

Epilogue

Jan Newberry

By its very nature, child and youth studies is transdisciplinary. Yet, conversations that truly cross epistemological and ontological categories remain difficult. The first-ever Intersections of Childhood symposium illustrated how risky and rewarding is the talk that enters into the spaces between established categories. In these spaces, created by acts of refusal as well as creation, new possibilities arise for imagining what youth, the digital, and indigeneity can mean.

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The Institute for Child and Youth Studies (I-CYS) at the University of Lethbridge was formally established in 2011 as a multidisciplinary institute devoted to examining what children and youth mean as social, demographic, artistic, legal, and existential categories. As the institute has grown, our role in graduate education has expanded significantly. To realize the benefits of this growth, we decided to pursue a new model of research connection and dissemination: the organization of a symposium by graduate students themselves. The goal was to encourage the kind of professional scholarly skill-building that is involved in choosing keynote speakers, organizing a workshop or symposium around a theme, collecting and editing papers (or other media), and seeking an outlet for this work. As the Acting Director of I-CYS at the time, I could not be prouder of what Victoria Holec and Amy Mack have achieved through our inaugural symposium, especially their attention to engagement beyond academia.

Their first decision was to choose a theme. Amy's Master's research on simulation in military-style videogames meant that she had explored the anthropology of digital worlds along with the limits and opportunities afforded by working with dispersed virtual communities. Victoria had recently shifted from Master's work in neuroscience to a Ph.D. program on cultural, social, and political thought. Her interest in the concept of Millennials as a digital phenomenon as well as a representational reality brought her to consider the idea of generation and its relationship to how youth as a category is constituted. Clearly, there was an overlap on the question of the digital, and the connection to I-CYS directed them to the issues of the young. Yet, there was a third circle in the emerging Venn diagram that led to the naming of this first symposium as *At the Intersections of Childhood*, and that was Indigenous issues. Raising Spirit is a seven-year collaboration between the Institute and a local agency devoted to Indigenous children and families here in southern Alberta. The project has unfolded in the context of the

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Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (2015) final report on the effects of residential schooling. Amy was the lead researcher and project manager for this project for two years before she entered a doctoral program in Anthropology at the University of Alberta this fall.

After defining these three themes, Victoria and Amy then sought out keynotes and presenters who could speak to at least two of the themes. They then organized a two-day workshop including the authors included here in the special collection. Before the full-day of talks, these authors met in a workshopping session. Other than the researchers affiliated with the University of Lethbridge, we were unacquainted. So, our process of working through a set of drafts mirrored the collaborative research process we consider in the articles here. We tried to produce a space to talk across disciplines and experiences, to enact the kind of epistemological cross-talk that challenges identity-based categories, and to struggle with ongoing colonial violence of those categories. As we worked through the various shared and discordant registers of interpretation, we came to see that the process of this awkward conversation was the pay-off we all desired. It was an unfinished, occasionally unvoiced, set of transactions that offered the possibility for “recognition, renegotiation, and reconciliation” (Spring and Fox, this volume).

Spaces that offer the possibility for recognition and renegotiation require the risk of vulnerability. In the cases described here, the young people took part in work that put their identities at risk. The idea of a space that is liminal and somehow between was a consistent thread in our conversations and our researches. This kind of space aligns with the ethical space between worldviews identified by Ermine (2007). Perhaps seeing the existence of this space requires the two-eyed seeing and both-ways knowing that Hogue and Forrest consider (in this volume). Bhabha (1994) considers the post-colonial potential of such liminal third spaces, both betwixt and between (Turner 1992). During our workshopping we created the kind of fragile

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space for translation that most of us had also created methodologically in our separate engagements. Liminal spaces are simultaneously dangerous and productive: Spaces of genesis and creation.

Creative work was another common theme, one that touches on the longstanding concern about recognizing the voice, the agency, and the expertise of the young. We were all eager to do that kind of recognition work, and yet, many of us were outfoxed by the young people we worked with. Using an animal metaphor here is not just a nod to Indigenous ways of knowing and the politics of relationality, but also an acknowledgement that the youth described here moved swiftly over landscapes that we have only just begun to map ourselves. Most of us had to confront acts of refusal: Refusing to give voice, refusing to share expertise, refusing to talk in the ways we expected. The consistent thread of alternative modes of communication and interpretation used by youth directed us to moments of refusal as a powerful and instructive part of the process we all came to value. Our shared recognition of this unified us briefly.

Our afternoon conversation across disciplines and experiences was an ephemeral moment of engagement and enactment. We created our own liminal third space, and we came to recognize that this process, this moment of enactment was significant. It was this recognition, and not just the recognition of colonial violence and continuing domination, that led us to configure this collection around methodological process as critical praxis. These moments of engagement were what we found at the intersection of the digital, youth, and indigeneity.

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References

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