The Class
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Notes

Introduction

1. In the British school system, this is Year 9. In the US, it would be eighth grade. For US readers, Year 9 describes both the whole cohort and, in addition, a level of schooling.

2. The idea of studying a class was partly inspired by Laurent Cantet’s 2008 award-winning film *Entre les murs* (“Within the walls,” translated as *The Class*; see www.imdb.com/title/tt1068646), which follows a year in the life of an optimistic young teacher of a class of 14- to 15-year-olds as he seeks to recognize the students’ diverse family contexts within the classroom. While his aim is well meaning, namely, to connect sites of knowledge to enable a holistic conception of learning, the result is disruptive and upsetting, leading the school to reassert the traditional separation of home and school.

3. Schools will typically mix up the new intake from their “feeder” primary schools (although often keeping close friends together), and they may distribute them according to a rough ability banding while also ensuring that children with designated special needs are not clustered together.

4. We are aware that this notion of a class varies among educational systems within and across countries. In some countries—for example, Denmark—students may spend all day together as a single class up to and beyond the age of 13. In other countries—for example, the US—students may each traverse an individual path through the day, depending on lesson assignment or subject choices, with no single teacher who knows them well or no shared association with a meaningful group that meets in the “homeroom.” But whatever the system, there is always a balance struck between individual pathways and shared school experiences, and it is this balance that we seek to depict through our focus on one (British) class of students.

5. Recognizing the ubiquitous nature of the digital media environment is to imply not that everyone has access to the Internet but rather that everyone is accessible to the satellite communications that scan, record, and connect all parts of the globe, along with the pervasive economic and political logics that shape those communicative connections and their consequences. See Lievrouw and Livingstone (2006).

6. As the critique of technological determinism makes clear, technologies may only be said to “afford” particular user practices—by shaping behavior or setting the boundary conditions for how a technology can be used. See Bijker et al. (1987), Mansell and Silverstone (1996), MacKenzie and Wajcman (1999), and Hutchby
And Nancy Baym (2015, p. 175) reminds us that “people are adaptive, innovative, and influential in determining what technology is and will become.” Once we stop seeing the digital as a distinct and external influence on society, then we can begin to recognize the mutual coevolution of society and digital technologies over decades or centuries.

7. As William Davies (2014) explains, while definitions and evaluations of neoliberalism vary, the term is widely used to capture the modernizing forces of capitalism, especially in the global North, as they seek to bring institutions that lie outside the market within it, privatizing or regulating them according to an ethical and political vision that promotes competition and considers inequality as necessary. See also Belfiore (2012) and Couldry (2010).

8. Consequently, critics are increasingly concerned that behind the popular rhetoric of connection lies a far-less-emancipatory reality. For example, see Couldry (2010) and van Dijck (2013a). For a critique of neoliberal forces in relation to education, see Loveless and Williamson (2013).

9. As we discuss in chapter 1, Anthony Giddens (1991) introduced the notion of the project of the self, while the psychologist Jerome Bruner (1991) talked of self-making. See also S. Hall (1996) on the importance of pluralizing identities. The extension of our project over a year adds a temporal dimensions, allowing each young person we interviewed to tell and retell his or her story of the self.

10. James Clifford (1983) critiques efforts to create a coherent ethnographic narrative with an overarching viewpoint for reader and author. For ethnography is interpretive, multivocal, and messy, and its readers, now more than ever, cannot and should not be easily controlled.

11. Generations matter too; when we have given talks during the writing of this book, younger and older people view the material from different vantage points, looking back to their own youth, reflecting on how things have changed, or comparing with their own present, and this is central to our concern with the nature of contemporary societal change.

12. In placing the emphasis on the everyday, the ordinary, we have been greatly influenced by what Raymond Williams (1961a) called “the whole way of life,” seeking to capture “the kaleidoscope of daily life,” as Janice Radway put it (1988, p. 366); see also Drotner (1994).

13. This means immersing the researcher (and the reader) in the worldview and daily routines of the researched (see, for example, Duneier et al., 2014) while also recognizing the dialectic between insider and outsider perspectives on the life of a community or cohort (Bohman, 1991).

14. We recognize that the structures of living and learning for our class are in some ways peculiar to the UK at the start of the 21st century, although many of the forces shaping both school and home have a longer history and a wider resonance beyond London. For instance, educational policy was highly contested in the political sphere, with an unusually dynamic secretary of state for education changing policy wholesale at frequent intervals. Educational practice was
affected by the influx of educational technologies, from the Smart Board or use of YouTube at school to personal digital devices designed to bridge school and home and a host of commercial products for homework and out-of-school learning. Yet efforts to create order and solidarity of purpose within the classroom are as old as school itself, the ambition of fostering home-school links has been advocated for some decades, and debates over how the boundaries of education—to deliver curriculum knowledge or to shape “the whole person” as a citizen—have ebbed and flowed in different places at different times.

15. We prefer the more everyday notion of in-between places to the more heavily theorized sociological notions of third spaces or liminality (Mitchell 1995), drawing on the empirical study of childhood places easily overlooked by adults. See, for example, Holloway and Valentine (2000); see also Olwig and Gullov (2003).

Chapter 1. Living and Learning in the Digital Age

1. Technically, “the digital” refers to the process of encoding information in discrete symbol systems and transmitting it across connected switching devices. But the social significance of the digital is much debated. It is vital to understand how it is imagined and used, as this embeds particular values, political interests, and normative practices in emerging communication infrastructures. See Mansell (2012).

2. Other changes affecting childhood exacerbate these anxieties—the recognition of children’s rights, growth in leisure time, emergence of youth subcultures, huge growth of marketing to children and young people, and increasing restrictions on children’s freedom of movement and opportunities to play. See Cunningham (2006) and Children’s Society (2013).


4. For Jürgen Habermas, as Outhwaite (1994, p. 86) explains, the lifeworld “is the ‘horizon’ within which human beings refer to items in the objective, subjective and normative worlds.” The concept thus captures the mutuality of individual and environment, thereby avoiding what Habermas sees as the reductionism of phenomenological approaches that prioritize the intersubjective realm of interpretation over wider societal structures.

5. While the popular sense of such claims is too simple, changes or even fragmentation in identities are discussed by Anthias (2002), O. Jones (2012), and van Zoonen (2013).

6. Coontz (1997), Osgerby (1998). This stability meant that when television first entered family life, a set of practices and concerns became established that, in retrospect, were particular to their times. Yet these have cast a long shadow of expectations over today’s diversified domestic media ecologies (see Livingstone, 2009b).

7. Late modernity, the most recent stage of change in Western societies since the Industrial Revolution, is shaped by the longer history of modernity including the rise of capitalism and the onward flows (and counter- or cross-flows) of
globalization—as seen in the often conflict-ridden spread of Western democratic ideals and in the consolidation of political and commercial forms of power around the world. Although the theorists of late modernity are often pessimistic about the future, they are not determinists or fatalists, and questions of agency run through many of their writings. Late modernity has also been called “second” or “reflexive” or “liquid” modernity. We do not address the differences among these labels but would point toward Beck et al. (1995), Castells (1996), Tomlinson (1999), and Jessop (2002).

8. With the notion of a “sensitising concept,” Blumer (1954, p. 7) pointed out how concepts in the social sciences often lack a clear-cut definition but instead give us “a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances,” sensitizing the researcher about where to look rather than defining precisely what exists a priori.


11. Lash (2002) theorizes this in terms of “disorganised capitalism,” arguing that modern institutions (the school, the family, community, etc.) have lost their purpose and significance. We wonder what this means for generational divides—when structures still meaningful to parents and teachers are seen as mere legacy structures by young people.

12. Indeed, media scholars are beginning to conceptualize a process of “mediatization” that parallels the other core processes of modernity (globalization, individualization, commercialization); see Krotz (2007) and Lundby (2014).


16. Ibid., p. xvi.

17. As Bauman puts it, pessimistically, “The other side of individualization seems to be the corrosion and slow disintegration of citizenship. . . . The concerns and pre-occupations of individuals qua individuals fill the public space. . . . ‘Public issues’ which resist such reduction [to the individual concern] become all but incomprehensible” (ibid., p. xviii).


19. Ibid., p. 11.


24. Hence, the postwar period, especially since the 1970s, has seen more mothers in paid employment, older parents, lower birthrates and so fewer siblings per child, more children born to single parents and to unmarried parents, more marriages ending in divorce, and more children brought up in reconstituted families. See Hill and Tisdall (1997) and Chambers (2012).
25. Hagell et al. (2013); see also Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2014) and Nayak (2003).
26. Hagell (2012). The proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds in education or training rose from two-thirds in 1985 to over four-fifths in 2011 (see also Hagell et al., 2013).
29. See Livingstone (2002).
30. For example, poorer children can rely on less social capital to generate supportive peer relations and a sense of belonging at school, for instance, than better-off children can (see Stevens et al., 2007).
31. Hagell (2012). As Cribb et al. (2013, p. 6) observe, “there are now much larger gaps between the richest and poorest individuals in families with children,” as the result of a decades-long rise in income inequality that today’s parents have lived through, just as they have lived through rising school achievement pressures and future job uncertainties. For instance, the social gap is widening in educational attainment at A-level and access to top universities, as well as among youth reoffending rates (see SMCP Commission, 2013).
32. Hagell et al. (2013).
33. UNICEF Office of Research (2013). This figure is, however, lower than in many southern and eastern European countries and three times lower than the figure for the US. Ethnicity and deprivation are strongly linked; see Jivraj and Khan (2013).
34. As Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2002) observe, even social reproduction is no longer predictable, having become precarious. See also Ito et al. (2013). The Timescapes qualitative study of parenting found that the more affluent the parents, the more uncertain and worried they were about how to anticipate and plan for their children’s employment futures. It seemed they felt the pressure, and the fear of failure, if their children could not sustain their own improvement in circumstances (see Backett-Milburn et al., 2011).
35. Edwards and Weller (2011); see also Arnett (2011) on the notion of “emerging adulthood” as a new life stage.
37. Hagell et al. (2013) show a sharp rise in all these indicators from 2000 to 2011. See also SMCP Commission (2013). For equivalent figures for the US, see Ito et al. (2013).
39. As many scholars have observed, rather than calling young people apathetic, it seems more appropriate to recognize that they struggle to find political efficacy (the sense that they can bring about change) in a world that pays them little attention. See Couldry et al. (2010).
40. Such beliefs are borne out by the evidence (Putnam, 2015).
41. Social Attitudes of Young People Community of Interest (2014).
43. We note that UK surveys find that teenagers are generally satisfied with their lives, especially with their friends and family, and four in five are also relatively

44. JWT (2012). See also Chamberlain et al. (2010), whose large national survey of students in Years 6, 8, and 10 found that 51% worried about schoolwork and exams, followed by career choice, friendships, and physical appearance. Currie et al. (2008) found that half of 13-year-olds felt pressurized by schoolwork. See also Hagell, Sandberg, et al. (2012). Whether the level of worry is new is contested: psychologists report that anxiety, depression, and emotional problems among adolescents have risen over the past 30 years (Collishaw, 2012), but the increase has halted in the past decade, along with a steady decline over decades in risk behaviors—smoking, drinking, drugs, and crime (Children's Society, 2013). Still, an estimated one in ten children and young people is affected by mental health difficulties of one kind or another, and a similar proportion says in surveys that they feel they cannot cope with day-to-day life (see Nuffield Foundation, 2012).

45. Hagell and Witherspoon (2012, p. 167). Looked at cross-nationally, Britain is a little below average on subjective well-being (children's self-reported happiness and life satisfaction), although it is far above the US; see Bradshaw et al. (2013). Over the first decade of the 21st century, the situation for Britain's children has slightly improved across a range of indicators (while it has worsened in the US, Canada, and several European countries); see Martorano et al. (2013). It is interesting to note, given our focus on 13- to 14-year-olds, that the Children's Society's Good Childhood Report 2013 (2013) found measures of life satisfaction and well-being to decline over the ages from eight to 15 but then rise again after the age of 16.


49. Schuller et al. (2004).

50. See, for example, Nussbaum (2012).


52. See www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa. At the same time, nonacademic outcomes built on experience and “craft” have also been undervalued despite powerful and pertinent social and economic arguments. See also Sennett (2008), J. Rose (2001), and M. Rose (2009).


