'think things out' become more important as economic and ecological interdependencies, facilitated by global communication, shrink time and space, so that "we have to learn how to cope with an overwhelming sense of 'compression' in our spatial and temporal worlds" (Harvey, 1989, p. 240). This necessitates the search for "inner space" of psychological and social meaning to regain "perspective, renewal and balance" (Hodgetts and Hodgetts, 1996) in a world characterised by "hurry sickness" (Larsen and Asmussen, 1991). Withdrawing to a space apart, either in the built or natural environment, has been observed by a number of researchers to be one way in which some young people cope with the intensity of change in making meaning (Mathews, Limb and Smith, 1998; McKinney 1998; Skelton and Valentine, 1998; Squires, 1994).

Research has shown that many young people are increasingly concerned about society's future and seem to place less emphasis on individual competition, consumerism and material wealth, and more on community, family, social cooperation and global environmental responsibilities though the level of 'public trust' in societal institutions has fallen dramatically over the last few years (Eisenstadt, 1995). Where young people are losing trust in societal institutions,

they are increasingly placing their trust in 'nature' and in the Earth as a living organism (Gaia) and as a source of identity and belonging (Cooper-Marcus, 1995, p. 5). There is also a growing 'romanticisation' about nature (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998, p. 114) which stresses the healing properties of nature, its wholeness and everlastingness as the opposite of harmful and polluting science and technology (Robertson, 2000). In addition, "nature and the environment are not only spatial but temporal" in a way which contests the capitalistic dominance of "clock time," because nature is seen as "timeless" or slowly changing (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998, p. 134). The importance of the natural environment in the lives of young people (Peet, 1998) and its aesthetic attraction (Tuan, 1989, p. 234) have been confirmed by a large scale survey of the views and visions of young people in the UK based on the 1996 national land use survey (Robertson, 2000; Robertson and Walford, 2000). Young people expressed a strong identification with 'nature' and a genuine concern about the pressures of urban expansion into already diminished wilderness and green spaces – characterized by Lefebvre (1991a) as the 'domination' of nature. The search for private space in a world increasingly represented as 'polluted', and the dream of 'escape' to the 'country', as a space to be 'appropriated' or consumed (Lefebvre, 1991a), are common in many urban cultures and are reflected in choice and location of both youth and adult leisure activities.

The social construction of space and place by youth is complex and many layered. Situated knowledge of home, neighbourhood, schools and related spaces of leisure activities can be both private (such as own bedroom, nature site) and public (such as shopping mall), embracing communal and individual experiences. Reference systems and related beliefs and values are likely to reflect these localized place contexts. As McDowell (1999) argues, the suburb or street where you live and the school you attend are recognized sources of 'life chances' as well as life experiences (p. 106). The openness or closure of opportunity to 'make a life' is bound up in the personal use of space. In addition, the differences experienced in moving from the internal spaces of home to the "public spaces of the street and the park and the public or quasi-public spaces of leisure" (McDowell, 1999, p. 148) impose rules of citizenship and control, placing boundaries around behaviours. Beyond the security of known spaces of home and neighbourhood, such life experiences of public spaces involve tests of social dependence and independence, agency and control. Here space is not the product of life narratives as in relatives' stories, books and the media. Identities formed in the urban landscape spaces of shops and leisure centres complement and alter lifestyle. Added to this expanded place experience, the juxtaposition of global spaces, linking to consumerism and instant communications via public media outlets and personal computers, makes for an extremely complex and confronting youth world, in which choices appear misleadingly infinite.

Space and place thus have physical, social, temporal and experiential dimensions. Public and private spaces and associated individual and communal activities in real time can be identified. What is less clear is the effect of the global time-space

compressed dynamic (Harvey, 1989) on the body referent identity of youth, in the context of their practical 'everyday lives'. Our research seeks a better understanding of these intersecting influences of situated physical, social and spatial knowledge and new global reference systems on young people, using as a perceptual trigger a central social construct – 'home'. The symbolic materials, the habitus, which make up 'home' for a sample of school age youth, and from which, at least in part, they construct their identity, is the starting point for our investigation.

