

Excluded citizens? Participatory research with young people from a ‘failing’ school community

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This paper examines a participatory community research project with young people from the ‘wrong side of the tracks’ in a provincial New Zealand town. This school-based project aimed to celebrate the expertise and insights of these young citizens by profiling their digital stories to their community. However, the failure to achieve this goal compelled the researcher to confront the ‘presentist’ assumptions underpinning this project. A re-analysis of the lingering impact of historic processes and practices of exclusion in this divided town drew attention to the temporal, spatial and relational nature of citizenship. The paper proposes that deeper recognition be given to the ‘webs of social relations’ (Arendt, Hannah. 1968. *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. New York: Viking Press) that citizenship acts are constituted within, alongside the lingering impact of historical legacies of socio-spatial exclusion. Recognising these aspects will enrich our understandings of citizenship as well as enhance the transformative potential of participatory community research.

Keywords: exclusion; abject citizenship; citizenship; Photovoice; participatory research; youth

Introduction

The focus of this paper is on a participatory research project with young people from the ‘wrong side of the tracks’ in a provincial New Zealand town. A railway track cuts through this town dividing the wealthier side on the west from the poorer side on the east. The young people from the east side of this town are considered ‘out-of-place’ (Cresswell 1996) by nature of their age, but also through their ethnicity (predominantly Maori) and their attendance of a so-called ‘failing’ school – ‘Koru’ College.¹ This project, in keeping with an emerging strand of participatory research *with* marginalised youth, sought to actively work against processes of youth exclusion by providing avenues for critical engagement in society (Cahill 2007a, 2004; Ansell et al. 2012; Blazek and Hraňová 2012). This includes a critique on the perceptions of ‘failure’ associated with this school community by celebrating their strengths and working against simplistic binaries of ‘loser’ and ‘winner’ schools, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ communities set up by locally held perceptions about the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ side of the tracks.

The project had two main goals. The first goal was an educational one and aimed to enable the students to gain deeper insights into their local history, geography and identity as a rural region of New Zealand through an enriched local history inquiry. A second goal, the main focus of this

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paper, was to create digital stories which celebrated the expertise and insights of these young people from Koru College that could be shared with the town. The Local Council offered to support the project by funding a youth street party in which some of the digital stories could be profiled. Photovoice, a participatory visual methodology, was chosen as a key strategy to encourage youth engagement and to enable the young people to capture images as a means to community social action and change (Wang 1997). However, while the young people completed the Photovoice activity, the presentation of these digital stories to the town did not happen due to a number of factors which are discussed in this paper. This brought into question the ability of these young people to participate as legitimate citizens and move beyond their 'abject' and 'sedimented past' (Sharkey and Shields 2008; Dillabough and Kennelly 2010), prompting a re-analysis of the lingering impact of historic processes and practices of exclusion in this 'divided' town.

The study of patterns of young people's social and spatial exclusion is a key focus of the research of children's geographers (Vanderbeck and Dunkley 2004). However, this research has less commonly considered the impact of social exclusion on young people's experiences and practices of citizenship (cf. Kennelly and Dillabough 2008; Sharkey and Shields 2008). Yet, as Staeheli (2010) points out, it is important to consider the construction of citizenship as both a status and a set of relationships, many of which are not only inclusionary but also exclusionary. In this paper, young people's citizenship is examined as a reflection of the web of complex social relations and *non*-relations embedded in a community town. This analysis draws upon Arendt's understanding of action as stories that are immersed in a web of relations constituted through the actions and narratives of others (Arendt 1958), and Massey's (1992) dynamic notion of space/time which draws attention to temporal and relational aspects of space, thus opening up the possibility for progressive politics.

The paper begins with an examination of prior research examining 'out-of-place' or excluded youth. The theoretical framework is outlined, introducing ideas articulated by Massey (2005, 1992) and Arendt (1958, 1968) and their conceptions of the temporal, spatial and relational nature of politics. I then provide further details about the research context and the methodologies employed in this participatory school community project. An analysis of the historic legacies of socio-spatial exclusion in this provincial New Zealand town is considered alongside an examination of young people's responses to the participatory project. The paper concludes with a discussion on the ability of 'out-of-place' citizens to participate in divided communities such as this one, drawing attention to the temporal and relational nature of exclusion.