54. Indeed, such contradictions may have always been present, as Raymond Williams suggested in his account of social and cultural life in the 20th century (1961a).


58. J. Thompson (2011, p. 61). We hesitate to use Homi Bhabha’s notion of a “third space” in this discussion insofar as this refers to the dialectical or transcendent resolution to conflicts among other places or relationships (Mitchell, 1995). Nonetheless, it is intriguing that Gutiérrez (2008) uses this concept in combination with Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development to theorize productive interactionally constituted learning spaces.

59. Social science has come to recognize the coconstructed nature of the spaces, times, and social relations of childhood, since young people’s imaginings, actions, and reactions shape their interactions with others and, thereby, the social contexts in which they live (Corsaro, 1997; Qvortrup, 1995; Holloway and Valentine, 2000; James et al., 1998; James, 2013).

60. See, for example, the sections on “human beings and human becomings” in Lee (2001) and James et al. (1998). As Qvortrup (1995) has argued powerfully, Western societies have a deeply ambivalent, even paradoxical, approach to children: they assert a positive view of them while simultaneously devaluing or neglecting their needs and experiences; children are disenfranchised within the public sphere yet castigated for being apathetic; they are subject to increasing surveillance yet seen as subversive; their imagination is valued, yet their lives are increasingly controlled; their protection is widely promoted, yet society allows many children to encounter serious risk; and so on.

61. Willett et al. (2013); see also Goetz et al. (2005).

62. See Corsaro (1997), Holloway and Valentine (2000), and Olwig and Gullov (2003). See also Livingstone (2002), on children’s “bedroom culture,” an account that draws on the “domestication” tradition of theorizing family, home, and media. See also Morley and Silverstone (1990), Bakardjieva (2005), and Silverstone (2006).

63. See, for example, Scollon and Scollon (2003) and Leander and Sheehy (2004).


65. The particular sites that wax and wane in popularity with the young continue to change. At the time of this writing, UK national surveys show Facebook to be by far the dominant site (see Lilley and Ball, 2013; and Ofcom, 2014), with over a billion users worldwide and a near monopoly among young people in the global North (see Lenhart, 2015, for US findings). While Facebook and MySpace are social network sites, Twitter and Tumblr are defined as microblogging sites, with the relative emphasis on short text messages and visual images, respectively. Generally, although not always, social network sites prioritize communication among people who know each other or who share a social circle (“friends”), while microblogging sites prioritize sharing content anonymously (among “followers”).


70. d. boyd (2014).
72. Bauman (2002, p. xv). This is conceptually distinct from “commonsense” notions of identity, which suggest a stable, continuous, persistent notion of personhood.
73. S. Hall (1996). See also Shotter and Gergen (1988) and Gergen (2009). As van Zoonen (2013) argues, because identity is not what we are but what we do, it is multivocal and context dependent; see also Somerville’s (2008, p. 31) account of how second-generation migrant youth particularly “describe a fluidity of identities, and a myriad of ways in which their identities are expressed as a direct result of shifting ethnic and national contexts.”
75. See de Certeau (1984). In other words, in common with others who lack institutional or collective power, children and young people exercise such power as they possess through seemingly unimportant everyday actions that may reinforce a desired adult response or rework an apparently fixed arrangement or renegotiate the meaning of a practice in a way that better suits their interests.
78. Willis (1978).
80. Our approach is influenced by studies of schooling conducted in the Foucauldian tradition that examine how the interplay of forces in social environments shapes how individuals, in turn, shape themselves. See, for example, Sullivan (1994), N. Rose (1999), and Baker and Heyning (2004). As Sullivan explains, by this self-shaping or care of the self (or what N. Rose, 1999, calls “governing the soul”), Foucault (1988) meant to advocate a self-scripting of one’s life, positioned not within a hierarchical society but rather within a complex society with multiple and distributed centers of power—we might now call this a network society in which people are more connected, not withdrawn. In this society, the cultivation of the self is defined not by ideology but by a new “stylistics of existence” (Sullivan, 1994, p. 8).
81. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), Bernstein (1973); see also Ball (2013) and Wortham (2005).
83. Henderson et al. (2012).
84. Stanton Wortham’s analysis of “learner identity” parallels this analysis by focusing on school. His yearlong study of a class of US middle schoolers showed that forms of social identification (gender, social class, ethnicity, etc.) are inextricably part and parcel of academic learning, with the social self constantly referred to or called on in situations that are ostensibly purely concerned with the curriculum. Drawing on Jay Lemke’s work on time scales (2000), Wortham (2005) showed how this occurred by tracking the to-and-fro between local, short, and
longer-term forms of identification across the hour of a lesson and the full length of the academic year. Early UK studies of similar depth and influence include Hargreaves (1967) and Rutter et al. (1979), and for a recent US study, see Putnam (2015).


88. As Giddens adds, “disembedding mechanisms depend on two conditions: the evacuation of the traditional or customary content of local contexts of action, and the reorganizing of social relations across broad time-space bands” (1995, p. 85). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim agree, defining “individualization” as the gradual process by which people’s everyday lives have become partially detached (or “disembedded” or even freed) from traditional structures of gender, social class, nationality, and religion: “‘individualization’ means disembedding without reembedding” in new traditions (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. xxii). Chambers (2013) traces the consequences for friendship, which, she argues, we come to rely on ever more for intimacy and meaningful ties to others.


90. Cultural geographers have argued that we have reconfigured the familiar and secure neighborhoods and places of our lives within new global flows and migrations; see Massey (2005).

91. For example, see Atkinson (2007), Brannen and Nilsen (2005), Elliott (2002), and Woodman (2009). Identifying the relevant evidence may not lead to clear conclusions either way, however. For example, in reviewing 30 years of annual surveys from 1983 to 2013, the British Social Attitudes report tracks a series of shifts among adults that show, as predicted by the thesis of individualization, that they have become progressively less attached to traditional religious and political affiliations; but the findings for social class identification are more equivocal (see Park et al., 2013). Predelli and Cebulla’s (2011) interviews with adults and their parents offer more support for Beck’s thesis, showing that individualization, future uncertainty, and the choice biography are more salient to and more discussed by the younger than the older generation.

92. On the pernicious effects of rising social inequality, see Wilkinson and Pickett (2010), Piketty (2014), and Dorling (2011).


94. Ibid., p. 39.


96. See Savage (2010) and Bennett et al. (2009). One outcome is the identification of further segments of society—not only the underclass but also the service class, the “precariat” or “hipsters,” or the new elite, and so forth.

97. For recent debates in the UK context, see Atkinson (2007), Bennett et al. (2009), O. Jones (2012), Biressi and Nunn (2013), and Skeggs (2013).
98. Brown et al. (2011). There is little evidence of change in social mobility, although this varies by country. UK government data show that social mobility reduced considerably (and inequality rose) during the 1980s but has neither improved nor worsened since (Cribb et al., 2013; Kennedy, 2010). See also Hills et al. (2010) for a major review showing that while differences across social groups remain substantial, there are also considerable differences in income and employment within groups (e.g., by gender, ethnicity, or class). Corak (2013) shows that mobility is lower in the US than in parts of Europe and Canada. Piketty (2014) concurs that the 20th century saw little social mobility, with even less in the US than in Europe; he particularly contests the belief in “American exceptionalism” among US sociologists that they alone in the West have high social mobility (p. 484). See also Putnam (2015).


100. Bernstein (1990). Bernstein writes further of the “pedagogicization” of society, referring to the spread of school-like forms of educational organization, knowledge, and subjectivity beyond the boundaries of traditional learning institutions, notably into the home. For a discussion of the use of pedagogy in relation to informal learning in the home, see Bonal and Rambla (2003) and Buckingham and Sefton-Green (2004).

101. Buckingham et al. (2001); see also McLaughlin (1996).


103. Hey (2005). The notion of the child as a “production” by middle-class parents is theorized further by Skelton and Francis (2012) as “the renaissance child,” whose “all-rounder” curriculum vitae will help him or her to win; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) are perhaps more sympathetic in attributing such parental efforts to the desire to “re-enchant” their own lives. See also Jenks (1996, p. 23), who argues that “children have become both the testing ground for the necessity of independence in the constitution of human subjectivity but also the symbolic refuse of the desirability of trust, dependency and care in human relations.” Demerath’s (2009) study of how school can become complicit in this process of seeking advantage is relevant here too.

104. Meanwhile, Lareau suggests that in working-class families, “the cultural logic of child rearing at home is out of synch with the standards of institutions” (2011, p. 3), and thus “social class dynamics are woven into the texture and rhythm of children and parents’ daily lives” (p. 236). Such processes result in social reproduction of dis/advantage, the opposite of that idealistic vision of a constructive and fair relation between home and school. For a somewhat different view, see Clark (2013).

105. We are especially thinking of the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984), along with the many scholars following in his tradition who question how far social class relations are changing and in what ways. Although they have effectively articulated the subtle ways by which institutions (how they are organized, the languages they use, and the habits and procedures they follow) interact with individuals so as
to reproduce rather than alter social hierarchies of power, they have tended to envisage a rather stable society with clearly stratified occupations and recognized hierarchies of taste and wealth.


Chapter 2. A Year of Fieldwork

1. Up to that point in the term, our observations had been rather general, focusing on the class as a whole rather than on individuals. This was, then, a crucial moment for our project: we requested formal permission to interview the students individually at school and explained that after Christmas we would further request permission to visit the family at home.

2. This also affected their power relations with us, with these young people mediating our efforts to gain parental consent for our research. As things turned out, however, virtually all the parents deferred to their child when deciding whether to allow us to visit them at home. It even seemed that the young people had already constructed us as advocates for them in some way, although, as it later emerged, parents appreciated the opportunity that the research provided to reflect on their childrearing practices and challenges.

3. The saz is a stringed instrument used in Turkish and Near Eastern music; see chapter 9.

4. Case studies triangulate multiple methods to offer a rich account of a phenomenon, with full awareness of its wider implications; see Flick (2014) and Yin (2014). Linking case studies to reflexive social science in a way that we are sympathetic to, Michael Burawoy (1998, p. 30) calls for research that takes “context and situation as its point of departure . . . and seeks to reduce the effects of power—domination, silencing, objectification, and normalisation.” Specific methodological considerations apply when conducting research with children and youth, as argued by Heath et al. (2009), Graue and Walsh (1998), and Greig and Taylor (1999).

5. We draw in particular on two ethnographic traditions: ethnographies of childhood and of school life. Among ethnographies of childhood and family, we were most influenced by Bakardjieva (2005), Seiter (2005), MacLeod (2009), Pugh (2009), Lareau (2011), Henderson et al. (2012), Clark (2013), and Ochs and Kemer-Sadlik (2013). Among school-based ethnographies, we would note Hargreaves (1967), Rutter et al. (1979), Ball (1981), Hammersley and Woods (1984), Eckert (1989), Pollard and Filer (1999), Bettie (2003), Pope (2003), and Davidson (2011).


7. Methods for tracking such spaces need to be attentive to young people's own perspectives. In a recent study, Thornham and Myers (2012) gave teenagers digital cameras to video the architecture of their school as they saw it, revealing not only its surveillant design but also their tactics of reappropriation; this construes space “less as a finite and separate entity that produces behaviour, but more as a fluid, continual process of negotiation, that is both lived and imagined” (p. 797).
9. Horst and Miller (2012, p. 3) propose several useful research principles to guide ethnographic research in the digital age. Most important is the emphasis on sensitivity to the ways in which the digital “intensifies the dialectical nature of culture” by materially altering everyday processes of mediation (but not increasing them, since culture is always, necessarily, mediated). They further advocate research that is holistic yet not homogenizing and that recognizes the indeterminacies and ambivalence of everyday life.

10. UK government statistics list schools according to their size (school enrollment), proportion of children with educational special needs, proportion of families whose lack of resources qualify the student for free school meals, the percentage of students who achieve five employer-recognized qualifications at age 16 (A–C grades at GCSE), whether the school has a sixth form (Years 12 and 13), and whether it has a specialism (usually in technology, science, languages, sports, or performing arts). Hence, we took all these factors into account.