3.   Research Sample and Research Methodology

a)   *Social and geographic context*

The 1998/99 study was conducted in Tasmania, population 471,885, one of Australia's most rural and economically disadvantaged States, with highest rates of unemployment, lowest rates of per capita income, and 37.4% of families whose main form of income is government payments of one sort or another (ABS, 1999; ABS, 2000, p. 111, 141). Despite its poverty and remoteness, the island is far from "peripheral" to processes of globalisation. Exports per capita are second highest in the country; the State's environmentally clean/green image has led to its foods and wines being celebrated, and sold at a premium, worldwide; the University of Tasmania has spearheaded the State's engagement in international research and scholarship, and the island's rich artistic and cultural life was celebrated "with the best from island cultures throughout the world" in the inaugural International Arts Festival "Ten Days on the Island" in March/April 2001 (Archer, 2001, p. 1). Ownership and usage of computers and the Internet is relatively high in Tasmania, as in Australia as a whole. The Tasmanian Department of Education has prioritised IT development, classroom computers and computer competencies among students and teachers. Tasmania's adolescents are therefore daily exposed to global ideas, values and popular culture.

b)   *Survey Sample*

The school 'cluster' sample reflects a cross-section of Tasmanian adolescents in five government high schools in terms of gender, area of residence and socio-economic status. The schools are located in rural and urban areas in the three main regions of the State – south, north and northwest (ABS, 1999). Classes of Year 9 and Year 10 secondary students were selected by each school principal to be invited to participate (on an anonymous basis) in the questionnaire survey, and a smaller group of students was invited to participate in interviews, in each case with parental consent. Analysis of the 256 completed questionnaires and 58 interviews (28 girls, 30 boys) form the basis of findings presented in this paper. The survey sample is broadly representative in terms of residence, gender and age – 100 from the southern region (37.7%), 99 from the northern region (37.4%) and 66 from the north-west

region (24.9%); 52.1% female and 47.9% male; and 47.6% aged 14 years, 51.3% aged 15 years and only 3 students (1.1%) aged 16 years. The sample is, however, biased towards the working class, based on the descriptions given by the students of both their father's and their mother's occupations, with high rates of unemployment – 58% of fathers and 21% of mothers were in manual work, trades and 'blue collar' occupations and 13% of fathers and 35% of mothers were "not in paid employment". Family socio-economic status does not discriminate between student responses, perhaps because the sample is relatively homogeneous. While 59.3% of the sample live in or near the capital Hobart (population in 1996: 189,397), or Launceston (population 95,751), the rest live in small country towns or rural areas, which have the highest rates of unemployment and underemployment.

c)   *Research Methodology and Survey Techniques*

The research gathered qualitative and quantitative data from interviews and a questionnaire survey. The interviews used an innovative technique in which photographs provided visual stimuli to prompt participants' open-ended reflection and discussion. The use of photographs as conceptual and conversation triggers had been successfully piloted previously (Abbott-Chapman and Robertson, 1999). The advantage of this spatial–visual technique was revealed in the perceptual detail observed by interviewees. Photographs evoked their visual memory and enriched the survey and interview process and data obtained. In this study fifty photographs of 'places' around Tasmania, including different styles of houses and types of neighbourhood were carefully selected to reflect socio-economic and lifestyle differences that included some images of outdoor places known to be used by homeless youth for sleeping. Photographs were spread on a table and the student was asked to take time looking at these and to select a photograph of the place "in which you would really like to live if you could"; the place where "you definitely would not like to live" and the place "where you actually might live". The student was then invited to give reasons why, and to describe the sort of imaginary family who might live in the chosen place, what sort of things they might do, especially the children if there were any, and the kind of neighbourhood represented. The interview ended with the student being asked to 'brain storm' and write down at random some words about 'home'. No tape recording was made so as not to intrude in the conversation, but a second researcher observed and made notes.

The questionnaire, which included open-ended and closed choice questions, incorporated ideas and issues arising from the thematic analysis of the interview data, and of the characteristics of the photos chosen, including a semantic differential question on the 'ideal' home using students' most frequently used words to describe the positives and negatives of different homes. The questionnaire was short to retain student interest, and as well as key background variables included questions about 'out of school' activities during the week prior to the survey, how many hours were spent on each activity and where they mainly took place.

Questions were also asked about friends and where they live, plus open-ended questions about the best and worst features of "where you live now", and about the student's "favourite place" and why they liked it. The interpretation and coding of the open-ended questions drew upon the insights gained from the interviews, and from the pilot study.

4.   Summary of Research Findings

a)   *Young People's Favourite Places*

Findings about adolescents' favourite places and associated activities (Table 1) allow us to tap into their preferred socio-spatial world and their place in it, and symbolic materials available to them in the interaction of space, place and identity. The interviews produced responses about chosen places and activities which conflict with popular media images about young people's need for noisy music, non-stop entertainment, activity and stimulation, mainly within urban and usually crowded places – the image associated with popular culture described by Strinati (1995). For respondents largely chose 'local' (particularistic) rather than 'global' (universalistic) places – in Robertson's (1992) words 'relativism' versus 'worldism' – especially those which were familiar to them and which they associated with pleasant leisure activities shared face-to-face with close friends and/or family members, or enjoyed on their own. Survey responses confirmed those from interviews in that the majority chose places and activities in and around the home or in the natural environment near to home, rather than in town centres such as Hobart and Launceston. Only 29% chose locations within urban landscapes in Tasmania, mainland Australia or Overseas. There were no statistically significant differences by age, place of residence, school attended, nor by time lived in current location, but gender differences were highly significant.