'Out-of-place' youth and divided communities

In some cases, processes of youth exclusion are relatively obvious. For example, researchers have found that young people in public arenas are frequently subject to high levels of adult surveillance and censure and this curtails and configures the spaces and places they can occupy (Matthews, Limb, and Percy-Smith 1998; Hil and Bessant 1999; Collins and Kearns 2001; Malone 2002; Panelli et al. 2002; Vanderbeck and Dunkley 2004). However, the spatiality of exclusion can also be more subtle, such as when various groups are considered abject or 'out of place' in specific contexts (Sharkey and Shields 2008). Cresswell (1996) explains that 'out-of-place-ness' is a state in which people or actions are viewed as deviant to the established social order. This sense of out-of-place-ness is defined by powerful groups in any given context and is generally held to be unquestioned common sense. The processes that define who or what is (or is not) out-of-place are therefore infused with aspects of power and inextricably linked to spatial patterns (Massey 1995).

It appears that *some* young people are more out-of-place than others – including those who are marked by the 'psychic landscape of social class' (Reay 2005). Sharkey and Shields (2008) refer

to these as ‘abject citizens’. They state that while all youth experience second-class citizenship, most go on to attain the rights of a ‘full citizen’ in time. In contrast, abject youth ‘never attain this status and will remain indefinite, second-class citizens even into adulthood’ (Sharkey and Shields 2008, 240). Responses to such youth are often hostile. Sharkey and Shields (2008, drawing on Kristeva 1982), describe how those who are relegated to an abject status are categorised as ‘Other’ and expelled or removed as useless or repulsive, thus securing the identities of those who can be considered ‘full citizens’ (Kristeva 1982, 4).

In a similar way, schools can also contribute to ‘out-of-place-ness’ and be marked with stigma and abjection. Hierarchies of schools have developed historically within geographic areas through processes of exclusivity and exclusion (Reay 2004, 2006; Ball, Goodson, and Maguire 2007). A driving force for school differentiation has always been residential location. Policies associated with the ‘new’ educational policies of marketised education and choice have further enabled schools in middle class areas to control school choice through the enforcement of geographic zoning that exclude certain young people and include others (Reay and Lucey 2000; Pearce and Gordon 2005; Thrupp 2007). Reay (2004) elaborates on how these processes then serve to demoralise (often through place-images and racial associations) the children who attend ‘loser’ schools as well as the schools themselves. This has the effect of compounding so-called ‘good’ and ‘bad’ schools, thus labelling their students respectively with ‘success’ and ‘failure’ (Watson, Hughes, and Lauder 2003). Of interest in this paper is how such processes operate within a provincial New Zealand town rather than large urban areas where most of this research has been undertaken.

Studies of ‘failing’ schools have frequently considered the impact of historic processes of urban design and housing patterns in explaining school ‘success’ and ‘failure’. For example, Reay and Lucey (2000) describe how ‘sink’ schools in the UK often mirror historic housing legacies of exclusivity and marginalisation. Similarly, in New Zealand, the geographical polarisation of both schools and communities which have increased as a result of marketised and competitive educational reforms closely mirrors historical patterns of wealth and poverty in urban areas (Gordon 2003). While studies of youth exclusion have at times interrogated how historical patterns and processes impact on contemporary socio-spatial contexts and identities of youth (for examples, see Cahill 2004; Wridt 2004; Dillabough and Kennelly 2010), Dillabough (2008) argues that youth studies have seemed largely oblivious to history, concentrating instead on the present as ‘an isolated, temporal period – or what Ricoeur calls the “amnesia of the now”’ (cited in Kearney 2004, 99).

In response, Dillabough and Kennelly (2010) advocate for a persistent concern with the ‘sedimented cultural narratives’ (41) that compose present day youth identities, arguing that ‘each contemporary expression of youth culture holds within it deep resonances with earlier symbolic forms from past time’ (Dillabough and Kennelly 2010, 41). They argue that a young person’s identity must be seen as ‘a partial draft of the person who must necessarily unfold in the face of time and place in the present’ (52). Therefore, they suggest that the young people’s actions need to be understood ‘intersubjectively through regulatory webs of social relations and constrained historical narratives in a deeply material sense’ (Dillabough and Kennelly 2010, 53). This approach also critiques the static and timeless narratives of failure associated with some places and some people and suggests the need for more nuanced understandings about inclusion/exclusion and the blurred and fluid intersections of these two positions (Wood 2015). These ideas point to the importance of thinking historically and relationally when examining youth exclusion and citizenship.

