

Global Youth and Spaces of Belonging in China, Australia and Tanzania

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At the Youth Research Centre we acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which our centre is located and where we conduct our research and teaching. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and future.

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INTRODUCTION

Hernán Cuervo & Johanna Wyn

The question ‘where and how do young people belong?’ is central to youth studies, as young people are increasingly mobile, and many are ever more marginalised from economic participation. On a global scale it is common for young people to move to metropolitan areas for education, responding to global labour markets and seeking refuge from environmental and economic degradation, and asylum from violence. This mobility inevitably raises questions about the nature and quality of young people’s connections with people and place (or ‘belonging’). Even for those young people that are ‘stuck’ (Popkewitz, 1998) in their local places, the mobility and flow of global ideas, images, and discourses impacts on their identities by linking them to the ‘currents of modernity that flow across the world’ (Dolby & Rizvi, 2008, p. 5). Increasing rates of educational participation raise the question of how a more diverse population of young people belong in educational institutions. Further, on a global scale, young people bear the brunt of economic policies that are failing to deliver sufficient jobs to enable them to make a livelihood, which means that many young people become outsiders in their own societies. New shades of grey between employment and unemployment are emerging, as young people are engaging in precarious and insecure work. This means that young people’s place in society is far from secure.

Belonging has tended to be implicit in youth research. However, there is a growing interest in understanding more about how young people put together the complex elements of life that enable them to be connected, included, to be well, to participate, and to be economically stable (Tilleczek, 2010). Sociological research on young people’s belonging covers multiple domains and draws on a wide range of conceptual frameworks. For example, Yuval-Davis (2006) explains that belonging occurs across three interrelated dimensions: social location; identification and emotional attachment; and ethics and political values, creating a link between the sociology of identities and emotions and the sociology of power. Taking up a different register, and drawing on Butler (1997), Bell (1999) argues that belonging is a performance, involving everyday practices as well as ritualised or celebratory practices. The performative and everyday aspect of belonging is also explored by Fallow, Jørgensen and Knudsen (2013). They focus specifically on the way in which mobility and the potential for mobility shape people’s sense of place and influence belonging in everyday life. That is, having a sense of belonging is a product of the relationships between people, place and mobility (Kaufman, 2002).

Researchers have begun to analyse how and where young people belong – both subjectively and structurally in rapidly changing social and economic contexts. Examples include research that focuses on the synergies between youth cultures and transitions research (Furlong, et al., 2011) on the intersections between locality and biography (Cuervo & Wyn, 2012; 2014; Hall,

Coffey & Lashua, 2009; Massey, 2005); and on struggles for identity (McDonald, 1999; Stokes, 2012). Other studies focus on how affective and cultural practices, developed over time through daily rituals and structured in specific social relations, give meaning and value to young people’s identity in rural places (Giardiello, 2015; Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody, 2006); while other significant work concentrates on the re-imagining of youth, places and collectivities through migratory movements (Haukanes, 2013), drawing on the notion of cosmopolitanism to critique binaries such as local/global or urban/rural (Skrbis, Woodward & Dean, 2014).

An explicit focus on belonging has also emerged in the post-subcultural debates about young people (see for example Baker et al., 2015). Drawing on ‘new and dynamic conceptualisations of contemporary belongings’ to open up understanding of how young people are navigating their lives, Robards’s analyses ‘everyday belongings’ to reveal the multiple, complex and sometimes contradictory affiliations of young people in everyday life as ‘systems of belonging’ (Robards, 2015, p. 125). In different ways, these studies give visibility to the quality of relationships and the nature of connections that enable young people to participate fully in their communities in the present and to have a basis for their aspirations and future directions. It places the focus on the resources that young people draw on to navigate the institutional and structural opportunities and constraints in their lives.

The three studies that inform this report contribute to this body of work by exploring three spaces of belonging for young people: online communities in China, an alternative program in a secondary school in Australia and sports organisations in Tanzania. These studies by Jun Fu, Babak Dadvand and John Chalukulu draw on their PhD research projects at the Youth Research Centre under the supervision of Professor Johanna Wyn and Dr Hernán Cuervo. They draw on different conceptual frameworks to understand forms of belonging, the dynamics that create a sense of community and the processes that enable young people to be included in their worlds. Their analyses open up thinking about the nature of belonging in a global context where social, economic, cultural and political developments are creating new mobilities (on a national and international scale) and ways of being, and are re-shaping young people’s relationship to civic society, to institutions and connection to significant others. Together, these studies illustrate common pressing issues among youth. They reveal the need for spaces that enhance meaningful participation for young people; the role that, offline and online, communities play in promoting young people’s wellbeing and a sense of community; and the impact that institutions (e.g. schools, welfare agencies) have on young people’s everyday lives. While each study is embedded in its own social, political and economic context, they all reflect the active, and often invisible, work that youth do to shape their lives and their collective futures through practices of belonging.