TABLE 1

Favourite Place by Gender

Favourite Place	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Home; Rels home	16	12.6	30	21.8	46	17.4
Friends' home	7	5.5	20	14.5	27	10.2
Beach/river	13	10.2	25	18.1	38	14.3
Bush/nature	13	10.2	11	8.0	24	9.1
Town/facilities	9	7.1	13	9.4	22	8.3
Sports/events	12	9.5	3	2.2	15	5.7
I'state; o'seas	27	21.3	13	9.4	40	15.0
Mixture/can't say	30	23.6	23	16.6	53	20.0
Total	**127**	**100.0**	**138**	**100.0**	**265**	**100.0**

While 27.6% of survey respondents chose their own home, their friends' or relatives' home (especially grandparents') as their favourite place and of these some (especially girls) mentioned "my bedroom", a further 23.4% chose a familiar place in the country, by the sea or a river, and 20% gave a mixture of places, usually home and nature combined. Places chosen included recreational places within a short distance of home, or further afield and associated with holidays and leisure activities with family and/or friends. Some were identified as places of great beauty or peacefulness. Particularly emphasized were themes of privacy, familiarity, safety and personal identity along with concepts of calm, comfort and tranquility within a place in which "to be myself" and/or to be with friends. Themes were statistically significant in the analysis of the survey questionnaires. Far more girls than boys mentioned their own home, relatives' homes or friends homes (40.3% compared with 18.1%). Examples of home as a favourite place include::

– *Home – I love home because it is a place I know and can trust. I can be myself there.*

– *Home – it is quiet and comfortable and I just like being there with my family. It has everything I need.*

– *My bedroom – my own place, peaceful, everything's there. My own things around me. I can play my guitar.*

– *My bedroom – because it's quiet and I can think.*

The importance of 'my own things' as treasured symbols of self located within the home and the bedroom emerged in both the interview and survey, along with the notion of privacy and containment. Not all homes offer privacy and peace of course. Four students said their favourite place is the toilet because with noisy brothers and sisters it is the only place they can be on their own! Those who chose a place in "nature" also stressed the opportunity to "get away" and think:

– *Out bush because it's quiet and peaceful. I really like bushwalking with friends.*

– *The beach – because it's relaxing, calm and beautiful.*

– *At the very bottom of our land where there is a great big log and thousands of butterflies – because it is so beautiful and peaceful with no-one around.*

– *Beach – peaceful, nice place to think things out. Makes me feel free and happy.*

– *I love the beach – a great place to get away from everything and relax. To enjoy being with friends.*

– *Under the tree in my backyard – it is cool and quiet and comfortable there and I can sit still for hours and relax.*

Whilst 'open' these spaces in nature are still seen as 'private' and almost 'owned'. The words 'quiet', 'peaceful', 'relaxing', 'worry free' were mentioned repeatedly implying 'escape' or 'refuge' and true recreation, irrespective of number

and closeness of friends. "Natural time is cosmic, completely controlled by the universe and the systematic laws that govern it. The thought of losing it or wasting it is not important because the cycle will return again" (Bammel and Burrus Bammel, 1996, p. 97). Findings suggest some young people are reacting to being over-manipulated, over-organised, and detached by technology from their sense of themselves, and are seeking personal space in order to make meaning of the changes and challenges which surround them.

For the minority (29%) who chose town/city facilities within Tasmania, sporting events taking place in cities elsewhere in Australia, and named cities in Australia and overseas which had been visited or which the student had seen on TV and hoped to visit, visual stimuli were also important. Three times as many boys as girls mentioned cities or city sporting events. Also popular were Disneyland in the USA and SeaWorld on the Australian Gold Coast. Gender differences highlight the more local and 'home centred' focus of the girls, and the sporting and 'wider world' focus of the boys. These findings confirm findings from other international studies that girls tend to favour more private places and boys more public places for their leisure activities and that this is associated with girls' need for safety and familiarity, and with boys' need for action and involvement (Malone, 1998). Detailed analysis of verbal responses to specific photographs and discussion of significant features showed girls were more inclined to 'see' aesthetic and 'social' qualities in housing (102 mentions by girls and 51 by boys) whereas boys more frequently commented on structural and external aspects (307 mentions by boys and 201 by girls) and status distinctions (226 comments by boys and 138 by girls).