11. There were also differences in our intellectual orientation. It was more evident to Julian that school-based research is often vague about domestic and familial practices at home, while Sonia became increasingly surprised that research based at home says little about the fact that children spend much of their lives at school.

12. Indeed, after we began our fieldwork, the school was upgraded by the government’s inspection body, Ofsted, from “good” to “outstanding.”

13. Measuring distances by walking instead of driving time is more typical of European than American suburbs, as Fishman (1987) insightfully discusses. This is, of course, especially important for children.

14. Vertovec (2007) has coined the term “super-diversity” to capture the complexity of cultural identities that, more than ever before, characterize late modern societies. See also Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2014) on the notion of “world families.” We try to avoid marking out minority ethnic children as “other,” as cautioned by Gutiérrez’s critique of “white innocence” (2005–2006).

15. This is a common feature in neighborhoods that have female single-sex schools, allowing parents to opt to send their girls to an all-girl school and so leaving more boys in coeducational schools.

16. School uniforms are common in England—with its tradition of fee-paying private schools—unlike in many other countries around the world where a uniform is seen as an infringement of students’ rights. In recent decades, successive governments have advocated a return to school uniforms as a way of marking a particular kind of discipline (despite the lack of scholarly evidence) and of stressing a return to the kind of rigor lost in the allegedly “permissive” sixties.

17. The computer-controlled electronic “blackboard” (or interactive whiteboard) displayed at the front of each classroom.

18. Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills) is the government body that carries out inspections to ensure compliance, with standards for English and Welsh schools (see www.ofsted.gov.uk/about-us).
19. For a handful of the students, the end of school registration was followed by detention, in which they were kept behind for minor infractions.

20. In this context, it is worth noting the considerable decline in the proportion of British children permitted to travel to school independently in recent decades (along with similar declines in unsupervised outdoor play and weekend travel without a parent); see Shaw et al. (2013).

21. Throughout the book, we have lightly edited the verbatim quotations from young people, pruning some of the repeated terms such as “like” and “sort of.” Abby, for instance, told us, “Sometimes I hang out with my friends, like, and then or, like, and then when I get home, I’ll go, like, on my phone, or, like, on, like, the Internet and stuff like that or maybe go out.” These terms become intrusive when written, even though they go largely unnoticed when spoken.

22. We met a few challenges: parents who spoke little English or who confused us with the teachers or who insisted on listening to the interview with their child or even answering for them. There were some practical difficulties: missed appointments, broken laptops, or nonworking internet connections. Sometimes children checked that we would not tell parents what they said before revealing something. A few bedrooms were tidied, instruments practiced, or internet histories cleared before we arrived. And we found that some young people texted each other our questions while we traveled from one house to the next.

23. See the appendix for the adoption of digital devices by teenagers in the UK generally and in the class in particular.

24. Minecraft is a construction game often played collaboratively; see https://minecraft.net/.

25. This is an indication that Dom was in the vanguard, the microblogging site Twitter being only recently popular among UK youth at the time; see Mascheroni and Olafsson (2014); for US findings, see Hargittai and Litt (2011).

26. Weekends also offered another opportunity for young people and their parents to fit in extracurricular activities. Giselle told us, “Weekends, I have piano and tennis lessons, so I do that. And on the weekend, I—we normally—me and my friends normally go out, like, maybe take the bus to [the mall].” Salma, too, was busy, with Saturdays spent swimming, horse riding, and trampolining, all of which she was confident in.

27. Undoubtedly, there was a link between social practices on- and offline. Just as multitasking homework with Facebook allowed the young people to mix learning and peer identities in a way that suited them, playing computer games together depended on parental approaches. For example, for Shane, playing computer games with friends meant getting together over pizza at his house, while for Nick, whose mother did not want a bunch of large, loud teenage boys in her home, computer games were primarily an online experience.

28. Livingstone (2002), d. boyd (2014). For example, Lydia and her best friend enjoyed the “teen scene” in a local leisure facility most Saturday evenings. Initially, Lydia’s mother was worried about this, and so she checked it out, saying,
“Twenty-five years ago, it was like pretty rough up there on a Friday and Saturday night. It was just sort of groups of youths hanging round trying to get the girls. And I was thinking, ‘No, you’re not going to start that; you’re too young.” But, actually, we’ve both been up there, and it’s absolutely fine. There’s little ones and there’s grown-ups, and there’s teenagers up there as well, but it’s all pretty—it’s all right.”

29. See, for example, Carrington (2006).

30. There was an opportunity at the start of the following year to correct choices that did not turn out as anticipated.

31. This film was designed to mirror the BBC’s *Britain in a Day* and even director Ridley Scott’s *Life in a Day*. See www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00kq25p and www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2k4nIARvS8.

32. Since the film could not be posted online for reasons of student privacy, this was one of many small examples we witnessed of how fears about the risks of digital media worked to constrain the opportunities that such media could bring in practice (see chapter 6).

33. Connections among the diaspora meant that summer holiday destinations were shaped by where relatives lived, and again, social class stratified experiences. Salma had fun with cousins, freedom, and sunshine in Lahore. Jenna went to Kenya but expressed little pleasure in this. Adriana and Gideon went frequently to see grandparents in Spain, as did Adam in Germany and Nick in Sweden. Two of the poorer children—Lydia and Joel—did not go on holiday at all in the summer before our exit interviews. It seemed that being part of an immigrant family ensured that young people from poorer homes got to travel abroad, but certainly the wealthier families traveled more.

34. As Neale and Flowerdew (2003, p. 189) observe, only through longitudinal qualitative methods can one grasp “the time and texture—or the interplay of the temporal and cultural dimensions of social life”—that are so crucial to understanding “the process of ‘growing up’.”

35. We have omitted some of the identifying details or events that could break our promise of confidentiality or anonymity, even though they might contribute to the overall picture.

36. Or, as Pink and Mackley put it (2013), while life is hardly centered on media, it is saturated with media, making media banal and yet crucial to the contemporary feeling and structure of life at “home.” See also Lievrouw (2004).

Chapter 3. Networks and Social Worlds

1. Ito et al. (2013). Yet the countervailing view is also strong—that society is becoming more fragmented, with individuals more isolated from their communities and disembedded from traditional ways of life, left only with the weak ties typical of the individualized network society. See Granovetter (1983), van Dijk (2012).

3. Furthermore, today’s conceptions of social network analysis draw heavily on the sociometry of the 1950s. One value of that earlier analysis is that social network analysis respects but also goes beyond the particularity of each individual’s experience, since a network encompasses multiple vantage points from which to view links among participants. Significantly, although networks are built through human action, no individual may fully grasp the larger network within which his or her life is lived. For example, individuals may or may not recognize their position in the network (e.g., near the center or on the edge), and they may not recognize the network effects that transcend the intention of any individual (e.g., how networks sustain forms of social capital or social exclusion). See Marcus et al. (2011).

4. See the appendix for an account of ethnicity in the British context. See also Williamson (2004). Thorne (1994) remains a primary source regarding the development of gendered identities, and we draw especially on her insight that the expression of gender is complex, sometimes surprising or contradictory, and not always even salient, although at other times it is central to children’s talk and play.


6. The use of Facebook was thoroughly embedded in the young people’s daily routine. Fesse logged on every day, Alice never logged off, and Abby turned it on as soon as she woke up, to “just, like, check what’s, like, happening on Facebook or something or, like, talk to people.” For Giselle, it was important when she came home from school, to coordinate her social life: “If I’m organizing an event or . . . quite often there are group chats.”

7. As George (2007, p. 127) observes, “Black girls . . . carry the dual yoke of sexism and racism,” so there is much to encourage their banding together, although they may be very different as individuals.

8. When the survey was done, Deyan had just arrived, so he seems isolated, although he quickly built links with Sergei, Sedat, Mark, and others (and he shared a home language with Sergei and Sedat). Sergei’s parents chose not to participate in our project, so we did not include him.

9. Pat ball is a playground game that involves knocking a tennis ball against a wall with the hand (as opposed to soccer).

10. Sebastian was eloquent about the difficulty of negotiating potentially hurtful social interactions: “My parents actually told me that when I went to the secondary school, they said everyone’s going to be really cruel. And I try not to be cruel, but sometimes if someone’s nosey, you’ll just be mean to them.”


12. From their school grades, it seems that the friendship groupings were not necessarily homogeneous by grades, although Sara and Giselle both got high grades. The mix of grades within the other groupings is striking. It should also be noted that the class was divided for their academic work, so friends from the class may not have been pursuing the same homework tasks.
13. The question “Who do you spend time with online?” more or less mirrors the pattern of chatting via digital technologies, although the network is a little less connected.

14. The boys on the periphery included Joel, Sergei, and the new boy Deyan, although Deyan was building connections fast, with nearly 400 Facebook friends, for instance, by his second term in the school.

15. Reich et al. (2012) compared the overlap in teenagers’ friends for friendships maintained face-to-face, through social networking sites, or by instant messaging. Most online contacts are already known offline, and for the most part, teenagers used online communication to reinforce offline friendships; but there was far from total overlap in the friends contacted in each of these three ways.


19. In an ego network, the respondent answers the same questions as for the whole-class network; but answers are open-ended, so they can answer about anybody they wish. This then reveals the social world as seen by the individual.

20. We have not labeled these young people “the cool kids” in the way some American readers suggested they might be, partly because they did not call themselves this and partly because of the contested conceptions of what might count as “cool” by others in this network. For further discussion, see Eckert (1989), Murray (2004), and Ito et al. (2010).

21. Their communication problem was linguistic—it seemed that Jenna’s mother had worked to bring up her older two daughters speaking her language but had lost the energy for Jenna and her little brother; nor had she managed to learn much English since arriving in the UK, although this is not to say that the family lacked warmth or understanding.

22. Pottermore is a privately owned website, a collaboration between Sony and the author of the Harry Potter series, J. K. Rowling. It contrasts with the Harry Potter Alliance, a website run by fans, which offers considerably more creativity, interactivity, and community organizing. See Jenkins (2012).


24. At the time of writing, two of the most popular crossover child/adult book series were Suzanne Collins’s trilogy The Hunger Games and J. K. Rowling’s seven-book Harry Potter series, centered on life at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

25. Ling (2008, p. 182) characterizes such social worlds as offering “bounded solidarity,” situations of reciprocal affirmation that close off ties to the wider network. Horst (2010b) talks of the ways in which teenagers segment their social world, employ tactics to suspend connections, or reduce integration as part of the continual dynamics of power in the family—and, we might add, the school and peer group.

26. For more on this important theme, see Silverstone (2005) and Siapera (2014).
27. By contrast, Yusuf attended a mosque school twice a week but, unlike Sedat, did not use this experience as a means of socializing, making it clear that he did not hang out or see the students from that school in his leisure time.

28. See Strand et al. (2010).

29. See Witteborn (2012). In ethnographic research on the communicative practices of migrants, Witteborn observes how they talk of “connecting” in several ways, when referring to Facebook and other online practices: to mean reaching distant others, engaging with diverse ideas, participating in communities of interest, positioning themselves in relation to others. These practices she calls “translocal,” following Kraidy and Murphy (2008). See also Madianou and Miller (2012).


31. Dom, for instance, put “the cricket team” in his ego network, while Gideon wrote “cousins” in his. The categories also blur boundaries. “In school” groups together those in the class and those across the year group, with most of the young people having more friends from across the year group than within the class. “Out of school” combines nuclear and extended family, out-of-school friends, neighbors, and both adults and children known through drama or sports or other activities.

32. While this suggests a degree of contentment in family relationships, it may also underscore the fact that these were young adolescents. Possibly much was set to change in the coming years.


34. See Moje (2000) for a discussion of these “levels” as ways of defining community membership.

35. Few children included in their ego networks any other adult relatives, teachers, or mentors who might introduce them to new interests or skills or diversify their social experiences. Even the names of their music or sports teachers often escaped the youngsters at the moment of recollection, suggesting that it was their role that mattered more than any more personal identity.