Thinking historically and relationally about exclusion

Viewing exclusion as a fragment of social relations and historic narratives suggests the need for alternative views of space, time and politics. Massey’s (1992) notion of space as the intersection

of configured social relations that are also temporal is useful. As Massey (1992, 79) states, 'space is not static, nor time spaceless'. Viewing space in this way gets us away from a notion of society as a 2-D or 3-D slice which moves through time, to a point where we need to think in terms of 'space-time' as 'neither space nor time can be conceptualised in the absence of the other' (Massey 1992, 80). Exclusionary space can therefore be seen as temporal and dynamic; a moving space rather than static entity frozen in time. Dynamic and fluid understandings of space also provide us with opportunities to conceptualise space as places of attachment infused with contexts of social interaction and memory (de Certeau 1984).

Alongside temporal understandings of space, Massey (1992, 80) argues that we need to conceptualise space as constructed out of interrelations, 'as the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales, from the most local level to the most global'. Seeing exclusion as a pattern of space/time as well as a product of social interrelations contributes to more dynamic conceptions of exclusion, contingent on changing social relations at various scales:

There is no choice between flow (time) and a flat surface of instantaneous relations (space). Space is not a 'flat' surface in that sense because the social relations which create it are themselves dynamic by their very nature. (Massey 1992, 81)

Arendt's notion of action has some interesting similarities that are worth exploring here. For Arendt, action is never an isolated, essentialised event. Instead, it is part of 'a mode of human togetherness' (d'Entreves 2013, Section 4: Action, Freedom and Plurality), or what Arendt refers to as the 'web of human relationships' (Arendt 1958, 183). Action therefore is always seen within the context of human plurality and processes of relating to others, or what Arendt calls the 'in-between' (Arendt 1958, 182). She states that the speech and actions of humans always 'fall into an existing web where their immediate consequence can be felt' (184), serving to have a ripple effect on the life stories of others. No one actor therefore controls the final outcome of an action – instead the final narrative rests in the hands of those beyond the intentions and actions of the initial author and producer (Arendt 1958).

These ideas have implications for youth research and how we understand both exclusion and citizenship by suggesting that we need to pay greater attention to how social interactions shape experiences of inclusion and exclusion, and indeed the experience of being a young citizen. Citizenship identities and actions are forged within specific contexts, and through social relations that young people experience (Isin and Wood 1999). Examining young people's experiences of citizenship through relational and temporal understandings of both space and exclusion also paves the way for 'progressive politics'. As Massey (2005, 9) says, 'it is not just that the spatial is political', but that the spatial 'can be an essential element in the imaginative structure which enables in the first place an opening up of the very sphere of the political'. The aim of enabling the conditions for progressive politics also informed the research methodology for the project for this particular research context which is described in more detail below.

Research context

Established in the 1960s, Koru College initially enjoyed high levels of success in this New Zealand town of about 20,000 residents, sharing equally the town's school-aged young people with the college situated on the other side of the tracks – 'West Side High School'. However, from the late 1980s, the stigma of crime, high unemployment and low health and education outcomes associated with the state housing block located near Koru College contributed to 'perception problems' associated with the college (Local Newspaper 2010). This was exacerbated by the

introduction in 1989 of a New Zealand-wide educational policy reform, *Tomorrow's Schools*, which brought in a marketised model of schooling, encouraging schools to compete for relative merit within their communities (Watson, Hughes, and Lauder 2003). In subsequent years, the student numbers between these two schools widened and West Side High School emerged with the more popular status, enabling it to put in place an enrolment zone. This zone restricted access to West Side High School to wealthier and whiter young people on the west side of the railway tracks, but excluded young people from the east side, many of whom were Maori, thus further widening the gulf in student numbers and popularity between these two schools.

By 2008, Koru College had reached crisis point. Student numbers had dropped to under 200, making the existence of the school marginal. This led the Board of Trustees (BOT) to propose the closure of the school, suggesting students could merge with West Side High School. Koru College's community rallied around in the face of this, and presented a student-led, 8000-strong petition to the Ministry of Education, persuading them to keep the school open. Koru College survived the threat of closure, although the Principal and BOT were asked to step down and a statutory manager was put in place for two years.