CHAPTER 1:

ONLINE SPACES OF BELONGING IN CHINA

Jun Fu

The experience of belonging is crucial for young people's wellbeing. This chapter examines young Chinese internet users' experiences of belonging through an analysis of their online identity performances on different social media platforms. Drawing on a qualitative research project about the online citizenship practices of 31 young people from urban China, I explore the ways in which they navigate and experience different senses of belonging in the Chinese internet space.

Participants in this study mainly perform two forms of identity on different Chinese social media platforms. On the platform where they can get access to their existing social networks in their physical life (WeChat), they tend to perform an identity homogenous with the one they perform in physical life by sharing 'lightweight' content (Ito & Okabe, 2005) such as happy life moments and selfies. On the platform where their followers are strangers but who share similar values (Weibo), they are more likely to perform the ideological values they identify with. These values as the basis of their online identity formation indicate the future they want both for themselves and their society.

Reflecting the state of the current Chinese society and the situation of younger generations in China, this chapter examines how young Chinese internet users experience belonging on the internet and briefly explores the kinds of belonging they experience through different online identity performances. I argue that young Chinese internet users' identity performances across different online social media platforms enable them to experience different senses of belonging, both of which are related to their wellbeing. The virtual interaction triggered by the lightweight content they share on WeChat enables them to feel immediate connection to the social networks in physical life. The experience of this connection *per se* provides a sense of belonging which is an antidote to their fragmented, fast-paced, and atomized city lives. Weibo engagements connect them with others who share similar values and enable a sense of political and spiritual belonging which can help them navigate their opportunities and clarify values.

Belonging

This analysis draws on the idea of belonging as an emotional attachment to places and groups which makes individuals feel safe or at home in different ways (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Belonging is generated in individual's active engagement with the structure and discourses of social contexts and through seeking to belong in these contexts (Brokenleg, 1998; Wyn & White, 1997). Bell (1999) argues that belonging is constituted through repetitive performances which are underpinned by norms and practices sustained by a community or group. These repetitive performances 'cultivate the sign and the sense of belonging' (Bell, 1999, p. 3). Since this performance can be subversive to community norms and practice (Beck & Levy, 2013), belonging exists in the dynamics of individual's engagement with their social context, and has a fluid, relational, and on-going nature (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

The drastic transformation of the Chinese society in the past few decades has significantly changed the resources for belonging. Its relatively simple class structure was replaced by increasing social diversification and differentiation. Modernization and population migration have significantly restructured spaces and people's connection to places, families and social groups. The co-existence and contestation of multiple political and ethical values, such as traditional Chinese ethical and political values, the dominant communist ideology in contemporary China, and more recently the popularity of economic liberalism and the influx of liberal and democratic values from western societies have all led to a multiplicity of values in Chinese society. The immense challenges (as well as opportunities) that these changes pose for young people's sense of belonging are visible in their online engagements, opening up new ways of belonging.

The value of the internet for people's experience of belonging is well documented (Davis, 2012; Johns, 2014; Russell, Toomey, Crockett, & Laub, 2010). As the world's largest user group, Chinese internet users experience a hugely diversified senses of belonging through identifying with values (Yang, 2009), online culture (Latham, 2012), engaging with different online communities such as parenting websites (Wang, 2003) and online game communities (Lindtner & Szablewicz, 2011). However, few studies have investigated young Chinese internet users' online practice through the lens of belonging.

The study

The study recruited 31 Chinese urban youth aged from 19-33 as participants. The majority are studying or working in metropolises (such as Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen) and big cities along the south-eastern coastal area. Two categories of data were collected: the online content participants post on their social media pages; and interviews that generated data about the background information and stories behind their online participation and their accounts of their engagement. Combining these two kinds of data enables an understanding of the nature and experience of belonging online for the research participants.