38. Stevens et al. (2007).


40. The theory of networked individualism is possibly more convincing in relation to adults, although the concept is intended to capture changes in society as a whole. In fairness, we note that advocates of the theory of networked individualism do not intend the conclusion that the Internet is somehow transcendent, replacing offline relations and practices. Rather, as Hogan and Wellman (2011) argue, mass use of the internet is intensifying longer-run changes toward individualization, personalized lifestyles, and the undermining of social cohesion. So, as with other theories of late modernity and the risk society, the analytic task is one of deciding whether the direction of travel has been insightfully identified by such theories, even if the pace of change is somewhat overclaimed.
41. Complexities and contingencies of economic and cultural capital are such that these small worlds do not simply ensure social reproduction of advantage or disadvantage from generation to generation (see chapters 8 and 9).

42. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, increasingly with reference to digital networks in particular, their meanings remain contested. For the OECD (2012, p. 15), connectedness “is the capacity to benefit from connectivity for personal, social, work or economic purposes.” By contrast, Turkle (2011) writes of “connectivity and its discontents,” lamenting that our absorption in digital technologies means that “we are increasingly connected to each other but oddly more alone” (p. 19). Differently again, van Dijck (2013a) sees connection as a matter of human communication, while connectivity is the commodification of such communication by major technology companies (for instance, transforming affiliation into “likes” and then monetizing them). At the heart of this debate is the question of whether certain values are embedded into technologically mediated networks so that their increased importance in underpinning social relations also shapes those relations.

43. On the basis of a longitudinal analysis of social networking practices among university students, Steinfeld et al. (2008, p. 434) concluded that “those with lower self-esteem gained more from their use of Facebook in terms of bridging social capital than higher self-esteem participants.”

44. As social network scholars have also found for the adult population, physical location remains a crucial factor shaping social networks—not merely in determining their nature but also as a source of diversity in networks: “Place is not lost as a result of the affordances of new technologies, but place-based networks are reinforced and made persistent” (Hampton et al., 2011, p. 1046). In a survey of US teenagers, Reich et al. (2012) reached similar conclusions, finding that use of social networking sites reinforced friendships forged offline rather than significantly extending their range of contacts. See also van Cleemput (2011).

Chapter 4. Identities and Relationships

1. In chapter 1, we discussed how identity is not fixed or given but instead is continually reconstituted through discourse, individually and culturally (S. Hall, 1996; Gergen, 2009).

2. Fischer noted (1981), albeit among US adults, that in the predigital era, people claimed to have, on average, 11 friends, of whom seven people, most of them kin, were called “close.”

3. In Granovetter’s original (predigital) formulation (1983), weak ties were no less important than strong ties but were important for different reasons: strong ties nourish the self emotionally; weak ties build the wider network and deliver social capital by bringing the resources of a larger social network within reach.

4. Banality is important since what is taken for granted reveals the communication infrastructure (Lievrouw, 2004). Young people have come to regard technology much like any other public utility (such as electricity or water), and thus socio-
technical conventions, priorities, and standards have become embedded in the lifeworld (Star and Bowker, 2006).

5. In discussing the affordances of social network sites, d. boyd (2008) focuses on persistence (since content is recorded, always visible online, and difficult to erase), scalability (since simple interactions can be rapidly made available to vast audiences), asynchronicity (enabling tactical interaction management), replicability (permitting seamless editing and manipulation of content), and searchability (both extending and permitting specialization within networks of information and relationships). These result in uncertainty regarding the audience for any message now and in the future and the collapsing of traditional context boundaries (most notably between public and private). Baym and boyd (2012, p. 328) elaborate the consequent “socially mediated publicness”: “an ever-shifting process throughout which people juggle blurred boundaries, multi-layered audiences, individual attributes, the specifics of the system they use, and the contexts of their use.”


7. Strathern (1996, p. 530) writes of “cutting the network,” since “in practice one does not trace connexions for ever; conversely the most intimate group is also open to discovering contacts they never knew existed.”

8. In chapter 3, Gideon said, “Boys don’t really have close friends. Like, it’s girls that have close friends. Boys kind of all go together.” His mother confirms this sense of “casual” friends: “He doesn’t seem to have that many friends. I mean, he says to me—he, you know, . . . he’s very popular. . . . But unlike my daughter—maybe because she’s a girl, I don’t know—she’s always had a very little, close-knit group of friends as much as she’s had wider friends, whereas Gideon doesn’t seem to have had that in this school.”

9. The class teacher, Catherine, describes Megan as “flying under the radar” with regard to the school’s record of her “concerns” (for the school’s management of “bad behavior,” see chapter 5).

10. For Marwick and boyd (2014), drawing on Goffman’s early analysis of social interaction in dramaturgical terms (1959), Facebook is well suited to teen drama.

11. Kupiainen (2013) argues that Facebook is a prime instance of school-based “networked publics” (Ito, 2008) for young people, making visible the school community to itself although not necessarily facilitating the “affinity spaces” (Gee, 2004a) required for more intensive or creative or civil collaboration.

12. As d. boyd (2014) argues, teenagers enjoy “social steganography” or “hiding in plain sight” by communicating with peers in technically public places yet in ways that become private in practice because the adults around them do not understand the message.

13. The point is that, for teens (and many adults), privacy matters most in relation to people you know rather than in relation to a wider or unknown public. This is often misunderstood as indicating that young people do not care about their
privacy, but the key point is that privacy means control over one's information rather than keeping that information secret from everyone. See Livingstone (2005).

14. For definitions of these types of youth subcultures, see www.urbandictionary.com; see also Ziehe (1994).

15. We develop the relationship between popular taste and identity in chapter 9.

16. Just a few years earlier, older teens were choosing Facebook, while younger teens preferred MySpace. But now, by the age of 13 or 14—the age when they were officially “allowed” on Facebook—our class was already losing interest, keeping a Facebook profile mostly as an address book to monitor action among their peers. The once “grown-up” blue-and-white layout had come to seem too straight-laced and public to be exciting or transgressive, while what teens had previously enjoyed about MySpace could now be found elsewhere on Tumblr or Instagram—notably, trying on possible selves by playing with stylized cultural tropes, decoration, and moods (Livingstone, 2008).

17. Massey uses the concept of “throwntogetherness” to capture the diverse constituencies, even the “clash of trajectories,” evident in major cities such as London. But we can apply this to the experience of social networking sites. She explains, “Insofar as they ‘work’ at all places are still not-inconsiderable collective achievements. They are formed through a myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation; practices, moreover, through which the constituent ‘identities’ are also themselves continually moulded” (2005, p. 154). See also Leurs (2014) on “digital throwntogetherness.”

18. However, Tumblr had become very time-consuming: “Tumblr takes up—like, it’s a massive part of my life. I’m on it a lot, like . . . I can reblog up to, like, 1,000 things a day. . . . I spend up to, like, two hours doing it at a time. But say I have nothing to do, I always have Tumblr.”


20. This conversation took place in our final interview at the start of Year 10.

21. Facer et al. (2003) observed over a decade ago how technology contributed to “flexible childhoods” by reconfiguring how children could enter adult worlds.


23. See www.timwoods.org/the-london-slang-dictionary-project


26. Their concern was to challenge a simple binary between online and offline, especially insofar as the online is popularly seen to detract from or undermine the offline, since “online and offline spaces are dynamically co-constructed and interpolated” (Leander and McKim, 2003, p. 222; see also Horst and Miller, 2012). They draw on Miller and Slater (2000) in calling for a “connective ethnography.”

28. Chambers (2013) argues that in late modernity, the relationship between intimacy and privacy is being reconfigured such that we can rely ever less on traditional ties (to family, community, or work), and so the voluntary and flexible ties of friendship are more intensely important. This may be true for adults; but for teenagers, friends have surely always been the relationship most under their control, so we see little grounds for claiming a change.

29. Anthias (2002, p. 492) makes a related point in her study of Greek Cypriot–British youth when she notes that “asking someone a question about their ‘identity’ often produces a blank stare, a puzzled silence or a glib and formulaic response. This is not only because research subjects have not understood the question, but also because they cannot easily provide answers.”

30. These responses are collated from individual interviews. Lydia’s response suggests a common way in which girls and boys delineated inner (“family”) from outer circles of contacts. Images showed the profile owner in everyday or sassy poses, with smiling groups of friends, social or sporting activities, jokey memes, and occasional news items (about Obama, Kony). There was lots of visible peer support (“love you all!!,” birthday wishes, exclamation marks, and smiley emojis), although a few complaints enter the mix (“why don’t you answer?”; “you’re annoying”); but these were generally mild in tone, even when the jokes become rude (“faggot,” “fuck off”).


33. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said, “Having two identities for yourself is an example of a lack of integrity” (van Dijck, 2013b, p. 199), but young people would disagree, precisely wishing to explore and express different identities in relation to particular social groups or situations. Van Dijck critiques the supposed emphasis on personal integrity, claiming that social networking has shifted from self-expressive communication to sustain connection among people to the promotion of the idealized (and quantified) self within a corporate context driven by the monetization of connectivity. So, while users choose what personal information to curate and share, data companies are mining the signs they give off naively or unintentionally, the better to target advertising; and for this purpose, a unique identity across sites is optimal (van Dijck, 2013b, p. 202). Yet, among the 13-year-olds in the class, we saw few signs of the self as a brand, many signs of resistance to Facebook’s more intrusive or determining features, and a strong sense that what matters are one’s relations with a circle of more or less known peers.

34. Contradicting popular prejudices that young people care little for privacy, see Nissenbaum’s contextualist conception of what is public or private (2010).

35. George and Clay (2013) note how few resources are available to the girl who is excluded by others and how problematic it is that school cultures tend to identify “the problem” in the girl rather than in wider peer dynamics.

36. At the time of writing, there was much discussion in the media of Facebook’s declining popularity with teens, reminding us to focus on how young people act
and interact as much as on the particularities of any one platform. See, for example, www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/23/facebooks-teen-trouble-in_n_4150940.html.

37. “Continual copresence” means even when people are physically apart; see Gergen (2002).

38. Bolter and Grusin (1999) argue that as a new medium of communication becomes commonplace, the social significance of already-established media is altered. But this is not to say that face-to-face communication is displaced by digital communication (as argued most recently by Turkle, 2015); indeed, one interpretation is that it thereby gains a greater intensity of meaning.

39. This is not to say, however, that social networking sites can always be made to work in young people’s best interests. Aiden’s story reminds us that online activities can be recuperated within established practices of control and supervision.

40. We observed the interactions on the class’s Facebook profiles over a period of several weeks. The young people seemed to prioritize a generally courteous to-and-fro of posts, likes, and brief comments, with most posts receiving little or no comment. Moreover, few interactions involved more than a handful of turns, and few of the several hundred contacts were in active communication.

41. There were anomalies: although Adam was connected to the core group in our analysis, his actual friendship behaviors as gleaned from interviews really revolved around his ego network, with less interest expressed in the class; Adriana’s life was more separate, too, due to her frequent visits to the family home in Spain.

42. As d. boyd (2014, p. x) comments, her study was inspired by the fact that “teens’ voices rarely shaped the public discourse surrounding their networked lives.”

Chapter 5. Life at School

1. See, for example, the essays collected in Albright and Luke (2008), N. Rose (1999), and Ball (2013).


4. As R. Boyd (2006, p. 863) argues, “contrary to the many critics who see civility as a conservative or nostalgic virtue deployed to repress difference and frustrate change, it is argued that civility should be understood as democratic, pluralistic and premised on a sense of moral equality,” especially in the contemporary city. Contini and Maturo (2010, p. 1544) put the positive case for civility yet more urgently: “school can have an important role in the development of cross-cultural competences, in the formation of social bonds and flexible and inclusive belonging and in the building of a multiple and shared citizenship, that implies the recognition of individual rights and universal values, to promote the living together in a multiethnic society.”
5. A report on young people’s social networks for the Department for Education (DfE 2008) found that most students had a lot of friends, largely from the same school, and that those with fewer friends in school also had fewer friends out of school.

6. There are exceptions to this principle, especially for young people with designated special educational needs and also if siblings already attend the school, but in general, it is the idea of neighborhood that underpins the principles of selection. The school used a form of rough ability banding to select pupils of different abilities and also to mix up (but also to sustain a few paired friendships) from the young person’s first school at primary or elementary level.

7. There were a few tower blocks in the locality, but most social housing and private rented properties were in low-build estates usually interspersed with privately owned houses.