My involvement in the school began five years later in 2013 when I was invited by a staff member to contribute to a participatory community project. By this time, Koru College had returned to full self-governance with a strong principal and a successful Education Review Report. The school had a committed teaching staff that had developed strong relationships with their students with a special emphasis on celebrating their diversity and identities. Yet, at our initial interview, teachers described how in spite of these successes, Koru College still was the 'unseen college' in the town with low student numbers and a low profile. In the words of one teacher, Lizzy, their students were effectively 'invisible'. Another teacher, Anna, described the 'creativity deficit' associated with the east side of town, with few opportunities for creative expression, or celebration of arts and culture. These ideas fuelled the participatory project discussed in this paper with the hope of encouraging young people to 'celebrate the strength in their community' (Ngaire, Arts and Heritage Trust worker) and move beyond negative stereotypes associated with 'no good' youth from the east side. The following section reviews some of the ways in which youth exclusion has been researched and understood in previous studies in order to contextualise this participatory project more strongly.

Research design and methodology

The principles of participatory community-based research underpinned the research design and methodology of this project. This included a commitment to enhance the profile of under-represented groups (Cahill 2007a; Kincheloe 2009) and provide opportunities to democratise the research process and build the capacity of young people to transform their own lives and communities (Cahill 2007a). Applying these principles to this project necessitated a commitment to young people not only as subjects of research, but also active participants and architects of the research process (Cahill 2004, 2007a). This community focus also enabled the teachers to manage the project's direction and outcomes through developing and strengthening their local networks and drawing on local expertise and knowledge.

In order to meet the first (educational) goal of the project, a social inquiry² was planned by the teachers, drawing on the social studies curriculum. Teachers gathered materials that described local history beginning with indigenous Maori history 500 years earlier through to the present. Local community members, such as the historical archivist, local Maori, and a Community Arts and Heritage Trust worker were invited to support the project as community and historical experts. Students also undertook their own research inquiries following their own interests and making use of these community experts and facilities.

The second goal, to create digital stories to celebrate the young people's perspectives and insights, applied Photovoice as a key visual methodology. Drawing on Freire's (1973) understanding of 'problem-posing', young people identified issues that were central to their lives and, through a process of photography, dialogue and reflection, examined these issues in relation to aspects of social justice. This process aimed to promote a deeper engagement with local history and identity to facilitate a form of conscientisation, through a process of praxis or action/reflection (Freire 1973). Students were encouraged to explore their local community and history through neighbourhood walks, hearing from local community people and visiting significant sites in the town, including the Historical Archives, to gain historical knowledge and take photos. The photography teacher gave all students a lesson in constructing and taking photos and I trained teachers in how to develop these photos into digital stories.³ Some students developed their photos into digital stories, some created wall displays and others profiled their photos in their own research reports.

All six classes at Year 9 and 10 (ages 13–15 years) at Koru College were involved. Ethical permission for the research was gained from my institute and all participating teachers and students from three of the six classes were invited to opt in to the research component of the project. All 6 teachers consented to join as research participants along with 61 students. Parental consent was also obtained for these students. Data were primarily collected through ethnographic processes and reflections and recollections of day-to-day events, episodes and conversations were recorded in field notes. All research participants were interviewed near the end of the project. This process involved students' reflections in small groups (collated on posters) about what they had learned, what they enjoyed and what they would change for another time, as well as whole class discussions about the project. A focus group interview with the six teachers at the end of the project also served as a reflective exercise to examine their perceptions on the value and challenges of the project. Informal interviews were also held with community collaborators following the project.

A collaborative research process necessarily shifts the role of the academic researcher (Cahill 2007a). My role involved supporting teachers at the planning stages, especially around the Photovoice processes, as well as joining in classroom and out of school activities, such as accompanying students on community walks and taking some to the local archives to do historical research (for three of the six classes in particular).⁴ In these roles of facilitator, collaborator and researcher, I was aware of the unspoken power dynamics within a collaborative process (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Cahill 2007a) and the impact this can have on data collected. My outside status (as an academic from the city) and my whiteness (in a school where 60% of students were Maori) meant that I relied heavily on 'insiders' such as the teachers, students and community experts to help me interpret data and clarify assumptions throughout the project. Despite their input, I acknowledge that my insights into this community and interpretation of data remain partial, situated and limited (Smith 2001).

The first goal of the project, to deepen students' educational skills and historical knowledge, was largely achieved through the project (see Wood 2013). Teachers reflected that the project had resulted in a greater understanding of historical change, and that 'having them involved in something that was relevant to them [...] helped them form a bigger picture of time'. However, the second goal of sharing the stories of these young people with the town was more problematic. Towards the end of the project, all of the digital stories created were lost in a computer upgrade before either the teachers or I had managed to take back-up copies of them. In my naivety, I had failed to recognise the deep 'digital divides' in this school and the lack of IT support staff which made planning for and using digital technologies more difficult (Warschauer and Matuchniak 2012). At about the same time, the proposed community youth street festival was cancelled. We were told that the Council had allocated funding for 3 security guards for the

festival, but they now decided that 30 were needed, as the event had become too ‘risky’. The extra funding for these security guards meant that the whole event was not possible. This news was devastating for all of us. As one teacher, Marianne, put it:

What we thought was going to be the celebration of it all fell through and therefore, for us, we were sort of missing that purpose in the end.