There are two major social media platforms in China, Weibo and WeChat. Weibo is an open micro-blogging service which has enabled grassroots participation in China. WeChat is a closed platform on which people can communicate to share life moments and other online content. Normally, contacts on WeChat are people they know in their physical life. The results of this study show that young Chinese internet users perform different identities on Weibo and WeChat to experience two different senses of belonging which I elaborate as follows.

***Cunzaigan* (sense of existence) on WeChat**

Most of the participants actively share life moments on WeChat. When asked about the reason for doing this, a 27 years old investment consultant in Guangzhou said:

It is mainly for experiencing *Cunzaigan* (a sense of existence), since my university classmates are located in different places, sharing this stuff can maintain the temperature of our relationship. Also, these days, people are all busy with work, we do not have much time to catch up with friends, doing this can at least tell them I am still alive and also let me know that they are alive as well.

Throughout the interview, this participant re-stated several times the reason for being involved in WeChat:

This city is crowded, but most people do not exist to you because you do not know them... you can only confirm your existence through interacting with other people. At work, everybody is busy, after work, you just go home and sleep, you do not even see your families very often. WeChat is a convenient way to prove to yourself that you still exist. For me, this is the most important function.

The word *Cunzaigan* was also used by other participants to describe their sharing on WeChat. A 26 old public relations manager in an advertising company in Shenzhen said he uploaded a photo of his new haircut

on WeChat, asking his friends to comment. For him, he said, it did not matter how his friends commented or even if they teased him, it is the interaction per se that mattered. The importance of presence and interaction on WeChat is illustrated by participants' efforts to protect and maintain connection. They only share interesting or pleasant content which is suitable for public scrutiny, and are less likely to express strong opinions or values in order to avoid possible conflict with friends holding different political or ideological opinions.

Since the participants of this study live in Chinese urban areas characterised by a fast pace of life and social fragmentation, they need an easily accessible way to experience a sense of immediate connection to people they know in their physical life. As WeChat aggregates their social connections in physical life, their sharing in this space can give them a virtual presence in the social network of their physical life. Their selective disclosure of personal information and their interaction with their friends on WeChat provide a 'proof of presence' (Laurent & Bouzeffrane, 2015, p. 15) through which they experience a sense of belonging to their social network in physical life, and solidify their identities in relation to this network.

***Sanguan* (three views) on Weibo**

In strong contrast to their identity performances on WeChat, which is used mainly to experience a feeling when existence by sharing 'lightweight' content (Ito & Okabe, 2005), participants are much more outspoken on performing their political and ideological views/values on Weibo. On this platform most followers are unknown to each other in their physical life. This performance is motivated by 'forming and maintaining the right *Sanguan*' to quote their words. The word *Sanguan* is a widely used word on the Chinese internet. It literally means 'three views' which include *rensheng guan* (view of life), *shijie guan* (view of the world), and *jiazhi guan* (view of value). In a general sense, the values they perform explicitly or implicitly on Weibo mainly encompass social equality and justice, individual rights and freedom, democracy, and care for marginalised and underprivileged groups.

One participant from Guangzhou wrote in his Weibo, 'We want democracy and freedom of speech, whoever does not, we'll take him down'. Another participant from Shenzhen posted 'liberalism plus independent personality', and explained in the interview that this is his personal goal. Although some participants make explicit declarations, many more choose to express opinions and perform their values through commenting on or reposting other people's Weibo posts about a wide range of social and political issues. One participant forwarded the post below on his Weibo page to express his support for gender equality:

Housewife is a formal profession, the direct economic value they create can easily exceed half of the family income; while the indirect social value created by them is immeasurable...promoting women's rights, is not to doubt the value of the existence of this profession, but to respect the choice of each woman and recognize their contribution.

Another participant showed his concern about equality for ethnic minority groups in China by forwarding an article reflecting the policy for candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds getting extra marks in national college entrance examinations. The latter endorsed the equal rights of ethnic minorities by criticising a news report about a university graduation ceremony in which all the students were required to wear traditional Han Chinese clothes. Still another participant, a medical student, posted knowledge she gained about the HIV virus that corrects common misunderstandings of HIV sufferers and tried to endorse equal working rights for them. One participant, a recent graduate, forwarded a short Japanese video entitled 'Life is not a Marathon' which criticized normalised criteria for success and endorsed a pluralistic view of success which acknowledges personal characteristics, interests, and choices. Some participants also reveal pro-democratic views in online posts. A participant who works at a media studio in Beijing posted a photo he took in Japan on Weibo. The picture shows a politician standing in heavy snow to promote his political program. Below is his account of this post:

...I know all the politicians in the world are making a show, but even for a show, I think that Japanese politician was doing it with great sincerity, because that day it was really windy and snowy, at least, to me, his show is more convincing and makes me more comfortable than those I see in Chinese media. Our politicians still need others to hold umbrella for them when they go out for inspection.