b)   *Home and Neighbourhood – Ideal and Reality*

The students' constructs of 'home' and 'neighbourhood' and the social relationships and activities therein, prompted in interviews by the photographs, were confirmed by the answers to the semantic differential question in the questionnaire about their 'ideal' of home. The ideal was often different from their actual living arrangements in terms of both the physical and social space, revealing tensions between aspirations and experience, the ideal and actual self. About two-thirds revealed on the question-naire that they live in a small to medium size detached, single-storey weatherboard or brick veneer home with a small garden or yard. The rest live in semi-detached, terraced houses or flats, about 15% without a garden or yard – a larger proportion than the average for Tasmania, reflecting the predominantly working class sample (ABS, 2000, p. 167). The "ideal" of most is a well-looked-after, friendly place, big and spacious, own bedroom, with a large well-kept garden with pets, light and modern, and well-fenced and gated. Also desirable but not universally stressed were the characteristics of being far from noisy traffic, double storey, in a quiet area and expensive. The preference for double storey homes is fairly general, though less marked than in a previous survey (Abbott-Chapman and Robertson, 1999) and is not typical of the predominant house style in Tasmania. The constructs resulting

from interview discussions of where students would and would not like to live were presented in the questionnaire as binary opposites on a five-point scale, along which students were asked to rank their choice. The mean values obtained are listed in Table 2. The more 'extreme' the mean score, the more closely did the sample as a whole identify with that particular quality. Scores towards the middle show more divergent views.

TABLE 2

Ideal Constructs of Home (Score 1 to 5)
In the order presented in the questionnaire

Construct		Mean Score	Rank
Private (1)	Public (5)	2.4	10
Light (1)	Dark (5)	1.9	6
Crowded (1)	Spacious (5)	4.2	5
Noisy (1)	Quiet (5)	3.6	10
Garden (1)	Overgrown (5)	1.6	3
Old (1)	Modern (5)	4.0	7
Looked After (1)	Run Down (5)	1.2	1
Pets (1)	No Pets (5)	1.7	4
Single Storey (1)	Double Storey (5)	3.7	9
Big (1)	Small (5)	1.7	4
Unfriendly (1)	Friendly (5)	4.8	1
Own Room (1)	Shared Room (5)	1.5	2
Near Traffic (1)	No Traffic (5)	3.8	8
Gates, Fences (1)	Open (5)	1.9	6
Ordinary (1)	Expensive (5)	3.6	10
Done Up (1)	Needs Doing Up (5)	1.6	3

The ambivalence about the home being both public and private is explained by the fact that respondents saw the ideal as "keeping out people you don't want in" but being accessible to friends and neighbours that you like. The stress on the need for defined boundaries, for fences and gates and "windows that strangers can't look in" emerged frequently in interviews and highlight the students' concern for personal safety, especially among girls. The chosen photographs seem to encapsulate, with their surrounding leafy gardens, a "storybook" image rather than a depiction of reality (Abbott-Chapman and Robertson, 1999). Respondents seemed to hold both a traditional and an aspirational view of home and environment as "powerful expressions of self" and the desired self (Cooper-Marcus, 1995, p. 10). The fact that only 9% of the respondents said they would live in the same neighbourhood when they grew up and left home – 46.7% said they would not and 42.2% were unsure – underlines the aspirational overlay and desire for social/spatial mobility (including out of Tasmania).

The actual and ideal household arrangements also reflect contrasting realities. As many as 53 respondents, or 20%, live in a single-parent family, which is twice the Tasmanian rate (ABS, 1994, p. 20). Of these, 40 (15.1%) live with Mum, 7 (2.6%) live with Dad, while 6 students (2.3%) live with no Mum or Dad at home, but with other relatives such as grandparent(s), aunt(s) or uncle(s), and 2.5% of households contain other unrelated adults and children. In discussions about the kind of family which might live in photographed homes selected, and what they might do, nearly all the students stressed the importance of a dad who works in a 'good job', and a mum and dad who both live at home. Some added that in the ideal home 'mum stays at home'. Others added that the mum, dad and children "love being in their house and garden", they would be a "quiet family with good neighbours," and interestingly, "sometimes they like being on their own". Gardens and trees were mentioned often, especially by girls. Girls more often than boys mentioned that it is good to "do up" houses, to "make them how you like them" while the boys were more keen on 'modern' houses that 'don't need doing up' and have the "latest technology", such as solar panels. Respondents' constructs of home as personal space in the main embody feelings of privacy, security and comfort which have been reflected through the ages (Rybczynski, 1986, p. 231), plus size, external appearance and location which are largely a function of class differences (Winter and Stone, 1999). The homes and activities chosen also show the ideal home as a heavily gendered domain, viewed as the prime site of female activities, in a traditional domestic setting.