8. The view—clearly endorsed by VFS—that teachers should identify and prevent “classroom incivility” is articulated by, for instance, Feldmann (2001). Yet, as classroom ethnographies have long shown (Erickson, 1984), such efforts risk teaching middle-class children to “play the game” while provoking poorer or minority ethnic children into tactics of resistance.

9. In relation to Toby especially, although arguably Lydia also, we could call this, following Goffman (1966), “civil inattention.” Cahill (1987) examines how children are taught the subtleties of the deliberate withdrawal of attention as a tactic to demonstrate unobtrusive recognition of the other.


11. See Pahl (2000). In practice, a range of words is available although not in common use among teenagers. Heil (2014) discusses discourses of conviviality, cohabitation, and neighborliness, for instance, as ways of instantiating equality and respect for others. As his ethnography reveals, such discourses must be continually enacted through practices of interaction, negotiation, and translation, as the configurations they facilitate remain fragile, with cooperation always liable to give way to conflict. See also Wessendorf (2014).

12. Amin (2012); see also Sennett (2012).

13. As this teacher went on to explain, dealing with trouble from the children spilling over into school was one thing, but it was far worse when the parents became involved. For the teachers charged with welfare responsibilities, home life impinged on life at school in a host of problematic ways: students smuggling distracting or disruptive devices into class, “inadequately parented” teenagers being unpleasant to each other online, angry parents complaining to the school, addicted teens staying up too late gaming or social networking and so missing homework or school. As more and more of teachers’ time was taken up with untangling conflicts, checking screen shots of claimed hostilities, or even calling in the police, it is no wonder that they saw digital technologies—and the out-of-school lives of the young people that they represented—as a problem to be
controlled rather than an opportunity to be harnessed constructively. Such difficulties led Grant (2011) to advocate the creation of “virtual third spaces” where a compromise between the logics of home and school learning might be reached. See also Crook (2011), Attewell et al. (2009), and Cramer and Hayes (2010).


15. It used to be the children’s news program BBC Newsround, but now the class demanded “adult news” (as Gideon said, Newsround “was all about penguins”).

16. Hochschild (1979) captures the kind of “emotional labor” that Catherine does here in her analysis of how “work” increasingly demands a performance of the private self for the benefit of others.

17. On that day, a teaching assistant was holding the fort in Catherine’s absence.

18. See K. Jones (2009) for an analysis of how, in late modernity, popular culture now stands in for common culture, especially that formed by collective class experiences, in English schools, identified by earlier theorists such as Williams (1961b) and Hoggart (1969). There is, in any case, no way to keep the world beyond the school out of the classroom, as Wortham (2005, p. 1) argues: not only do the “social identification, power relations and interpersonal struggles” of daily life occur in the classroom as anywhere else, but they intersect with the academic learning that also occurs there. Wortham is particularly interested in the explicit and “common pedagogical strategy of building an analogy between students’ actual or hypothetical experiences and the curricular topic” (p. 2). Since building these analogies is doubly hazardous—both because the teachers know little of the students’ lives at home and because these are themselves very diverse—popular culture is often positioned as a shared body of experience by which teachers can bridge what students are presumed to know already and what they need to learn.

19. The use of popular culture genres such as X Factor in class can be appreciated as a step toward what Ladson-Billings (1995) calls “culturally relevant pedagogy.” But the practice is criticized by Lefstein and Snell (2011). Their detailed linguistic ethnographic observation showed, on the one hand, that the practice was motivating to the students, encouraging them to participate, but, on the other hand, that when the genre of the show took the lesson away from its pedagogic objectives, a degree of contestation and messiness entered that confused the learning. Most interesting is that, in the lesson Lefstein and Snell analyzed, the loudest students were those who usually dominated; so this teaching strategy did not manage to include otherwise marginalized students.

20. The gap between popular culture references selected by teachers and those favored by students is, in itself, indicative of the difficulties inherent in trying to build a shared framework from a teacher-led perspective. As Dover (2007) found, in her ethnographic study of playground talk, children talk about popular culture constantly; it is just that they pick their own references, for their own purposes.
21. Alvermann (2012) contests this normative distinction, while noting its widespread endorsement by teachers, especially insofar as digital literacies may enable students to find pleasure in “high culture,” making it “popular.” See also Jenkins and Kelley (2013).

22. Such critical knowledge is often lacking from classroom discussions that draw on popular culture (L. Hall, 2012). While it should especially come from media studies, although as an optional subject, for older students, such debates are not usually part of the common curriculum. See also Buckingham (2004).


24. Seiter (2005) observes how often teachers avoid “teachable moments” because of their expectations of what the children should value, which often exclude the messy and conflictual realities. She cites Audrey Thompson (1998) on the “color-blind” model of teaching adopted by teachers that ignores the class’s experiences of race and racism, saying, “It is a disservice to students to exclude from classroom discussion issues of race and class that they are negotiating throughout their everyday lives” (p. 24).

25. This idea is suggested by studies such as O’Hear and Sefton-Green (2004), National School Boards Association (2007), Thomas (2011).


27. Personal, Social and Health Education, taught once a week, a subject that included formal civics.

28. Blackberry Messenger, a form of instant messaging via Blackberry smartphones that was popular among teenagers at the time.

29. The school always returned confiscated phones at the end of each week.

30. Cahill (1987) would call this “ceremonial deviance,” the point being that while Megan and Adriana push the boundaries of classroom behavior as far as they can, they do not transgress too far; thus, they sustain their independent image for themselves and the class without this being overtly challenged or having to leave the situation.

31. Several of the scholars cited earlier in the chapter are eloquent on the positive pleasures of civility; see, for instance, Sennett (2012) for a careful critique of Elias’s critique of self-restraint.

32. As R. Boyd (2006, p. 870) reminds us, civility encompasses an acknowledgment of distance and difference without entailing intimacy or strong obligations. Rather, it merely—but importantly—allows “diverse populations to live side-by-side in mutual peace and accommodation.” As the school recognized, this goes beyond mere tolerance and, rather, requires continual, if small, displays of mutual respect. For Calhoun (2000), civility must be visibly communicated or displayed if it is to be more than mere tolerance; regulating visible behaviors was a matter that the school took seriously, irrespective of how the students might feel “underneath.”

33. We might note that the school was tacitly supported in this effort by the wider culture. As Watson and Saha (2013, p. 2020) put it, drawing on Stuart Hall’s
earlier work, in the 21st century, “multicultural drift . . . captures the sense of an ordinary, humdrum and lackadaisical set of changes that are neither dramatic nor exoticized, but that take place in a willy-nilly, quiet and hotchpotch way in suburbs across British cities.” In other words, it is becoming ordinary for diverse cultures to live in close proximity, with some tensions, some shared pleasures—a kind of “mundane multiculturalism” that suggests little to celebrate but no great failure either.

34. We refer to the work of Michel de Certeau here (1984), as he proffered an analysis of the tactics people use in everyday life to resist and negotiate dominant order across many levels of social activities.

35. There are many studies exploring this theme; see, for example, Reay (2006).

36. Recall Catherine’s comment about Megan (in chapter 4) that she managed to stay “under the radar” with regard to gaining “concerns,” despite her poor record of attendance and homework completion. Catherine presented this as a matter of Megan’s skill in not attracting teacher disapproval rather than reflecting on what this meant about the school’s differential treatment of students from wealthier and poorer homes. Such injustices did not escape the young people themselves. As the middle-class Dominic told us, “Like with Shane, because he used to be really badly behaved, like last year, like teachers would think the worst of him. Like, if something’s happened, they would usually blame Shane.”

37. There is a vast literature on school failure, so here we just note the more ethnographic studies that influenced our thinking: Hargreaves (1967), MacLeod (2009), and Willis (1978).

38. This is not the place to develop an analysis of such various concepts, but it is noteworthy how many scholars (several of them cited in this chapter) are devoting their intellectual and normative efforts toward forms of communality or solidarity as the historical process of individualization advances.

Chapter 6. Learning at School

1. Levinson et al. (1996).

2. By “learner identity,” we refer to how forms of social identification become part and parcel of academic learning. A school is both a formal institution to ensure learning and also a particular social context with its own norms, habits, and ways of being. Students’ identities are constructed in part through the ways that their teachers refer to them or group them in particular ways and through the ways that students in turn enact certain identities within the classroom. See Wortham (2005).

3. See also the current interest in the idea of the quantified self, the counting and display of one’s diet, health, sleep, and other dimensions of daily life; see Lupton (2014); see also http://quantifiedself.com. Although the quantified self is generally thought of as voluntary rather than imposed, what surprised us was how accepting the students were of the quantification of their learning.
4. This seepage into gaming and from gaming into learning lies behind some of the principles of gamification—turning and using structured games play in education; see, for example, http://badgeville.com/wiki/case_studies.

5. National curriculum testing in terms of levels was introduced in 1991 by the UK’s now defunct National Assessment Agency (NAA) arm of the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA); see www.nfer.ac.uk/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uuid=67EAAF91-C29E-AD4D-07F1-A9373EA17105&siteName=nfer. Each subject was divided into core elements: for example, English was divided into Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening; and Music into Performing, Composing, and Listening. Criteria defining attainment were specified for each element for each of ten levels, with each level further subdivided into a, b, and c. In principle, students in Year 9 were meant to achieve between levels 5 and 7. In practice, at VFS, the ability range stretched from 4 to 8. A degree of complexity entered when creating the overall scale, since “a” was higher than “c” but 6 higher than 5. This meant that, for example, students in the class might be striving to rise from 5b to 5a and then to 6c followed by 6b, 6a, and then 7c.

6. Certain kinds of school were exempt, but not VFS.

7. iLearning is otherwise known as ICT (information, communication, and technology).

8. There is a further level of confusion in that in Year 10 students start their GCSE courses, and these have a different form of grading (A, B, C, etc.) that map onto levels 8 to 10—an additional dimension that bothered some parents during their meetings on Progress Day.

9. Recall the exhortation to “shine” through outside achievements that Catherine urged on all the young people on Progress Day (see chapter 2).


12. SIMS stands for “school information management system” (see www.capita-sims.co.uk). The technology was developed and is owned by Capita, one of the largest private providers in the UK education market. This ever-growing and never-forgetting system of record keeping integrated detailed accounts of incidents during lesson times with other information held about students by the school: their family structure, special needs, or the involvement of social services, as well as correspondence between the school and the home. Other systems include IsisBehave (formerly iBehave). The normative expectation, among educational policy makers, is that such a system can support improved teacher and school decision making; see Breiter and Light (2006).

13. While in theory the young person’s family could access student records, and Catherine told us that this was the school’s original plan, this does not seem to have happened at VFS (and as Catherine hinted further, it would have necessitated the teachers rewriting a number of the entries for public consumption).
14. During each lesson or immediately after, teachers entered commendations and concerns into their computers. Some wrote the names of students deserving of punishment or reward on the white board during lessons. These might be transcribed later into SIMS, but sometimes they merely acted as a form of visible control during the lesson. Alongside this system of recording good and/or poor performance, lesson teachers would also record formal attainment in terms of levels.

15. Badges (gold, silver, bronze) were awarded for 150, 100, or 50 commendations, respectively, and were announced to all in the school’s newsletter.

16. As we discovered, teachers generally lacked the time or skill to exploit the wealth of information available. They were intrigued, for instance, that we, as researchers, managed to calculate levels across subjects in order to track the class’s progress by socioeconomic background. Although we did not inquire at the time into the legal and ethical aspects of this information management, as such systems raise issues in regard to student and parent rights to access or correct information and about how schools manage privacy rights within the school or with the software provider. Interestingly, by the time of writing, a US equivalent of SIMS, inBloom, was unceremoniously closed down due to legal privacy concerns. See Herold 2014 and Balkam 2014.


18. See Alexander (2009), among others, for an extended critique of how the management of schools is negatively affecting attention to questions of curriculum and developing learning.

19. Leander et al. (2010) talks of the traditional model as instantiating the “container classroom,” for instance, noting that this is now challenged by mobile technologies.


22. Chouliaraki (1998, p. 6) observed a parallel process in a UK classroom some 20 years ago in relation to the then-progressivist discourse of child-centered pedagogy, when she found that “individualized talk did not serve the pedagogic purpose of ‘fine tuning.’ Instead, it had primarily, a regulative function in (a) controlling each pupil’s rate and quality of activity, and (b) constructing pedagogic knowledges which avoided content input and emphasized procedural tasks.”