Through posting these values on social media, participants find and connect to strangers who share these values, and with whom they form a community within which they can feel a sense of belonging. A participant who is a teacher in Beijing explained the main reason she uses Weibo as follows:

It can find like-minded people for you...you can tell if a person's values are compatible with yours by simply check the people he/she follows on Weibo.

The values with which they identify become the basis for the construction of both their personal and collective identities (Gerbaudo, 2014). Since these values are still in competition with political and traditional cultural values in Chinese society, and do not have widespread currency in mainstream media or social practice in current Chinese society, Weibo provides a relatively free space for young Chinese internet users to perform these values and connect with each other. Online communities, constructed through the performance of these values, enable them to shape identities that may never have developed in their absence.

In sum, young Chinese internet users perform different identities repeatedly over time on WeChat and Weibo. These performances enable them to experience different senses of belonging which are equally important for their well-being in the current complex and rapidly-changing Chinese society.

CHAPTER 2: BELONGING AND PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL IN AUSTRALIA

Babak Dadvand

The notion of belonging is used in education research to address a range of school-related issues. For example, weak social bonding and poor interpersonal relationships with teachers and school staff correlate with disruptive conduct, passivity, withdrawal, disinterest and lack of initiative (Demagnet & Van Houtte, 2012; Schulz & Rubel, 2011). There is also evidence that connects a weak sense of school belonging to behaviours such as violence, smoking, alcohol consumption and marijuana use among young people (Pittman & Richmond, 2007). Given the significant role that a sense of belonging plays in shaping young people's school behaviours, I draw upon this notion to explore the way in which a group of students who are marginalized in their school and classrooms participate. My research examines: a) how a sense of belonging to the school among those who experience issues such as poverty, complex home environments and disability affects their school participation, and b) what factors, both in the students' backgrounds and within the social space of the school, contributes to their sense of school belonging. Addressing school belonging and participation is important because schools are the major institutions where young people spend most of their time outside their families. Schools also impact on a range of social, economic and political outcomes for young people. Those who succeed in their school education can expect better employment opportunities, higher salaries and improved health and living conditions. Those who fail are more likely to find themselves in a vicious cycle of material disadvantage and social exclusion.

Belonging and School Participation

A sense of belonging is often communicated through expressions such as 'feeling at home', 'feeling at ease' or 'feeling welcomed' (Antonsich, 2010; Cuervo & Wyn, 2014). Underlying these expressions of affects, however, are more complex and often less visible processes that create spaces where a sense of belonging evolves. A significant contributor to young people's sense of belonging, and one that I explicate further throughout this chapter, is the sets of practices that characterize particular spaces such as schools and classrooms. These practices, which follow socially-sanctioned norms, values and expectations, have an impact on how individuals are ultimately positioned and treated in these spaces. Such positioning and treatment in turn influences the re-creation of space and a person's sense of belonging to it through the links it has with affects and participation.

What this means is that on the one hand, spaces of belonging become sites for active participation, and on the other hand, active participation produces spaces of belonging.

Understanding a sense of belonging along these lines can have three broad and inter-related implications for how we think about belonging and school participation. First, such an understanding draws our attention to the social processes that produce a sense of belonging. This is significant because rather than placing the responsibility of belonging on the individual, it brings to the fore the processes that allow or deny the *development* of a sense of belonging. The second implication relates to the acknowledgement that the school practices that produce belonging are not neutral and value-free. Rather, these practices are value-laden, founded on norms and values that are deemed to have social, economic and political significance: norms and values such as the ability to work hard and be disciplined, respect authority, compete, succeed in learning and achieve good results. Finally, understanding school belonging as a product of socially-sanctioned practices foregrounds how school practices can create boundaries of exclusion for those who, for any one or combination of reasons, do not possess the norms and dispositions sanctioned by the institution.