So, instead of creating a positive image for these young people, it could be that we had contributed to further disillusionment and notions of failure. I was keen to recreate the digital stories and try again to profile but the teachers were tired and had run out of time in their curriculum and energy to repeat the process or devise a new strategy.

While not discounting my role in this aspect of the project that failed, I began to reflect on a multitude of dimensions that may have made the success of the project less tenable. In particular, I began to trace the ‘web of human relationships’ (Arendt 1958, 182) that existed between residents of the town and the young people and staff from Koru College. I also became more critical of the presentist assumptions that had underpinned this participatory project – supposing that we could bring about a greater sense of pride and respect for this school community in the space of a six-month project. This time pressure was exacerbated by the rather short time frames of the project which sat in tension with the rather organic and time-consuming process of participatory research. Perhaps more importantly, the assumption that the town (the local Council, residents and community members) was ready to hear an alternative story from the east side, rather than the one of ‘failure’ associated with the school’s relatively recent past, ignored the school’s ‘sedimented past’ (Dillabough and Kennelly 2010) and how this continued to shape attitudes and perceptions. The project had therefore overlooked the necessity for ‘togetherness’ (Arendt 1968) in the overall success of the project – relying not only on Koru College’s school community, but also the receptiveness of the dominant West Side community in this town. As Arendt (1968, 150) states,

... to identify an action is to tell the story of its initiation, of its unfolding, of its immersion in a web of relations constituted through the actions and narratives of others.

In order to examine the web of relations of this story more closely, I returned to analyse the socio-spatial perceptions of Koru College in the town more closely – in particular, at the time of the proposed closure of the school in 2008.

Historic and spatial legacies

I began by examining how the school and its community were represented in the media, in public documents and in everyday conversations at the time of the proposed closure. Rather than seeing space or time as static, in Massey’s (1992, 84) words, I wanted to think in terms of ‘space/time’, to ‘insist on the inseparability and joint construction of time and space’ in order to examine contemporary expressions and experiences of citizenship inclusion/exclusion. It was apparent that in 2008, both school and community members were quick to point to spatial and locational factors as contributing to the school’s failure, thus pathologising the school and its community and attributing moral and symbolic evaluations upon the people who lived there (Skeggs 2004). For example, in the draft for community consultation, the BOT attributed perceptions of differences between the two schools in the town as a key reason for their proposed closure of the school. These included perceptions that:

[Koru College] was built in the 'wrong place'. [Koru College] is at the edge of town and on the unfavoured East side. [Koru College] has suffered from the socio-economic, racist and snobbish attitudes that have developed in [town] about the so called East/West divide;

There has been a greater development on Western side of [town] and this had added to the perception of "West good, East not so good";

[Koru College] is the "appropriate" school in [town] for difficult students and for Maori students;

[Koru College] is a less desirable option for students enrolled at [town] Intermediate who are moving to secondary school. (BOT paper, July 2008, 5)

Such narratives serve to demonise both the school and the classed 'ethnic other' associated with this working class community (Reay 2004). These perceptions were affirmed by the departing deputy principal who stated that the school was tainted with failure as it had 'always laboured under the problem of being in the wrong area' (July 8, 2008, Local Newspaper). He linked this back to the opening of the school in the 1960s:

No doubt the first mistake was the location. It's easy to be wise after the event, but there has been no development of any of the houses in the area since the college was built and it doesn't help having a dump just down the road. (July 8, 2008, Local Newspaper)

He went on to say that great things were happening at the school despite working with what some people would perceive to be 'unpromising material' (i.e. the students).