Places in which respondents would **not** like to live, apart from the arch under a bridge, the park bench or the waste bin where "homeless people might live", were characterised as small, crowded, 'no space', no garden, noisy, near traffic and in a 'bad neighbourhood' with difficult neighbours – the exact opposite of the ideal. Students' comments on, and selection of, photographs similar to where they actually live or probably would live (at some unspecified time) most commonly focussed on the 'ordinariness' of the home, and its being not too big and not too small, but nevertheless a 'comfortable' home. Tables 3 and 4 present findings from the open-ended questions on the questionnaire regarding students' views of the best and worst features of where they currently live (both home and neighbourhood), which support the interview findings.

Under a quarter of respondents gave no response or said that there were 'no best features' of where they live. Of the rest, the quiet and peaceful neighbourhood, open spaces or being near to the countryside or park ranked very highly. Living close to facilities like shops, sports ovals, parks as well as entertainment venues was also highly rated, as was having friends living near and friendly neighbours. A minority mentioned specific features of their home which they liked, particularly where this denoted status, such as size of house or garden. Twice as many boys as girls liked the wide-open spaces and the nearness to countryside, while two and a half times as many girls as boys rated highly the social and community aspects such as having friends living nearby or friendly neighbours.

TABLE 3

Best Feature of Where Live by Gender

Best Feature	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Quiet/peaceful	24	18.9	28	20.3	52	19.6
Close to facilities	23	18.1	27	19.6	50	18.9
Space/near bush	30	23.6	20	14.5	50	18.9
Friends, neighbour	10	7.9	27	19.6	37	14.0
Home features	7	5.5	6	4.3	13	4.9
No response	33	26.0	30	21.7	63	23.7
Total	**127**	**100.0**	**138**	**100.0**	**265**	**100.0**

TABLE 4

Worst Feature of Where Live by Gender

Worst Feature	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Bad' neighbourhood	24	18.9	17	12.3	41	15.5
Far from facilities	11	8.7	20	14.5	31	11.7
No facilities, boring	16	12.6	15	10.9	31	11.7
Not near friends	7	5.5	30	21.7	37	14.9
Far from bush	6	4.7	2	1.5	8	3.0
House features	11	8.7	13	9.4	24	9.0
No response	52	40.9	41	29.7	93	35.0
Total	**127**	**100.0**	**138**	**100.0**	**265**	**100.0**

With regard to worst features of where they live, 35% had nothing to report and indeed some said explicitly that there was nothing 'bad' about where they live. It appears that overall the majority are basically satisfied with where they live even though they admit it does not always approach the 'ideal'. Living in a 'bad', sometimes specifically named, neighbourhood was described as living near people who do not look after their houses and are noisy and antisocial. A few interviewees said they felt hurt by being labelled by where they lived. Other 'worst features' included living far from facilities, especially in the country (a paradox here), and having poor transport; while others, referring to surburban housing estates and housing commission homes, said that there were no recreational facilities for young people which consequently made them 'boring' places to live. The most striking gender difference again relates to the 'community' aspects in that four times as many girls as boys said that the worst feature was not being near their friends. This highlights something suggested by the interviews that the girls far more often discussed the social and community aspects of home and neighbourhood before considering the physical environment, whereas with boys it was the other way round.

c)   *Leisure Activities and Where They Took Place*

Respondents' self reported leisure time activities, and time spent on these during the normal school week previous to the survey are shown in Table 5. The activity categories were derived from responses made in interviews in response to the photographic triggers.

TABLE 5

Hours spent on leisure activities in week before survey and frequency of participation by respondents

Activity in Partic. order	Nil	1-5	6-10	11-15	16 plus	Mean	Rank Hrs
TV	7.6	23.3	18.5	22.2	28.4	11.8	2
Phone	26.1	62.4	8.1	2.2	1.2	3.0	10
Chores	34.3	50.6	9.8	2.8	2.5	3.8	8
Sports	34.8	32.6	16.3	9.0	7.3	7.0	4
Friends	36.8	19.4	13.2	10.7	19.9	14.3	1
Homework	38.2	47.5	11.5	2.8	0.0	3.2	9
Hanging out	44.7	26.1	8.1	9.3	11.8	9.8	3
Computer	45.0	40.7	6.7	3.7	3.9	4.8	6
Shopping	53.1	36.0	7.8	2.0	1.3	4.0	7
Reading	59.3	33.7	5.0	1.1	0.9	3.0	10
Surfing Net	80.6	13.5	2.8	1.7	1.4	5.9	5