23. For an account of digital affordances, see Lievrouw and Livingstone (2006). For an account of the “mediatization of education,” see Rawolle and Lingard (2014). What remains unknown is how such data systems, likely to become more rather than less common, will develop in the future. Perrotta (2013, p. 119) is pessimistic, arguing that “powerful techniques to manipulate data can be easily co-opted to serve the restrictive frameworks of competitive, hyper-controlling, managerial accountability that characterise current cultures of summative assessment in
many countries." By contrast, Visscher et al. (2003) were disappointed to find that school information systems are more often used for clerical rather than strategic educational purposes.

24. This practice was not universally approved, especially when coming from an unpopular teacher. As Salma told us of a teacher she disliked, "He always tells us, 'Oh, you're underachieving your level,' like, 'You're not doing your level good,' and he just like tells everyone in front of everyone. It's like embarrassing. It's just rude."

25. Chouliaraki (1998) here cites Bernstein (1990) on how an "empty" discourse sustains an institutional order—in this case, in the school—that is cut off from any relation to actual learning, supposedly the primary purpose of the institution. Hence, talk of levels in the class becomes ritualistic, meaningful within the classroom but disconnected from an engagement with knowledge.


27. Levinson et al. (1996).

28. Ito et al. (2013).

29. Just a few months after we said goodbye to the class, the UK's Department for Education announced the abolition of levels in the national curriculum for all schools in England starting in 2014, stating, "We believe this system is complicated and difficult to understand, especially for parents. It also encourages teachers to focus on a pupil's current level, rather than consider more broadly what the pupil can actually do" (DfE, 2013a). Exactly how policy and practice unfold—and how far these reflect political struggles between government and the education profession—is beyond the scope of this book. Certainly our fieldwork year coincided with an ambitious secretary of state for education, determined to change the British school system substantially during his tenure. This particular change positions much of what we have documented in this chapter as potentially wasted with regard to both teachers' efforts and, more significantly, the students' sincere attempts to construct their learner identities in the ways required of them by the school. It is as yet unclear what more stable set of practices might replace those we observed or how this pronouncement will impact on inspection regimes, which in themselves are far more influential than policy speeches in determining what actually happens in schools. But at the time of writing, it was already clear that changing so entrenched a culture of learning was proving a struggle for many schools (Commission on Assessment without Levels, 2015).

Chapter 7. Life at Home Together and Apart

1. As discussed in chapter 1, for many children, the notions of family, household and home do not necessarily coincide. See Livingstone (2002).

2. This is partly because teachers fear that the many hours spent with screen media at home undermines children's concentration, their academic interests, and even their skills in writing. See Common Sense Media (2012).
4. As J. Thompson (2011) observes, what we call private spaces are defined less by their physical spatiality than by the contextual norms that define their accessibility and visibility. See also Cunningham (1995).
5. Children's tactics should not be interpreted in cynical or manipulative terms; tactics are, more simply, the means available to those who lack the power to intervene in more systematic or structural ways. As Corsaro (1997) shows, children's tactics are often creative or witty, and they may also be effective in renegotiating the domestic environment. See also Brannen (2005), de Certeau (1984).
6. Over the past century, the media have adapted to these domestic concerns, seeking to accommodate family preferences in order to better shape and profit from them. But it is important to see media goods and contents not simply in the terms of their developers, distributors, or marketers but, rather, to inquire into how households appropriate and make sense of them in their own particular cultural and personal contexts. Domestication theory emphasizes the active, interpretative work that goes into the temporal, spatial, social, and material conditions of “home,” including the ways that media technologies are appropriated and made meaningful so as to sustain particular interests and meanings. See Buckingham (2000), Livingstone (2002), Oswell (2002), and Berker et al. (2006).
7. We did not discover whether this was a matter of religious prohibition, poverty, or aesthetics.
8. This is not to say that Jenna was neglected; her mother was ambitious for all the girls. Impressively the older sisters were gaining university degrees, and Jenna had a tutor for math and English because, she said, “my mum wants us to be best at stuff.” As researchers of immigrant families have shown, having parents less attuned to the host culture can offer children particular power in brokering (via language or media) the community or state resources required by their parents. Katz (2010) draws on family systems theory—the notion that a family is more than the sum of its parts and, further, that it is self-organizing in its dynamics—to examine how migrant families seek to balance the need for intimacy, on the one hand, and differentiation or mutual independence, on the other.
9. The pattern of “practically perfect” older siblings, as understood in the family discourse, was a challenge for several members of the class.
10. As we often had cause to reflect, the young people’s initial interests frequently stopped, with few new interests sustained to the point where they became self-organized or part of the young people’s identity and core motivation, as this takes considerable resourcing over time from the family, school, or community. See Hidi and Renninger (2006). Parents tended to identify the transition to secondary school as a moment when the development of interests was disrupted, either because the young people embraced change as part of growing up or because peer support was lost or because institutional provision was age related.
11. As Fiese and Sameroff (1999, p. 3) put it, “family narratives move beyond the individual and deal with how the family makes sense of its world, expresses rules of interaction, and creates beliefs about relationships.” Bohanek et al. (2006, p. 41) explore how family narratives are important for young adolescents, who are concerned to create “self-continuity and a more complex sense of self.”

12. Rather speculatively, we would note that both Abby and Lydia at this age were rather overweight, mixed-race (white/Afro-Caribbean) girls with a past prowess in sports who had experienced difficulties with their peers since the transition to secondary school. This parallel made us want to ask whether sporty girls encounter particular problems in adolescence for failing to fit the gendered norms of their peers.

13. For example, the clinical psychologist Steiner-Adair (2013) articulates a host of popular anxieties in her guide to parents, *The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age*. She worries that screens are “sucking us in,” making us all addicted, as we all fight over digital devices, with misunderstandings becoming endemic as we prioritize our relationships with technology over our relationships with each other. Interestingly, however, her suggestion of developing “a family philosophy about using [technology] that reflects and supports the family’s values and well-being” (p. 269) echoes the conclusions of Hoover et al. (2004) from their in-depth studies of mediated family life, as well as a strategy often attempted by the parents of the class.


16. This analysis follows Livingstone (2002).

17. As Pugh (2009) observed in her ethnography of American families, poorer families tend to invest in “symbolic indulgence,” while wealthier families tend to practice “symbolic deprivation.”


19. To counterbalance this increase in individual access to the internet, Adriana’s father installed parental controls on all the computers, which he monitored actively. So had Dom’s father, while Salma’s father kept an eye on her computer use (by “friending” her on Facebook, checking her “history,” etc.).

20. This use of Skype is emerging as common practice for sustaining geographically separated families; see Madianou and Miller (2012). For the notion of digitally mediated copresence, see Baym (2015).

21. She told us, “My relationship to it I would’ve said wasn’t blocked at all because I’m quite . . . because of the whole art thing, you tend to be open to different media, you tend to be looking for cross relationships. But I’m aware of having, sort of, compartmentalized what he does as a different—which I’m not pleased. . . . It’s one of the reasons I let you into the house is because I don’t really like that
attitude in myself.” For her, the research project was an opportunity to reflect on how her role in the family had become one of mediating between Adam and his father, as Adam grows up, no longer a child for whom, she said, “we dictated what he was doing, and we decided what he could and couldn’t have.”

22. As Horst (2010a) observes from her fieldwork with families, this “coming together” need not be tightly planned by the parents but, rather, is subtly orchestrated by creating flexible places in the home and casual times in the family schedule so that they can “hang out” or “mess around” or even “geek out” (p. 171) with their kids as a shared pleasure.


25. On the basis of an in-depth study of 46 American families, Clark (2013) showed how families draw on public scripts or discourses about media effects that guide their appropriation of new media at home, including the ways in which they consider themselves accountable—to researchers, to their children, to themselves. She argues that our society as a whole values the ethic of expressive empowerment over the ethic of respectful connectedness, so that the privileged children’s media uses resonate with other institutions, unlike those of the poorer families, thereby exacerbating social inequalities. The resonance works in both directions; the “moral economy of the household” (Silverstone et al., 1992, p. 9) also has implications for the wider society. The irony, as Clark points out, is that the middle-class families find themselves envious of the respectful connectedness and warmth in the working-class families but cannot give up on their competitive, individualistic aspirations sufficiently to emulate those families more closely or even to recognize the hidden costs of their high-stress lifestyles.

26. Clark’s (2013) research also showed how American parents’ time-poor lifestyles lead them to create media-rich homes. But their children are often less time-poor, so digital media provide a workaround given their heavily regulated access to spaces outside (and, indeed, within) the home or school, permitting a pathway to a certain kind of independence. See also Boneva et al. (2006).


30. Hence the notion of “quality time”; see Brannen (2005) and Kremer-Sadlik et al. (2008). See also Robinson and Schulz (2013). Indeed, Gutiérrez et al. (2010) worry that children, especially the children of working middle-class families, have little unstructured time at all to play or be creative.

31. Wingard and Forsberg (2009). There are cultural variations in the meanings and uses of time. See also Kremer-Sadlik et al. (2010).
5. Paus-Hasebrink et al. (2012); see also Halford and Savage (2010) and Warschauer and Matuchniak (2010).
6. For the notion of cultural capital, see Bourdieu (1984). For an extended analysis of cultural capital in the British context, see Bennett et al. (2009). For critical analysis of the idea of cultural capital, see Fine (2000).
7. Annette Lareau’s book was first published in 2003, with a ten-year update on the families published in 2011. See also Hey (2005), Pugh (2009), and Clark (2013).
8. Over the past four decades, family spending on so-called enrichment activities for their children has risen only slightly for those in the bottom income quintile, compared with a nearly three-fold increase among those in the top quintile. Inequalities, therefore, are to be found not only in the absolute level of expenditure (which is itself substantial) but also in the growing gap between the richest and poorest families. For US data, see Ito et al. (2013). For UK data, see Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2014).
9. See, for example, Facer et al. (2003), Becta (2009), and Davies and Eynon (2013).
10. As Clark et al. (2005, p. 421) have observed, technology is popularly associated with particularly individualistic notions of “success,” with parents “adopting the familiar rhetoric linking access to ICTs [information communication technologies] and their appropriate, industrious use to the ability to prosper in an information-based society.”
11. She did not cite any examples, knowing only the general principles. We would note, for example, Gee (2004b), Salen (2008), and also the Quest to Learn schools, at http://q2l.org.
12. Warschauer (2006) compared information literacy practices among students Sara’s age and younger in more and less privileged schools. In the more privileged schools, some sophisticated practices were already in evidence, with students learning to search and evaluate a range of primary sources to produce an integrated result. In the less privileged schools, however, students would simply take the first source from a Google search and cut and paste the information into their assignment. Similar findings regarding students’ instrumental searching were obtained by Rye (2013).
13. As Hammerberg (2004, p. 375–376) observes, “the training of independence is closely related to levelled curricular outcomes and a sense of what is ‘meaningful’ in terms of cognitive, psychological goals,” adding that such training values “techniques for operating on the self in ways that appear independent, authentic, or meaningful [but] are, instead, rigorously trained and curricular.”
15. Other studies confirm that this is a largely middle-class phenomenon. See Schwartz and Arena (2013).
16. The term “habitus” is most associated with Bourdieu (1990) and is usually taken to describe the relatively stable and taken-for-granted mix of values, dispositions, and expectations of social groups that arise from the experiences and activities of everyday life.

17. See, for example, Brown et al. 2011.

18. As Lareau (2011, p. 3) says of working-class families, “for them, the crucial responsibilities of parenthood do not lie in eliciting their children’s feelings, opinions, and thoughts.” Rather, they instantiate a strong boundary between child and adult and issue directives rather than trying to persuade their children of desired actions. The result is that “the cultural logic of child rearing at home is out of synch with the standards of institutions” (ibid.).

19. As Chin and Phillips (2004) have also observed, while there are, indeed, social class inequalities in parents’ ability to support their children’s development of interests and skills, this should not be interpreted as evidence of differential desire: poorer parents may share wealthier parents’ wish to support their children but lack the finances or know-how to do so effectively.