The making of places involves implicit processes of defining the identity and coherence of social groups that occupy a place. As Massey (1995) reminds us, the designation of who is 'one of us' also actively involves processes of exclusion. The very processes that define the imagination and character of a place are part of defining not only who is an insider, but also who is not: 'it is a space of bounded identities; a geography of rejection' (Massey 1995, 196). Such geographies of rejection could be seen in the type of inclusionary and exclusionary statements made about the Koru College community. Race and social class were closely linked to representations of these two schools. For example, when West Side High School was asked to consider merging with Koru College, a number of responses indicated that 'We want the Maori students to stay at [Koru College] and leave [West Side High School] for the *Pakeha*'⁵ (Local Newspaper 2008). Such statements widened the divide between 'people like us' and 'people like them' along grounds of race, space and class, demonstrating 'how relentlessly the idea of citizenship inclusion produces exclusion' (Isin 2005, 381).

These pathologising statements fixed Koru College statically in narratives of past failure, thus reducing the possibility for transformation. Massey (1992, 81) offers a reminder that space (and exclusionary space in this case) is created out of social relations: 'space is by its very nature full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and cooperation'. This creates 'power geometries' in this provincial town, isolating one community from the 'other', reducing social interactions and tainting the excluded with stigma and forcing them to the periphery (Goffman 1963). These power geometries were also sedimented through metaphorical and symbolic associations of place and people with fear and suspicion.

Symbolic markers of out-of-place-ness: fear, suspicion and stigma

The clearly spatially marked exclusionary practices and patterns described above were reinforced further through the symbolic and metaphorical encounters with this school community. Goffman (1963) describes how signs and spaces are used by 'the normals' to expose and define the 'Other'. Metaphors of out-of-place-ness which include weeds, plagues and bodily secretions have often

been used as signifiers of out-of-place-ness (Cresswell 1997). Associations of the school and its area as polluted and diseased were recounted by Lizzy, a teacher:

When I first arrived in town, a real estate agent took me for a drive around the town to show me different options. He made it clear that I wouldn't want to buy on East side but I asked him to drive me through it anyway. When we got near the state housing block he said "oh, put up your window quickly" as if I might catch some kind of disease by driving through that part of town!

In this case, the state housing block was viewed by the agent with such disgust that he feared diseases could be caught by merely driving through it with the windows open. The teachers laughed together at this story but recounted that they were also stigmatised by even teaching in the school:

Anna: It's the biggest conversation killer ever. I meet someone from [this town] and they ask, "where do you teach?" I say Koru College and they have nothing left to say. It's like they don't even have the words to respond ...

Such responses reinforced the 'invisible' nature of this school and its students in the community.

Yet, there were a number of occasions when the young people became less invisible, moving from their 'out-of-place' spaces on east side and into the formal, mainstream public arenas more closely associated with west side. On such occasions, they were treated with fear and suspicion. I observed this when undertaking community walks with the young people as part of the Photo-voice activity. On one occasion, I walked with 15 students to the large park in the centre of town that was attractively presented with a good playground. As we stood on a narrow suspension bridge over the river that borders the park taking photos and chatting, I realised a European Pakeha woman was waiting to cross over. I asked the students to all stand to one side (which they all did), but I realised that as she approached these young people, she showed visible signs of fear. I remember thinking: 'does she think they will hit her on the head or something?'

I looked at the young people, clearly identifiable in their Koru College uniforms, the majority of them Maori and realised they were 'marked' and identifiable as coming from a school which was viewed with suspicion and, in this case, even fear. On the same community walk, we were trailed by a local police car for some time, having spotted that these (clearly identifiable) students were out of school during school time. Teachers also confirmed this sense of fear felt by the public towards these young people:

Anna: A local reporter came to the school once to take some photos of the students. When I took him to the class, he wouldn't even come in. He was visibly scared. I said to him, "They won't bite or anything!"

These stories all depict webs of relations (and non-relations) that represent the social interactions between people from the Koru College and the wider community. They paint a picture of enduring stigma and stereotyping associated with race and class that was spatially reinforced. The fact that the Council decided these youth were too risky for the street party without 30 security guards was in keeping with the impression of many in this the town that these young people from east side represented trouble. Despite our intention of creating conditions for social change through this project, it appeared that we were unable to separate this school community from its historic and spatial legacies at this time. In Dillabough and Kennelly's (2010, 3) words, the 'residual weight of the past' continued to retain a hold over young people's contemporary cultural expressions and social practices. But just how did young people from Koru College see their citizenship identities and imaginaries? As Sharkey and Shields (2008, 243) state, 'it is critical youth speak for themselves and tell their own stories in their own voices'.