The study

The research that I draw on in the next section is part of a wider study of school participation among 12 students who were identified as 'disengaged' and at risk of early school leaving. I draw upon the concept of belonging to identify the social processes that create a sense of school *un*belonging among the students. I conducted my research in a government school located in a low socio-economic status suburb of Melbourne. I refer to the school as Parktown High School and the suburb as Parktown. Parktown has relatively high rates of poverty, unemployment, drug use and delinquency compared to the rest of Victoria. Parktown High School, in contrast, is known to be a centre of academic excellence. According to the data from My School Website, which reports on the performance of schools over standardized national tests undertaken as a part of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), the school accommodates over 1,700 students most of whom from the middle and top quarters in terms of their Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage.

Geographies of School Belonging and Exclusion

In this section I discuss the experiences of Alex (a pseudonym) whose weak sense of school belonging ultimately led him to drop out of Parktown High School. Alex is 14 years old and his parents separated a few years ago. Alex lives at home with his father who is a stonemason and his father's partner who works in a restaurant and has recently moved in with Alex and his father. Alex is identified as 'a retention risk' by the school and has a history of 'disruptive behaviours'. Alex's weak sense of school belonging has led to numerous unaccounted absences and frequent confrontations with his teachers. In my interview with him, Alex describes his school as "annoying, depressing and unappealing" before explaining how he almost got into a physical encounter with one of his teachers:

Alex: Like I almost had a fight with a teacher, a dude teacher. I almost had a fight with him because, it was in tutorial, he was sub, and he is like "Stay back after the class I need to talk to you" and I said "Okay I stay back." And he started raising his voice at me. He's like "Why weren't you doing your work?" and I'm like "I was doing my website for IT." It was about Bob Marley and he said that I didn't make the website. And I showed it to him and he said that's not it and I said, "Are you sure?" and I said "I'm leaving right now!" He's like, "No!" and then I said, "You know, whatever, I'm going, I am not talking anymore!" So he started talking and yelled at me. He grabbed my shoulder and pulled me back. And I'm like "Be careful what you do now because this could decide whether you either get fired or you get hurt because I guarantee!" Everyone else around there was looking at me and him. Everyone was dead silent.

While one cannot attribute all behavioural problems to a weak sense of school belonging, it is hard to refute the relationship that exists between the two. This relationship is evident in Alex's case. Subsequent to the above event, Alex received a disciplinary suspension for disrupting an exam session. He was removed from the session for throwing his shoe across the classroom during the exam. It is the succession of events like this that has set Alex at odds with his school. To get a better understanding of Alex' behaviours, we need to look at these acts of misconduct in the backdrop of the school practices that have created a space of *unbelonging* and subsequent confrontation for him. Alex complains about being constantly 'ignored' by his teachers because of his reputation as 'a bad kid':

Alex: You know how they [the teachers] always say put your hand up if you want help? And then like if you had your hand up, they *ignore* you. Like they look at you, and then they say I will come in a minute, and they don't come. Either they forget or just find somebody

else to do it, supposedly more important or more effective for them. [...] You know, I complain about being ignored by the teachers, you know. Like, they say hold on, I'll get to you in a minute, and then it's like... and then when they don't, it's like you had a whole period, I'm sure, for 30 seconds [you] could have just stopped by saying... even if he couldn't help me with it. And it's always the ones, like the *good kids*, you know good grades and stuff, they get acknowledged.

The above reflection highlights what Thomson (2007, p. 116) refers to as 'the paradox of visibility and invisibility' with which many young people struggle on a daily basis. That is, while these students feel they are highly visible in their school and classrooms, mostly for the reputation that they have acquired as 'bad kids', they feel neither heard nor supported in ways that would help them with their education. This has left many of these students in a state of confusion as to how they can overcome their normative categorization and its exclusionary consequences. For Alex, breaking through this vicious cycle of categorization and exclusion has become an almost impossible undertaking. His experiences of exclusion have turned Parktown High School into a space of *unbelonging* for him, which evokes negative affects.

Alex is by no means an exception in harbouring a sense of *unbelonging* and antagonism towards the school. Other students who find themselves on the margins of the mainstream school also complain about being ignored, excluded and left behind because of their reputation as bad kids. To better understand these accounts of exclusion and the sense of *unbelonging* that arises from them, we need to interrogate the commonsensical distinctions that are often made between 'good kids' and 'bad kids'. The questions that need to be asked in this regard are: 'What underpins the notion of 'good' student?' And 'how do schools respond to those who do not qualify as good student?'