The first thing to note about this chart is that the number of hours spent on all the activities is unrealistically high, revealing respondents' problems with estimating time spent but also that many of the activities overlap as we know from interviews. A total of 70.6 mean hours for a week of activities during school term gives an impossible mean of 10 hours per day! Many of the activities take place with friends, including watching TV, playing computer games, playing sports, hanging out, shopping and doing homework. In addition, the chart is as significant for what it portrays of the relative **importance** of the activities in the perceived allocation of 'social' time – rather than in absolute 'clock time'. Bearing this in mind, we can see that the activities with friends in person or by phone, and with family in terms of 'chores' (perhaps a surprise to most parents!), emerge as the most important and time consuming activities rather than use of technology per se, although a substantial proportion of teenagers are spending long hours watching T.V. and videos, as expected. Many of these adolescents live in country towns and rural areas so that helping with household chores might also involve feeding animals, helping with milking and other farm chores (which is why a small percentage seem to be spending, or say they are spending, a large number of hours on these chores).

Only 19.4% of students said they had 'surfed the net' in the previous week but they spent more time doing it – at 5.9 mean hours – than the 40.7% of students who spent 3.0 mean hours reading. A higher percentage of students (55%) spent more time playing computer games than reading (4.8 mean hours) reflecting the influence of globalisation. However, activities such as playing sports of all kinds, organised or informal, also had high participation rates, and we know from interviews how popular sports are – everything from kicking a ball around or playing cricket in the backyard through to competitive team sports organized by schools and communities. That 65% of students said they had played some kind of sport the previous week (mean 7.0 hours) is perhaps not surprising given Australia's record as a sporting nation.

Social activities with friends emerge as the most important and valued. Findings on favourite places, and the best features of where students live confirm this. Being with friends means usually doing one of the activities described above, while "hanging out" means doing 'nothing' (or nothing parents know about) with friends. We know from other research the widespread participation, particularly of older adolescents, in socially and legally prohibited activities such as drinking alcohol, binge drinking, smoking cigarettes and smoking marijuana (Abbott-Chapman and Denholm, 2001) but while this goes on 'in private' and away from parents' view it is quite often in or near the home, rather than places of public entertainment. Not surprisingly, friends were mentioned much more often than family with regard to leisure activities, which reveals the generational segregation which tends to characterise current social activities. Gender differences reveal a male bias towards computer use, Net surfing and sports while a female bias is reflected in phoning friends, household chores and reading. The places where leisure activities took place are identified in Table 6.

Table 6 shows where the activities took place without providing expanded detail of the precise nature of activities and interactions that may have been shared by the young people surveyed. While this may be viewed as a limitation of the study, it was not part of the original design. However, the results confirm the picture painted above of a group of young adolescents who are very home and neighbourhood-centred in their leisure activities. 'Hanging out' with friends, being involved in social activities with friends, or playing sports mainly took place in the local neighbourhood close to home (and **not** in the nearest town centre). Only 8.4% reported 'hanging out' in the centre of town. The students' activities are therefore extremely 'local' and bounded by community of residence, and do not reflect the highly visible activities in town centres of small groups of noisy and disruptive older youth, media reports of which tend to stigmatise all youth unfairly. More boys tend to hang out with friends in public places while more girls tend to meet with friends in private spaces at their home or their friends' home. This is also a reflection of the age group, and their concern for personal safety.

TABLE 6

Place in which leisure activities took place in week before survey

Activity in order of participation	Home	Rels/ Friends	N'hood	Town
TV	94.8	5.2	0.0	0.0
Phone	96.9	3.1	0.0	0.0
Chores	97.5	2.5	0.0	0.0
Sports	17.2	10.0	71.9**	1.0**
Friends	19.0	26.8	45.8	8.4
Homework	97.9	2.1	0.0	0.0
Hanging out	22.4	25.3	42.9	8.8
Computer games	92.3	7.7	0.0	0.0
Shopping	0.0	0.0	39.3	60.7
Reading	98.4	0.0	1.6*	0.0
Surfing net	83.0	9.4	7.6*	0.0

 * Library and Online Centres.

** Sports oval at school or in town (state matches/competitions).

5.   Conclusions and discussion of Findings

This research relates social constructs of 'home' and 'neighbourhood' as private and public spaces, to the leisure activities of a sample of young adolescents in Tasmania, Australia. The study of what young people say they do in their 'spare time' when not at school and the locations in which the activities take place maps these adolescents' socio-spatial worlds, the activities which are important to them, and reveals their local, home and neighbourhood focus. Such findings contrast with critical media comment, and public fears, about the highly 'visible' groups or gangs of young people congregating in urban public places like shops and shopping malls, who need to be 'controlled'. (Abbott-Chapman, 2000). Findings also emphasise the symbolic significance of familiar places in the built and natural environment for youth leisure activities, social network building, and the search for identity and meaning in a fast changing world, dominated by economic and technological globalisation. The search for private places for social interaction and personal renewal in home and neighbourhood, and in the natural world, whether idealised or real, is emphasised.