Spatial and citizenship imaginings

In contrast to the rather spatially and historically deterministic pattern of 'failure' associated with Koru College, young people did not have strong feelings of aversion to their school or their side of town. In fact, Joanne (age 13) described how she had chosen the school over the West Side High School as 'my sister had such a bad time there that my Mum said there was no way I would go there'. Many young people also spoke positively of the pride they had in their local *marae*⁶ and the cultural identity this gave them; and others described how Koru College contributed to their distinctive identity on east side. While only about one quarter of the participants lived in the much stigmatised state housing block near Koru College, most were very familiar with it as they walked through the area regularly or had friends there. On our community walks through this block, young people would often call out to *whanau*⁷ and friends, or an 'aunty' would poke her head out and ask what we were doing. I noted that most houses were occupied during the day. This enhanced the young people's sense of security and safety as they walked about the block as they were always 'known' (Watt and Stenson 1998). For young people who did live there, it was not a site of contamination – it was just 'where we live'. These discussions highlighted how both exclusionary and inclusionary practices structure young people's lived experiences of places (Nairn, Panelli, and McCormack 2003; Vanderbeck and Dunkley 2004).

However, they also had a strong sense that some aspects could be improved. This was articulated through the Photovoice process which elicited stories about the community's resources, capabilities and imaginations, but also their needs (Wang and Burris 1994). For example, the young people took me to a park by the state housing area with no facilities except for three slides and one swing. This playground served hundreds of children and families in this housing block and the east side of town. The young people compared this directly with the attractive park in the centre of town, critiquing the spatial and structural divides of east and west and the power relations embedded in these distinctions. Mana (14 years, female) commented: 'How is it that they get the cool playground and we get this?' Tane and Jed (14 years, both male) also took photos of this playground and asked: 'Is this fair on young people our side of town? How come the money is spent on them not us?'

They also critiqued the local Council for failing to do something about a recent algal bloom in their river which meant no one could swim in it that summer. Participants had identified rivers as highly significant as they represented free spaces where they could 'hang out', 'have fun' and 'muck around'. As such, they were not only spatial sites, but also relational sites where bonds of friendship and identity were formed. This sense of injustice that such sites were inadequate (the playground) or contaminated (the river) fuelled discussions by the young people about how they needed to take their ideas to the local Council to tell them about what life on east side was from a young person's perspective.

These narratives point to a growing sense of agency and conscientisation as young people developed the words to critique the world (Freire 1973). My observations of the development of the digital stories (even though they were lost) revealed moments of political formation. Their narratives showed their 'citizenship imaginings' (Wood 2012), illustrating the ability to think, speak and act as citizens about what should be protected, preserved or transformed. The digital stories also gave insights into their narrative or representational agency as political actors, able to 'perceive, make judgement about, or re-read normative meanings' (Elwood and Mitchell 2012, 5). In these examples, young people's sense of themselves as community members is apparent, but we can also see how their identity as young citizens was also forming in relation to *others*, with evidence of a growing awareness of some of the 'power geometries' (Massey 1995) operating in this town. It was apparent through this participatory project

that the inequalities of these power relations still continued to shape young people's experiences of citizenship and, indeed, their ability to participate as legitimate citizens in this town.

Discussion: excluded citizens?

This analysis has drawn attention to the nature of these young people's experience of citizenship. Unlike Sharkey and Sheild's (2008) discussion of 'abject' citizens, these stories were far from despair – they showed young people meaningfully engaging with issues in their neighbourhoods as young citizens. These young people were able to critique and assess their lives and demonstrated sharp citizenship imaginations when it came to identifying the aspects of their community they wished to improve. Yet, while they showed dispositions as young citizens that were committed to transformative change, there was also a sense that the 'residual weight of the past' (Dillabough and Kennelly 2010, 3) continued to prevent these young people being perceived as 'legitimate' citizens in this town. As members of the perceived 'loser' school in the educational marketplace of this community, the young people were often tarnished with the stigma of 'trouble' and 'risk' despite the activist and transformative goals of this participatory project. Moreover, as members of the east side community, their lives were already under scrutiny and suspicion for attributes and actions associated with *that* side of town. As Anna (teacher) put it 'our students have to be doubly good to succeed'. She explained that to succeed, they had to overcome initial prejudices of failure and then perform so well that others would believe they were indeed capable. In this we can see enactments of class divisions and judgements of culture that are deeply intersected with race that serve to perpetuate distance and prejudice (Reay 2004; Skeggs 2004).