Today, the model of 'good student' in many schools is someone who respects the norms of the school, complies with the institution and takes charge of their own learning. However, not all students fare equally well with the terms stipulated by this categorization. The more privileged students generally possess the dispositions that the school capitalizes on, dispositions such as respect for authority, the ability to be independent and achieve results. Students who possess and demonstrate such dispositions are more readily accepted by their teachers and as such are more likely to develop affective bonds with their school and a sense of affinity to its practices. In contrast, those like Alex who have more complex needs and backgrounds often fail to meet the expectations that their school places on them. It is, therefore, not surprising that this latter group often complains about exclusion from an institution whose ethos and one-size-fits-all practices have little resonance with their complex needs and circumstances.

CHAPTER 3:

YOUTH SPORT AND BELONGING IN TANZANIA

John Chalukulu Bilinzosi

This paper focuses on the situation of young people in Tanzania. The paper is part of my doctoral study which analyses ways in which the practices of two youth sport organisations located in two different metropolitan cities (Arusha and Dar Es Salaam) in Tanzania contribute to positive youth development. Young people make up approximately one third of the country's total population (National Bureau of Statistics and Office of Chief Government Statistician, 2013). Tanzanian youth face a myriad of challenges including marginalisation, high unemployment and increasing drug and alcohol use leading to high rates of HIV/AIDS infections, vandalism and impertinence toward elders and authority (Atkinson, McCurdy, Williams, Mbwambo, & Kilonzo, 2011; Department of Youth Development, 2007; Haji, 2007; URoT, 2013). Their rights and needs are not being addressed; they are regarded as a problem to be solved, dependent and incapable of making any significant contribution to community development affairs (Department of Youth Development, 2007). As a result there is increased concern about youth development now evident in the proliferation of youth development programs (Bulamile, 2008; Department of Youth Development, 2007; Orasmaa, Ndee, Frantsi, & Frantsi, 2015).

In this chapter I extend the discussion of youth development from my thesis, drawing on the Generic Youth Development Framework (GYDF) to describe how youth sport in Tanzania fosters a sense of belonging in young people (Wierenga & Wyn, 2011). In particular, I focus on organisations that use sports and games to develop a sense of belonging as a significant component in young peoples' experience and development. The research shows that youth sport organisations bring about positive outcomes (building a sense of belonging, competencies, and values) through active engagement and citizenship.

Youth Sport and Belonging

Youth development through sport tends to leave the question of young people's belonging implicit. However, the lens of belonging has the potential to expand our understanding of how youth sport makes a positive contribution to youth development. Youth sport is inherently social and places adaptive demands for belonging and identity work on young people that often resemble those found in real life (Holt, 2016; Perkins & Noam, 2007). When young people learn sporting and social skills, they also learn the skills that foster long-

term friendships, justice principles, confidence and respect (Perkins & Noam, 2007), which are key elements of belonging. In this respect, youth sport can be seen as a space where participants can develop a strong sense of belonging through their engagement in meaningful group activities in a supportive youth-focused environment (Holt & Jones, 2016). Having a sense of belonging is important for young people's wellbeing. The absence of a sense of belonging places young people at greater risk of internalising behaviours, including anxiety and depression, and externalising behaviours such as antisocial behaviour, rather than being affiliated to a group or community (Newman, Lohman & Newman, 2007). Belonging to a group or community is regarded as a predictor of protective factors and decreases problem behaviours among young people (Anderson-Butcher & Conroy, 2002), is a mediator of motivation and success (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005), is a predictor of better health for young people (Hale, Hannum, & Espelage, 2005) and helps them become resilient (McDonald, Grossman, & Johns, 2012).