Young people aged 14 and 15 years, of mainly working-class backgrounds, and living in different regions of Tasmania, challenge some of our assumptions about adolescent uses and constructs of space and place in relation to their leisure activities and their search for identity. Their choices of 'favourite' place, and the reasons for their choices, highlight similar and possibly surprising aspects in both the built and natural environment which they value – that is spaces and places

which are quiet and secure and where they can choose to be solitary or together with chosen friends in activities, or 'non activities' like 'hanging out', and where they "can be myself". The importance of private space whether in the home, neighbourhood or in 'nature' in which to relax and reflect and to make sense of the world has emerged strongly, and leads us to look more deeply at the interrelation of space, place and identity formation in a world characterised by materialism, clock time and "hurry sickness".

Findings both qualitative and quantitative also reveal shared constructs of the idealised home and neighbourhood as private and public spaces, which accentuate space, safety, privacy, identity and status and community, in very 'traditional' ways. The importance of friends and neighbours as accessible and helpful, people with whom one can share social activities, but who are not intrusive or 'noisy' has been stressed. These findings seem to suggest identification with 'traditional' local community values, despite the societal and global changes wrought by technological change, consumerism and commodification, associated with development of attenuated 'virtual' communities. The idealised family also differs from the reality of many of these young people's lives as based on two (married) parents living together with children and pets, with the dad having a good job and the mum often staying at home to look after the children and home. The family enjoy doing things together. The emphasis on space, privacy and the 'traditional' family is at variance with the reality of many adolescents' lives, and this is likely to be productive of stress as the "heightened function between ideal and real, between expected and actual, between an internal model of the world and the world as it is encountered" (Larsen and Asmussen, 1991, p. 22). Recreational activities and spaces which enable the 'escape' from such stresses and anxieties come to have special meaning, as the adolescents' favourite places revealed. Some adolescents also use alcohol and drugs to 'escape' in the same way that some adults do (Abbott-Chapman and Denholm, 2001).

The ideal home is also the site of highly gendered activities, which the actuality of respondents' leisure activities and their location, seems largely to mirror, with the girls being much more home and neighbourhood centred and the boys being more outdoor activity centred and frequenting public spaces. Does this represent a return to modernist or possibly pre-modernist values? In addition, although the majority watch T.V. and videos, and use a home computer, mainly to play computer games, or for some to connect with the wider world through the Internet, this does not seem to have taken the place of maintaining friendships, through spending a lot of time with friends at home, on the phone, in the neighbourhood, playing sport, or just 'hanging around'. Is this peculiar to Tasmania or is there a wider trend that we may observe? Do findings suggest the beginning of a return to ideals of normative securities of traditional homes, families and communities in a postmodern world of apparently unlimited choices and discourses? Would the youth of inner Sydney, London or New York hold the same ideals and

have the same pattern of activities? This research cannot tell us, but it raises important questions for further study in different rural and urban regions as part of a social discourse which relates geography and social theory (Bird *et al.,* 1993).

The symbolic importance of the natural environment in young people's thinking about space has also emerged as an important aspect for further study, as this relates to leisure activities and perceptions of favoured environments. The attraction for young people of international 'Green' movements which emphasise human beings' global environmental responsibilities for the planet, seem associated. According to Lefebvre, leisure spaces now involve the 'appropriation' or consumption of natural phenomena, such as sea, sun and countryside. These are especially visual and for the consumer the visual sense is dominant (Lefebvre, 1991a, p. 75-76). The visual, iconic, even spectacular, qualities of natural places emerge from our data, even when those spaces did not feature as much during the school week (in terms of time spent) as in 'holidays' and 'special times', recollected, remembered and desired. Lefebvre also highlights the fact that with modernity lived time experienced in and through nature disappears and is replaced by clock time (Lefebvre, 1991a, p. 95-96). Our findings suggest however that for a significant proportion of young people time in nature remembered and idealized offers an escape, at least in mind to that 'other' space where time slows down and events take on new meanings. Strong visualisation of private spaces in the home for some have the same sort of effect. This represents the utilisation of visualisation of desired or idealised space, whether in the home or natural environment, as important symbolic resources valued in the construction of a sense of self. Cross-cultural studies in Finland and the U.K. are giving further support for these findings (Rikkinen and Robertson, 1998; Robertson, 2000). Collaboration is invited of colleagues around the world, in order to conduct similar studies in other countries, in both urban and rural regions.