20. In chapter 2, we described how, on Progress Day, Catherine met each parent with his or her child for an intensive ten-minute discussion to review academic attainment, in-school behavior, and extracurricular activities. As we observed, this meeting was fraught in a number of ways. Parents often did not understand the system of levels by which attainment was measured (see chapter 6). Nor did they always accept the school’s account of their child’s behavior, with parents aware of the personal extenuating circumstances that teachers might not know or take into consideration. This made us all the more surprised when teacher and parent teamed up to exhort the young people to take on more so as to “realize their potential” and “shine” at school, in the face of marked reluctance from the young people themselves. We interpreted this partly as a manifestation of the young people’s desire to protect their “free time” and also as reflecting their awareness of how an informal and pleasurable learning activity could be transformed by fitting it into the calculus of the school—with commendations, public commentary, and pressurizing exhortations to achieve more.

21. This level of extracurricular activities among poorer families is not insignificant, however. As Robinson and Schulz (2013, p. 545) concluded from their US-based research on ICT use, “insufficient attention has been paid to disadvantaged families . . . [for] parents from all socio-economic backgrounds can take an active interest in guiding their children’s ICT use for capital-enhancing activities.” In general, boys’ engagement in sports acts as a leveler, with music and performance activities being more likely to differentiate middle- from working-class children.

22. Examples of such innovative visions and policies can be found in US Department of Education (2010), Thomas (2011), Facer (2012), Ito et al. (2013), and Aspen Institute (2014).

23. We note that research evaluating the provision of computers and internet access to poorer homes has recorded a range of benefits including improved engage-
ment with homework, more independent learning, and better ICT skills and confidence in the classroom. See Jewitt and Parashar (2011).


26. Despite much policy speculation about educational blogs adding a more creative, deep, or experimental dimension to the learning experience, those we checked out mainly provided revision materials, ways of uploading completed worksheets, or extra “fun facts.” Such blogs will possibly take a more innovative direction in the future. See, for example, Ozcinar and Ekizoglu (2013). Also optimistic in their conclusions are McLeod and Vasinda (2009), whose evaluation of digital portfolios found that teachers gained insights into each child as a learner while parents gained a window into their child’s classroom experience. See also Selwyn (2009) for an analysis of the disjunction between formal education and everyday uses of digital media.

27. Writing in the early days of the internet, Hallgarten (2000) calls for a future for the home-school relationship in which, rather than expecting parents to adapt to the institutional demands of school, schools put effort into adapting to parents. He argues further that this would require a fundamental shift on the part of the school from a command-and-control to a relational norm, one that treats parents as citizens who, along with the school, are surely committed to the best interests of their child.

28. European Schoolnet (2013, p. 10). Similar conclusions are reached by Selwyn et al. (2011). Passey (2014) reviews recent research showing how parents can support their children’s school learning if they, themselves, are also supported by the school, regretting that this too rarely occurs in a constructive manner.


30. As Rideout (2014) has showed in the US, parents reach varying conclusions about which media are educational for their children and why.

Chapter 9. Learning to Play Music

1. We drew particularly on Wortham (2005) for the notion of learning identity to capture the often-intangible mix of personal, social, academic, and nonacademic influences that combine to create a particular sense of oneself as a learner at any moment in time.

2. Scholars have examined the value of participating in sporting activities both intrinsically and in comparison with arts activities (for an overview, see Catterall, 2009). Participation in sports (mainly football) was important for a few boys in the class, but in a British context, sports do not offer the same range of institutions, practices, and domains as music did for the class. Music not only offered a way to explore tensions between academic and popular culture but, even more than sports, raises questions about equity and access by families.

3. See Bennett et al. (2009) for an analysis of the relationship between economic, social, and cultural capital.
4. As Kassabian says (2013), the experience of “ubiquitous music” is how we feel connection with others in the abstract, and that, over and above forms of direct engagement with particular others, is important to people. Finney (2011) takes the case of music as a paramount instance of the incompatibility between the standardized, top-down, assessment-led approach to teaching typical of English schools in the early 21st century and the progressive, child-centered tradition that can—although does not always—characterize out-of-school experiences of musical pleasures and music learning.

5. It may be noted that these groupings by music taste map partially onto the network diagram shown in chapter 3.

6. On a grade scale from 1 to 8, Grade 5 is taken to be equivalent to GCSE level (i.e., the level of attainment expected of 16-year-olds), and Grade 8 is recognized as a qualification in the university entrance procedures. See Green (2002) for an extended study of the relationships between informal music learning/playing and attainment of formal qualifications. Green argues that informal music learning is based on different traditions of musicianship that may be as valuable and inspiring as more traditional ways of teaching music.

7. The Connected Learning Research Network, which funded the research on which this book is based, makes the case that interest-driven learning lies at the heart of connected learning, that finding ways to engage learners in authentic and “deep” ways and to build learning on the basis of their interests wherever these might lie is central to developing an a better education system. See Ito et al. (2013). Azevedo (2013) distinguishes between personal interest, as a way of describing a person's long-term disposition to engage in practices, and interest-based participation in activities that make up these larger practices. This distinction points to the ways that individuals learn to participate in what he calls “lines of practice” and hints at the ways that engaging in short-term activities do and do not build into longer, deeper, and wider practices.


9. For reasons of space, we do not tell the stories of Alice, Sara, or Sebastian but note here that Alice’s and Sara’s experiences of music learning most closely resemble those of Max, while Sebastian’s pleasure in improvisational work in his drama/singing group bears similarities with Giselle’s experience. There is also a story to be told about the young people who began but then gave up learning music; Abby’s is perhaps the most interesting case, and we briefly discuss her experiences in chapter 10. For Sara, learning the clarinet proved one of the domains in which she realized her limitations (as discussed in chapter 8), but she was now enjoying singing in the school choir.

10. As any learning theorist or teacher knows, learning progresses through hills and plateaus; what these parents are finding hard is how to sustain their children’s motivation through the plateaus. Yet as the research on sustaining children’s interests makes clear, this is what makes the difference between taking up an interest and really developing it. See Barron (2006) and Renninger and Hidi (2011).
11. Green (2008) takes on this challenge directly in her analysis of building informal music learning into the curriculum. In fairness to the school, we did not set out to investigate this systematically, and so our observations must remain tentative.
12. Such a disinterested approach is very much the bourgeois paradigm of “distanciation” as described by Bourdieu (1984). For a contrasting analysis of constructive links between youth-led fan interests and educational opportunity, see Jenkins et al. (2007).
14. For instance, she wanted to move to a well-known music school elsewhere in London, because of its reputation for artiness, as opposed to VFS’s Science and Maths designation. For a further discussion of Giselle’s and Fesse’s artiness, see Sefton-Green (2015).
15. See Green (2008). For an extended analysis of building on informal learning processes within the school curriculum of learning, see also the work of Musical Futures, at www.musicalfutures.org, as an attempt to formalize such approaches.
16. This orientation is in line with the artistic critique of capitalism outlined in Boltanski and Chiapello (2007).
19. For use of YouTube in informal learning and culture, see Burgess et al. (2009) and K. Miller (2012).
20. Other fields of interest (e.g., sports) might also represent fruitful domains for observing similar processes of informal learning, although music, we suggest, provides a particularly insightful route into analyzing the reproduction of cultural and social capital because musical taste cultures are strongly stratified by social class in ways that are widely recognized and institutionally valued. See note 2 above.
21. What appears to make the difference between these girls and the others in this chapter is what McPherson (2005) calls “thinking musically,” the mix of musical imagination, listening practices, and task-oriented strategies that enable sustained progression in music learning and that bear little relation to measures of time spent practicing or external rewards offered for achievement.
23. Alternative domains could have been that of sports or computer gaming, bringing different young people to the fore but, we suggest, resulting in similar arguments, although see Catterall (2009) for an argument that arts activities outperform all others.
24. See the approach to learning in, across, and between contexts in Erstad et al. (2016).
25. Relatedly, the after-school play rehearsals in which Max was involved supported an atmosphere of relaxed and irreverent fun overlaying an intense pedagogy based on clear direction, focused practice, extensive repetition, and yet no language of discipline or levels. Although his piano lesson lacked the relaxed
atmosphere, the sense of purpose in practicing the next steps in a clearly laid-out set of tasks was similar, as was his determination to succeed.


27. The distinction between avant-garde and bohemian is a difficult one to draw, given that both “depend on a stance of separation from the putative mainstream of culture, . . . both seek programmatically to break down barriers between art and life and to fuse them in a integral aestheticisation of everyday life, . . . [and] both are marked by ambiguous ties to popular culture” (T. Miller, 2005, p. 100). See also Nicholson (2003).

28. Bennett et al. (2009, p. 93) suggest the label “subcultural capital,” which they define as “a matter of showing enthusiasm, allegiance and discriminating taste through a relationship to contemporary forms.” While noting that Sedat’s saz community is hardly “contemporary,” given its lengthy tradition in his country and culture of origin, this label is helpful for their further observation that this capital is not convertible, into other domains of knowledge and recognition or other forms of capital.

Chapter 10. Life Trajectories, Social Mobility, and Cultural Capital


2. The exceptions included those who were withdrawn from some lessons for support with their English, Sara’s selection for an additional astronomy GCSE, and Adam, who had taken a German GCSE.

3. A smattering of vocational courses was also on offer, allowing a practically oriented engagement: for example, music BTEC was a more technologically oriented course including aspects of business, while music GCSE was more theoretical, requiring the ability to read music. As should be clear, British education tends to prioritize academic selection and stratification, offering fewer of the second chances that lie at the heart of the US education system. See Goldin and Katz (2008) and M. Rose (2009).

4. See studies deriving from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, for example, Merleau-Ponty (1979).


6. Thomson describes this process as part of the challenges of researching “identity in process” (2009, p. 15). In reviewing how the young people had changed over the year, in how they talked to us and how they talked about themselves, it seemed to us that such reflexivity emerges particularly during the early teenage years.

7. For the classic study of how young teenage girls “lose their voice,” symbolically, psychologically, and sociologically, see Gilligan (1993). For more recent work, see Walkerdine et al. (2001). On how boys’ masculinity is constructed as problematic within the education system, see Willis (1978). For more recent work, see Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2013).

9. See Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) for a discussion of how such language relies on metaphors that are problematically teleological in nature.

10. Bernstein (1970). A good example of the effort to make educational reform the crucible for any and all kinds of change that might lead to greater social mobility is the research and advocacy offered by the Sutton Trust (see www.suttontrust.com/research).

11. For worried parents, the fact that many teenagers spend so much time on computers is particularly ambiguous: is it a sign of a marketable interest and expertise developing or quite the opposite?

12. Indeed, recent studies of social development agree that interest-driven learning (or finding one’s “spark”) is effective. See Barron (2006), Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1997), Renninger and Hidi (2011), Peppler (2013), and Ben-Eliyahu et al. (2014).

13. All of the details in Sara’s learning identity clearly show the impact of the “concerted cultivation” (Lareau, 2011) that her parents have invested in her.

14. In the UK system, it is common to change school for the last two years, 12 and 13 (known as Sixth Form, in which A-levels are taken), with young people often seeking a change of scene or educational level or specialism.

15. As we saw in chapter 9, the class position of Fesse, as the child of migrants, was difficult to describe. Although not well-off economically, his siblings who lived in the family home were educated and working in arts fields, so the suggestion that it is more likely middle-class families who consider working in the arts, and that he might not appear to come from such a background, cannot be taken at face value.

16. It is notable that these are mainly middle-class young people exploring values captured by Boltanski and Chiapello’s (2007) artistic critique of the constraints of capitalism.

17. It may be that social networking will not retain its present hold over young people’s attention, but as Horst (2010b, p. 92) has put it, for this generation, joining Facebook represents a “coming of age in networked public culture.”

18. See our account of method and transcription conventions in chapter 2.

19. Relatedly, we discussed in chapter 9 how Giselle positioned her music lessons as part of the work she was engaged in to become an artist, building a plan that integrates artistic desires with a realistic appraisal of what it means to succeed as an artist and make a living. Both Giselle and Megan had fathers working at home as self-employed artists/designers offering a model of some security, although in Giselle’s case, income seemed to be more precarious. In chapters 8 and 9, too, we theorized this life choice in terms of bohemian cultural capital.