Belonging, Youth and Citizenship

This discussion contributes to knowledge about youth development and uses empirical data to demonstrate how participation in youth sport contributes to the development of a sense of belonging in young people. I draw on the Generic Youth Development Framework (GYDF)—a tool which articulates essential elements required in any youth development program—as a resource to inform positive practices (Wierenga & Wyn, 2011). The framework includes a toolkit of measures that enabled me to identify some of the key dimensions of youth sport organisations that promote youth development and at the same time, promote a sense of belonging. The framework uses strength-based approaches (i.e. focusing on what young people can do), and is governed by two values of youth development: *valuing young people*, which establishes the contexts, structures, cultures and sets of relationships that foster youth development, and *doing things of value*, which highlights the actions of stakeholders in running youth development programs. The framework has six principles (divided into two sets based on the two overarching values) that can support young people to thrive and achieve their full potential. To foster a better understanding of belonging, I focus on the principle of *being active citizens*; one of the dimensions associated with *doing things of value*.

Before discussing the principle *being an active citizen*, I briefly describe the definition of citizenship. Traditionally, citizenship is described as a status, a set of responsibilities and rights, and an important element of personal and collective identity (Wierenga & Wyn, 2012; Zaff, Boyd, Li, Lerner, & Lerner, 2010). While each of the elements mentioned in the traditional definition of citizenship remain important, youth development emphasises contemporary forms of citizenship that encourage active involvement, providing time and space for young people to engage in and with various civic activities (Mansouri, Skrbis, Francis, & Guerra, 2013). The activities can be as small as a campaign to clean up neighbourhoods or as big as providing awareness on wider health, social and physical issues in the community. According to Wierenga and Wyn (2011) the principle *being active citizens* calls for youth organisations to engage young people in active roles both in organisational and community activities. It also encourages young people to use an acquired set of civic skills and behaviours including social connections, a sense of civic self-efficacy and responsibility to positively contribute to their community (Zaff et al., 2010). The principle *being an active citizen* is connected to two practices: *building collective identity* and *leading the community*. Both practices encourage active citizenship practices through which young people can develop leadership skills, establish positive connections and make invaluable contributions to their communities, elements which underpin a sense of belonging (Wierenga & Wyn, 2011).

The study

The study used surveys and focus group interviews to collect data from young people participating in two selected youth sport organisations located in two different cities (Arusha and Dar Es Salaam) in Tanzania. Despite a few differences in vision and mission, both organisations use sports and games to attract young people and as a tool for youth development. They regard having a sense of belonging as an important dimension of positive youth development. The organisations endeavour to provide young people with opportunities to learn about and develop, among other things, teamwork, decision-making abilities, networking, effective communication and civic skills. One hundred and sixteen young people aged between 15 and 24 completed the survey. They were asked to rate their experiences in relation to the examples of two practices: *building collective identity* and *leading communities*. For clarity and to complement the survey, focus groups were conducted where 13 young people (split into two groups) were asked to describe the nature of activities they were engaged in by the organisations and demonstrate how they influenced their sense of belonging.

Belonging in sporting organisations

A cross-tabulation analysis was performed on each of the elements described above (*building collective identity and leading communities*) in order to understand the perceptions and experiences of the young people in relation to the principle *being active citizens*. Next, all responses on each element within the principle to determine the strengths and growth areas of the organisations were summarised and their averages were calculated.

Eighty one per cent of the young people felt strongly that they were part of something bigger than themselves and 80.7 per cent reported that participation in the community activities organised by the programs made them feel confident to take on new challenges. The same proportions wished this element to continue into the future, indicating their positive view of this component of their program. When asked about the nature of the activities they engage in, one young person highlighted:

We start a day with teamwork drills. Our leaders assign us with a task that requires us to work like termites in a piece wood. Though we sometimes argue and fail to reach the goal, we still respect and encourage each other. Our differences have never set us apart. For this reason I never miss coming to this place. (Female, 17 years)

They also described other events and activities they participate in including sports tournaments, sports bonanzas and community activities such as cleaning up neighbourhoods, tree planting, and anti-corruption, HIV/AIDS and women emancipation campaigns that benefited not only the young people but also local communities. In relation to one of these campaigns, another young person said:

One day our community leaders approached and asked us if we could participate in HIV/AIDS awareness campaign. The request made us feel so honoured by the leaders and connected to our people. So together with my colleagues we decided to use drama and traditional dances to create awareness about the effects of stigmatising fellow community members living with HIV. (Male, 19 years)

In the view of the young people, participation in organisational and community activities helped them to work together and connect to each other and their community. The activities emboldened them to categorise themselves as members of the organisation and community, and to understand what is expected of them as leaders; specifically, as people who can bring about change in their communities. The results suggest that participation and connectedness are key elements in the development of a sense of belonging, fostering

attachment to the organisation and community, and to feeling valued for the contributions they make to their community as a whole. There was a high degree of correlation between the importance young people attached to feeling confident to take on new challenges and the frequency with which they were able to do this in the organisation and to the extent to which they were able to lead activities that make a difference in the community.