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Joan ABBOTT-CHAPMAN et Margaret ROBERTSON
Jeunesse, loisir et foyer : espace, lieu et identité

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude, à la fois qualitative et quantitative, porte sur les activités de loisir de 265 jeunes adolescentes et adolescents de la Tasmanie, en Australie, et la relation qu'ont ces activités avec leur perception sociale du foyer et du voisinage en tant que lieux privés et publics, cela dans le contexte pratique de leur vie quotidienne. Pendant que ces jeunes se cherchent une raison d'être et une identité dans un monde en constante évolution, dominé par la mondialisation de l'économique et de la technologie, nous examinons le matériel symbolique auquel ils ont accès, socialement et spatialement, à l'aide de méthodes de recherche novatrices comportant l'emploi de déclencheurs visuels et verbaux. Les résultats de l'étude ont permis de constater que les activités que ces jeunes choisissent, bien qu'elles reflètent les tendances mondiales en ce qui concerne l'utilisation des technologies de l'information et de la communication, se concentrent principalement sur l'élaboration de réseaux d'amitié dans leur milieu immédiat, principalement au foyer ou dans le voisinage. Les lieux de loisir qu'ils privilégient font ressortir clairement l'importance et l'idéalisation du foyer « traditionnel » et de l'environnement naturel dans la recherche de lieux privés où il est possible de se retirer et de réfléchir. Les résultats suggèrent également que les adolescents recherchent des espaces privés où ils peuvent s'isoler en sécurité ou mener des activités de groupe avec des amis proches, ceci faisant partie du processus d'affirmation de soi à travers la prise de conscience et la symbolique. Nous examinons l'échantillon des réponses, essentiellement conservatrices et fortement différenciées selon le sexe des répondants, dans le contexte des théories socioculturelles actuelles qui relient espace, lieu et identité.

Joan ABBOTT-CHAPMAN and Margaret ROBERTSON
Youth, leisure and home: Space, place and identity

ABSTRACT

This qualitative and quantitative research investigates the leisure activities of 265 young adolescents in Tasmania, Australia, in relation to their social constructs of home and neighbourhood as private and public spaces, and in the practical contexts of their day to day lives. As these young people search for meaning and identity in a fast changing world dominated by economic and technological globalisation, the symbolic materials available to them both socially and spatially are examined using innovative research methods which involve visual as well as

verbal triggers. Findings show that their chosen activities, while reflecting global trends in the use of information and communication technology, focus mainly on friendship network building in the immediate locale and take place predominantly in home and neighbourhood. Favourite places for leisure pursuits also emphasise the importance and idealisation of the 'traditional' home and of the natural environment in the search for private places in which to withdraw and reflect. Findings also suggest that the adolescents seek private spaces for safe seclusion or group activities with close friends as part of the process of construction of self as a reflexive and symbolic project. The inherently 'conservative' and highly gendered responses of the sample are discussed in the context of current sociocultural theories linking space, place and identity.

Joan ABBOTT-CHAPMAN Y Margaret ROBERTSON
Juventud, ocio y hogar : espacio, lugar e identidad

RESUMEN

Este estudio, a la vez cualitativo y cuantitativo, trata sobre las actividades de diversión de 265 jóvenes adolescentes de ambos sexos de Tasmania, en Australia, y la relación que tienen esas actividades con su percepción social del hogar y de la vecindad en tanto que lugares privados y públicos, todo esto en el contexto práctico de su vida cotidiana. Mientras estos jóvenes buscan una razón de ser y una identidad en un mundo en constante evolución, dominado por la mundialización de la economía y de la tecnología, nosotros examinamos el material simbólico al cual ellos tienen acceso, social y espacialmente, con la ayuda de métodos de investigación innovadores que permiten el empleo de activadores visuales y verbales. Los resultados del estudio han permitido de constatar que las actividades que estos jóvenes escogen, aunque ellas reflejan las tendencias mundiales en lo que concierne a la utilización de las tecnologías de la información y de la comunicación, se enfocan principalmente en la elaboración de redes de amistad en su medio inmediato, principalmente en el hogar o en la vecindad. Los lugares de diversión que ellos privilegian hacen sobresalir claramente la importancia y la idealización del hogar « tradicional » y del medio ambiente natural en la búsqueda de lugares privados donde es posible retirarse y reflexionar. Los resultados sugieren igualmente que los adolescentes buscan espacios privados donde ellos pueden aislarse en seguridad o tener actividades de grupo con amigos cercanos, todo esto forma parte del proceso de construcción de la personalidad como un proyecto reflexivo y simbólico. Nosotros examinamos la muestra de respuestas, esencialmente conservadoras y fuertemente diferenciadas según el sexo de los que respondieron, en el contexto de teorías socioculturales actuales que unen espacio, lugar e identidad.