20. We could perhaps continue through the rest of the class in this way; see, for instance, our description in chapters 7 and 9 of the considerable cultural and economic investments that Dom’s and Sedat’s families were making to ensure, for Dom, a competitive middle-class future and, for Sedat, a securely embedded member of his community.

21. For an extended discussion of this phenomenon, see Kehily (2002).
22. See, for example, Weis (2004), Williamson (2004), MacLeod (2009), Lareau (2011), and Heath (2012). These studies question whether people end up living predestined lives—following the paths that could have been predicted for them—or whether and in what ways individuals have exercised their own capabilities to follow different trajectories to be explored. The time scale of some of these books is generational, thus allowing the classic measures of social reproduction—the life chances of the child to be set against those of the parent—to be explored and explained. The challenge in these accounts is to show how predictable and predicted the lives of the younger generation are and how individuals are swept away by larger forces over which they have little control, despite the attention to exceptional cases.

23. As MacLeod puts it, the “white trash kids” (whom he calls “The Hallway Hangers”) saw a ladder of opportunity but no rungs on it for them. Meanwhile, the black kids (“The Brothers”), who internalized their failure, were less angry at the world but ultimately more hurt. So when he returned after eight years, he found these young men still living out their problems. The white men were variously in jail, on drugs, or in low-paid work, while the black men were in even less secure jobs and often badly treated, and yet they picked themselves up and were ready to try again, less angry than disappointed. As MacLeod wittily summarizes, they were all “outclassed and outcaste,” for society is structured so that some must lose. A further 15 years on, when these men had reached 40, MacLeod’s colleagues revisited them, finding that, for all the complexities of particular lives lived in particular circumstances in a particular time, “the bottom line is that social reproduction marches on” (2009, p. 410). See also Sennett and Cobb (1972) and McClelland and Karen (2009).


25. Thomson et al. (2002); see also Thomson (2009).

26. See Bennett et al. (2009).

Conclusion

1. See Outhwaite (1994, writing about the work of Jürgen Habermas).

2. See www.world-challenge.co.uk (quoted from www.world-challenge.co.uk/pages/benefits-students.asp). World Challenge is one of the brands owned by a FTSE 100 leisure company: www.tuitravelplc.com/brand-experience/explore-all-our-brands/2/484/#.U6LpKxa2vxc. Its website linked to various forms of accreditation, offering clear advice about how the experience would help build a portfolio of valued skills and so contribute to participants’ CVs and university applications. While this discourse was broadly accepted by the school, it may well have functioned more as a pretext than as a sincerely meant educational ideology. What matters is that we heard no alternative discourse for those who were involved—or those who were not involved—to frame their activities; perhaps for this reason, talk about the World Challenge centered on practical arrangements, sums raised, and hopes for the holiday.
3. Here, as elsewhere in this book, we saw how differences in economic and cultural capital worked to perpetuate social inequality—in this instance, excluding, for example, Abby, who we saw try valiantly with her application, only for it to be rejected, while giving Gideon a second chance.

4. Our interviews with teachers revealed this concern with the school’s authority, which had the effect of disempowering the young people. For instance, in one after-school meeting we observed, this top-down stance was illustrated by Julie sitting behind her computer, talking authoritatively over the young people’s variously tentative or silly suggestions. While she retained her authority, the young people felt free to be childish, unburdened by the commitment that a more equal interaction would have required of them. See also Crook (2011), Grant (2011), Player-Koro (2013), Vickery (2014).

5. This is partly because participatory websites are often poorly thought through, even patronizing, in their efforts to appeal to children (Banaji and Buckingham, 2013; Livingstone, 2007).


7. These are most evident in the school’s emphasis on standardization and individual achievement (chapter 6), the school itself being in competition with other schools in the borough and even the country. Paralleling many critiques of the school, Webb (2011, p. 97) argues that “over the last century, dominant conceptions of family have transformed; from a site of affect to be protected from the vagaries of the outside world, the family has become a modern, transactional institution,” subject to political, policy, and educational expectations and anxieties.

8. See Bennett et al. (2009), Biressi and Nunn (2013), Skeggs (2013), and Social Attitudes of Young People Community of Interest (2014).

9. Even though they regard the very idea of “the child” as a means by which parents might reenchant their lives in disillusioned times (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). For a critique, see Vincent and Ball (2007) on middle-class families and the child as “project.” We note that others have, however, sought to apply the idea of later modernity to the ways in which children and young people find opportunities for agency in a world largely structured for them by adults. See Stakrursd (2013), Fornäs and Bolin (1995), Corsaro (1997), James et al. (1998), Furlong and Cartmel (2006), and France (2007). For a recent analysis that transcends the individual/society opposition by reading agency in relational terms, see Oswell (2012).


11. Giddens (1991), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), Bauman (2005). As Brannen and Nilsen (2005) observe, while the notion of a pressured and uncertain choice biography finds some resonance in empirical research, that same research reveals a diversity of strategies by which young people meet this challenge, with varying outcomes that themselves continue to be shaped by gender and social class.
13. This flexibility meant that we could not simply map wealthier and poorer families onto competitive or conservative approaches, respectively, as discussed in chapters 8 and 9 in relation to multiple forms of cultural capital.
15. This shift might well form part of the analysis of “the quantified self.” Lupton (2014) explicitly links self-tracking systems to the attempt to assert a reflexive sense of control over the self when faced with the uncertainties and pressures on individuals living in the risk society.
17. Only for Yusuf did we see equally stringent pressures applied at school, home, and online, with his learning “leveled” in all places; but he was the exception that pointed to the rule.
18. So Jenna enjoyed a friendship with Max and Alice, and Shane with some of the more middle-class boys like Dominic. But these might be only the weak and bridging ties identified by social network theorists (Granovetter, 1983), in contrast to what appeared to be deeper ties between Sedat and the local Turkish community, and a deeper disconnect between Mark or Yusuf, for example, and the middle-class boys in the class.
19. Hills et al. (2010), Corak (2013), Cribb et al. (2013). Families draw on a range of economic, cultural, and subcultural resources, and while these seem likely to result in social reproduction of status from parents to children, we cannot predict this categorically from our year with the class. We saw some signs of “downward mobility” and some of upward mobility; across the range of backgrounds, we saw efforts to recuperate children who were struggling; we also saw interests go unsupported and pathways become blocked.
20. See the collection edited by Giroux (1983) for a discussion of the hidden curriculum and Willis (1978) on “learning to labor.” Nayak (2003, p. 169) draws similar conclusions regarding the increasingly placeless and destabilized traditions of youth cultures in a globalizing world. Indeed, he concludes, perhaps provocatively, “for many young people, inhabiting the de-industrial landscapes where my research was undertaken, life-long labour and community ties to the mill or colliery would now appear to offer welcome respite against unemployment, insecurity and a sense of dislocation.”
22. See Arnett (2011) and Cunningham (1995).
25. Intensification is not to be underestimated as a form of social change. As “daily life becomes increasingly saturated in communicational practices and increasingly dependent on the ubiquitous presence-availability, via electronic media, of information and human resources . . . this density of communicational connectedness promotes a new kind of intensity in everyday experience, mixing pace and vibrancy” (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 87).
26. Or, in the language of social network analysis, the metaphor is limited in its focus on links over nodes, thereby prioritizing extended social relations over grounded groupings; further, by tending to treat all links as equivalent, it seems to prioritize weak ties over strong ties.

27. Constructive examples included Giselle’s music making (along with her game playing and other creative digital activities), which connected learning activities at home and outside, alone and with family or peers, offline and online, although recognition in the school was only partial (chapter 9). Examples of disconnection included the ways that the black boys in chapter 5 were encouraged to leave their cultural identity outside the history classroom or how definitions of learning and progression in Yusuf’s home were designed to dovetail with school learning but did not (chapter 8).

28. The young people’s civility online was discussed in chapters 3 and 4. It may be that the very extensiveness of Facebook networks among this cohort—taking in nearly the whole class and, indeed, much of the year group as well as peers beyond the school—meant that it functioned as a kind of digital extension of school life. Not to be civil on Facebook to people in the class or to people you do not know very well would cause difficulties the next day at school. Most of the young people (although not all and not always) were keen to avoid the eruption of such difficulties within the closely managed, largely civil sphere of the school.

29. Arguably, it would have been more disheartening to find evidence of young people’s active embrace of competitive individualism, which for the most part we did not.

30. As noted in chapter 4, Strathern (1996) analyzes the necessity of “cutting the network” so that connections are limited and can, thereby, be deepened (rather than weak ties forever multiplied). In finding a balance between fewer deep or strong ties and more weak ties, the simple notion of connection becomes unhelpful. For instance, Smart (2007) frames connectedness not in terms of ever-extending networked individualism (Wellman and Rainie, 2012) but in terms of fewer deep relationships, prioritizing the same sense of local and familial embeddedness that we found to be important.


33. Bruns (2008); see also Jenkins (2006) and Ito et al. (2013).


35. Buckingham et al. (2001) discuss families’ probably misplaced investment in all kinds of homework materials, home tutors, and “edutainment” technologies. Gutiérrez et al. (2010) examine middle-class families’ beliefs in the value of a busy schedule of enrichment activities. Lareau (2011) shows how middle-class families inculcate a sense of entitlement in their children along with the communicative skills to ensure they get what is on offer. See also Brantlinger’s (2003) account
of how middle-class parents justify their strategies to get ahead. Relatedly, Threadgold and Nilan (2009, p. 48) argue that privileged youths’ advantage is reproduced partly by their developing reflexivity, since “being reflexive, and successfully negotiating future risks, both real and perceived, constitutes privileged cultural capital.”

36. Such inequalities were echoed in our class. For some of the higher-achieving individuals, continuities across home and school appeared advantageous (Sara and Dom). Others introduced a degree of disconnection in order to retain their own vision of pedagogy and learning identity (Giselle, Megan, Max). Meanwhile, for some of the lower-achieving individuals, continuities across sites may have compounded disadvantage (Lydia, Shane), making sense of their parents’ efforts to keep home separate (Abby, Sedat).

37. Loveless and Williamson (2013); see also Cuban (1986), Buckingham et al. (2001), Monahan (2005), Selwyn (2010, 2013, 2014), and Bandy (2012).

38. As Loveless and Williamson (2013, p. 25) put it, in popular visions of connected learning and connected communities, “the potential for creative autonomy is shaped, controlled, and curtailed by a concentration of interlocking corporate multimedia, financial trade, and government strategies which have permitted the expansion of for-profit entertainment and the commodification of personal freedom.” Bakan (2012, pp. 173–174) is yet more pessimistic, asserting that “a larger and more ominous threat is big business’s ongoing campaign to co-opt the idealism of youth for its own self-interested purposes. . . . As a result, corporations have begun creating, sponsoring, and infiltrating youth-driven environmental and social justice campaigns as central parts of their marketing strategies.”

39. Appealing both to the educational and domestic market, a host of technology and educational providers are developing and promoting ever more narrow, individualistic, instrumental, and competitive tools to teachers and parents. These, too, undercut the promise of connected learning, as witnessed in the class.

40. While we have not pursued studies of educational innovation in this book, it may be intriguing for advocates of connected or seamless or blended learning to note that Akkerman and Bakker (2011) identify that potential learning mechanisms that occur at boundaries are precisely stimulated rather than undermined by disconnections.

41. Digital affordances are discussed in chapter 4 as primarily persistence, scalability, asynchronicity, replicability, and searchability (boyd, 2014).

42. Lupton (2014). For critical reflections on the logics of digitally networked systems, see van Dijck (2013a).

Appendix
1. On the validity of such indicators, see Hills et al. (2010).
2. See Bennett et al. (2009).
3. This was partly a matter of ethnicity and partly also of family composition: many of the poorer families were, as noted here, from ethnic minority backgrounds.
(and some were well educated, such as the families of Mark, Sergei, and Fesse), while some were poorer than might be expected from their education or employment because they were single-parent families (such as the families of Dilruba and Nick).

4. In this, they illustrate the phenomenon of “model minorities”; see Kao (1995).


6. Such methods have been variously used by social researchers to map the home; we were especially influenced by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1990) and by Silverstone et al. (1992).

7. By “digital footprints,” we simply mean whatever could be found online when searching using the young people’s names or nicknames.

8. The examples that we learned most from were Lareau (2011) and MacLeod (2009). See chapter 10.

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