Although young people would like more opportunities to engage in community activities or events on a regular basis, the results suggest that the organisations are successful in supporting young people to engage in activities that develop a sense of belonging through building a collective identity, confidence and leadership attributes. Young people were expected to plan and deliver some of the activities such as HIV/AIDS awareness programs with minimal supervision from their leaders. In this way, participation in youth sport organisations promoted positive attitudes such as teamwork, camaraderie and more important, a sense of belonging (Holt, 2016; Smith & Smoll, 1991). They also reflect the argument that when youth sport is empowered to deliver relevant programs it can develop community identity and greater community cohesion, self-esteem and a sense of ownership in young people (Chau, 2007; Lawson, 2005). In this context youth sport can be a space and place where a sense of belonging is developed with a young population through active engagement in both organisational and civic activities. It is a space that can prepare active, informed citizens who can contribute to their community in various areas of need.

CONCLUSION

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These studies provide some insights into the nuanced and complex answers to the question 'where and how do young people belong'? The three examples draw on research with young people in dramatically different contexts, and yet there is synergy in the way they use practices and spaces to build a sense of belonging.

Jun Fu shows how young Chinese people use online sites WeChat and Weibo to experience different senses of belonging, both of which are important to their wellbeing in Chinese society. They perform offline identities on WeChat by sharing lightweight content which enables them to experience a sense of 'co-presence' with their friends in physical life (Ito & Okabe, 2005). They refer to this experience as 'a sense of existence' which provides an immediate connection to their social network in physical life. It is a crucial part of developing a sense of belonging for young people who live a fast-paced and atomized metropolitan life. Their performance of values on Weibo helps them to connect with strangers who share similar values and forms loosely connected online communities to support the formation of their identity they want to become in the future. By identifying with these values, they experience a sense of belonging which can help them to navigate their way out of the confusion of values in current Chinese society and the increased opportunities available to them.

Shifting to Australia and the very tangible spaces of formal schooling, Babak Dadvand focuses on the ways in which schools can contribute to a sense of *un*belonging through practices that are either oblivious to students' needs and backgrounds or stigmatise their differences. Ashurst and Venn (2014) talk about 'a revolving door' that connects poor and 'troubled' families with low levels of school performance, exclusion, and further down the road unemployment, delinquency and perhaps prison. This metaphorical revolving door can help explain why Alex drops out of high school before completing Year 9. What Dadvand's research with a group of students who are marginalized in their school demonstrates is that many young people like Alex are well aware of the important role that formal education plays in their future lives. These young people also have a strong wish to succeed in school.

What is also worth noting in debates about school belonging is the extent to which schools, driven by performativity agendas and regimes of high-stake testing, can offer young people who deal with compounded forms of socio-material disadvantage a space where they can participate and develop a sense of belonging. This is not to suggest that performance and academic achievement are counter-productive or that they should be abandoned. Rather, Dadvand argues that what is needed is greater attention to the unintended implications that education policy mandates can have for how schools position themselves vis-à-vis their students. This is particularly important for young people from socially marginalised backgrounds who need public education to break through their vicious cycle of marginality.

In Tanzania, John Chalukulu Bilinzosi shows how sporting organisations provide significant spaces for young people to build a sense of belonging through the opportunities these organisations provide for being active citizens. Chalukulu's research shows that by emphasising practices that encourage active citizenship, youth sport is likely to impact positively upon the development of a sense of belonging in young people. It can make a better space and place for building active citizens who can make significant contributions to their community.

Using a range of concepts of belonging, these three short case studies reveal the ways in which spaces such as online communities, schools and sports organisations all provide opportunities for young people to be connected to something bigger than themselves, through which they make sense of their worlds, enact a variety of forms of citizenship and build identities. Each study also shows the ways in which young people seek to engage with these spaces, and the potential for exclusion as well as inclusion. In times of uncertainty and rapid social change, it seems that the idea and practice of belonging has become critical for young people's wellbeing and social inclusion. In sum, the work of these upcoming scholars reveals an important research pathway that needs to be deepened if we want to contribute to better understanding young people's lives.

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