This has significant implications on young people's own sense of citizenship and their ability to contribute and participate in society as full citizens. Within the field of citizenship, unstated symbolic signifiers of acceptance and success exist. Kennelly and Dillabough (2008) suggest that tracing these signifiers provides a window of illumination to the cultural and deeply coded forms of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu 1997) which still operate through narratives of citizenship. In the case of this rural town, signifiers of successful citizenship were not generally associated with the 'out-of-place', lower socio-economic and frequently Maori young people on the east side of town. Underpinning this participatory project was the belief that celebrating these young people's stories publically could serve to break down negative stereotypes and foster respect, empathy and pride in the east side. However, in our naivety, we had, at least in part, viewed the east side community as an isolated historical unit, rather than seeing it as part of a complex web of human relationships within the whole town. In some ways we had bought into contemporary models of political liberalism and individualism by assuming the actions of individuals could transform the whole. This contradicts Arendt's notion of participatory democracy which holds strongly to a belief in human plurality and a commitment to human togetherness (Arendt 1958). As d'Entrevés (2013) writes, these ideas contribute to a relational understanding of citizenship politics:

[B]y viewing action as a mode of human togetherness, Arendt is able to develop a conception of participatory democracy which stands in direct contrast to the bureaucratized and elitist forms of politics so characteristic of the modern epoch.

Acknowledging the depth of the divide that separated this town between east and west is pivotal to understanding the 'failure' of this participatory project. This divide was founded on historic socio-spatial stigma, and perpetuated by *non*-relations between members of these communities. This exacerbated their isolation from each other and added to the inability for these

young people to be publically acknowledged as legitimate citizens in public arenas of this town where they might have had a chance to advocate for themselves (Kennelly and Dillabough 2008). This raises a number of questions about the inclusion of these young citizens and the ethical responsibilities of participatory research.

Concluding remarks

In this paper I have proposed that in order to gain greater understandings of youth exclusion, it is necessary to consider temporal and relational dimensions in greater depth. A focus on history and temporality in this provincial town exposed some of the enduring historical realities of structural inequalities and racism that continue to shape contemporary 'landscapes of exclusion' (Sibley 1995, 14). The divisions in this town reflected historical housing patterns and structural divides, but also aspects of stigma which were far harder to see. As Reay (2004, 1019) states, 'class inequalities can no longer be conceived simply in structural terms. They are made and remade at the micro level, in and through innumerable everyday practices'. In this project, this was illustrated through a number of examples of exclusionary processes which occurred through everyday relations and non-relations in space/time (Massey 1992). Such narratives are never isolated life stories. Instead, these stories are constituted within existing social worlds in webs of relations that involved the actions and narratives of others (Arendt 1958). In this project, the stories of the Koru College community 'fell' into pre-existing webs of human relationships in this town which were fractured and incomplete. Thus, the conflicting wills and intentions towards Koru College's community meant that the 'action never achieved its purpose' (Arendt 1958, 184). As Arendt asserts, full citizenship can never be affirmed unless whole communities engage in common action and collective deliberation (d'Entrevies 2013).

This also raises implications and challenges for how we conduct research with young people from communities we already know to be marginalised in some way. As discussed earlier, the 'presentist' assumptions which had underpinned this participatory research method and process had failed to see the depth of the divide (symbolic and material) between social groups in this town. The participatory project had hoped for transformative change in a very short time period, fuelled in part by the demand for quick outputs at my tertiary institution and the time limitations of the school year. However, it is apparent that sustained, long-term and systemic change is needed to transform historical legacies of exclusion in such places. Our collective ethical responsibilities as participatory researchers are not only to expose the bleak realities of structural racism and social inequities, but also to remain committed to transformation through sustained actions of change (Cahill 2007b). My hope is that the lessons learned through this project about the significance of historical processes of exclusion and the need for sustained, long-term commitments in participatory projects may raise critical questions and encourage more transformative ways of conducting participatory research.

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Notes

1. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants and schools in this research to respect the confidentiality of participants. At times this requires not giving a direct source for a media quotation which would then identify people and places more specifically.
2. A 'social inquiry' is an approach outlined in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education 2007) and includes the study of historical and contemporary facts, people's values and social action in relation to social issues and ideas.
3. Students used the Microsoft Windows package Movie Maker[®] as it was already loaded up on their school laptops.
4. I limited my involvement to these three classes for time management and so I could build relationships with these young people and track their progress in greater depth.
5. *Pakeha*: Maori word commonly used to mean European (or not Maori).
6. *Marae*: Maori for meeting place. Within New Zealand communities, marae buildings provide a central place for meeting and sharing.
7. *Whanau*: Maori for extended family members.

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