NEOS

In Pursuit of Racial Justice
in Child & Youth Studies

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Editorial: In Pursuit of Racial Justice in Child & Youth Studies

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the forefront the extent to which systemic racism continues to impact the lives of children and youth. With devastating experiences including illness and death, hate crimes, wage loss, and systemic oppression in receipt of and access to services, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities have borne the brunt of the current public health crisis around the world (Lopez, Rainie and Budiman 2020; Ruiz, Horowitz, and Tami 2020; Yaya et *al.* 2020). Far from putting racial injustices on pause, "COVID-19 is more starkly laying bare what Black people and people of colour have always known: our world is inequitable, unjust, and unsustainable, and those in power prioritize their economic interests over and at the expense of the livelihoods of the majority" (Okech and Essof 2021, 2).

In the Summer of 2020, the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer was a catalyst for protest in every major US city and around the world despite ongoing pandemic lockdowns. From Rio de Janeiro to Nairobi and Barcelona to Osaka, protesters in solidarity with the struggle against police brutality in the United States uttered the names of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and too many more, alongside those of local victims of state violence like João Pedro Mattos (14) in Brazil, Yassin Moyo (13) in Kenya, and Mame Mbaye (35) in Spain. As Shereen Essof has discussed, rallying cries against the unrelenting and global criminalization of Blackness emerged in a very specific context. This was one of ongoing racial inequities, police violence, and rising white supremacy in the US, compounded by the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was also a context in which the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement "skillfully channeled anger into action on the back of years of consciousness raising, organising and mobilising, door-to-door, street-by-street, and community by community" (Okech and Essof 2021, 2).

BLM is a "multi-faceted, global movement predicated on the belief that Black lives matter. That Black policy matters. That Black organizing matters. And that Black joy matters" (Cullors 2020, 5). As a movement, BLM was sparked by the 2013 acquittal of a self-appointed neighborhood vigilante who attacked and killed Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old Black teenager, as he walked home talking on the phone with a bag of skittles in hand, in Sanford, Florida. This is a movement founded and led by young, queer, Black womxn like Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi, and Alicia Garza, who dared to utter the simple imperative that Black lives *matter*, as they juxtaposed their own devastating lived experiences with the criminalization and mass incarceration of Black youth as a result of the US "war on drugs" to the very fact that "this white-presenting man could kill us and go home" (Khan-Cullors and Bandele 2018, 179). From the very beginning, BLM has implored us to pay attention to—and unapologetically address—the chronic and acute experiences of systemic oppression, violence, and harm that BIPOC children and youth experience.

This call to pay attention and act is not new. Children and youth have long been at the center of global struggles for racial justice, not just as some of the most vulnerable targets of systems of mass incarceration, police brutality, and racialized violence, but also as agents of change and leaders in efforts to imagine new possibilities and to dismantle white supremacy in schools, universities, public-serving systems, and communities (Daniel Tatum 2017; Turner and Beneke 2019). Multi-racial, multi-class, and multi-ethnic coalitions of youth like the Dream Defenders in

Florida and Aliento in Arizona have long been laying the groundwork for dismantling intersecting systems of oppression and imagining more equitable, just, and joyous futures. This pursuit has been done through a multitude of mediums, from protests and boycotts, to art and performance, reminding us that—as Betina Love writes in her work on abolitionist teaching—"writing, drawing, acting, painting, composing, spittin' rhyme, and /or dancing is love, joy, and resistance personified" (2019, 99).

In this Issue

The Spring 2021 Issue of *NEOS* aims to further the call that Black lives *matter*. The lives of BIPOC communities not only matter; they are valued, respected, and vital. To this end, articles in this issue critically explore both harm, suffering, and inequities that plague the lives of children and youth of color, while also uplifting the ways young people navigate resiliency, strengths, and the creation of more equitable futures.

The issue opens with commentaries exploring themes of diaspora, empathy, and marginalization in and outside educational spaces. In "Dismantling White Supremacy: The Role of Ubuntu Epistemology and US Universities," Hawkins-Moore probes the tenet of "communalism" within Ubuntu epistemology and its power to highlight youth resiliency in African diasporic communities through initiatives and programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Moran calls for a critical interrogation of the role of empathy among White youth engaging anti-racism efforts and their own experiences of whiteness in "On Engaging Racial Privilege: Youth, Whiteness, and the Confines of Empathy." Finally, in her commentary "The Burden of Demonization: Muslim American Youth on the Marginalization Spectrum," Ali discusses the consequences of ongoing criminalization and demonization for Muslim American youth in educational settings, inviting us to expand the frames we use and the actions we take.

Research articles in this issue robustly grapple with theoretical and practical questions tied to racial justice. Bullon-Cassis, reflecting on fieldwork at a United Nations Summit in Madrid, Spain, investigates the ways "youth" as an identifier holds preferential status over other identifiers such as "Indigenous" or "BIPOC" via concepts like "generationalism" and "adultification." In an analysis of the through lines of policing and the instability of childhood in Rochester, New York and Cairo, Egypt, Sweis asks us to consider how police-child interactions and state violence expose the limits of childhood. In further probing narratives of idealized childhoods, Nguyen explores how notions of childhood innocence prevent curriculum-centered dialogue about racism in a Kindergarten classroom in the US Northeast. Nguyen asks us to consider the extent to which performative statements regarding diversity and inclusion following the murder of George Floyd made by school districts across the US did not necessarily lead to curriculum-centered changes, but rather, remained words without action. In her article on transitional justice in Canada, Kim centers the experiences of Indigenous youth and their perceptions of transitional justice responses to Indian Residential Schools. Her article interrogates how Indigenous youth have been impacted by and reconcile with the lasting impacts of prior human rights violations, calling on practitioners to recognize that historical violence is intertwined with youth identities and contemporary experiences of structural and physical violence. Finally, through the implementation of an arts-based afterschool program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Binte-Farid explores how Black Muslim youth experience racialized and religious identities at school, illuminating the ways in which such programs—often framed as a path to divert "at-risk" youth—can be a means for empowerment, self-expression, joy, and healing when approached through an asset-based framework.

We hope this issue entices readers to more thoughtfully and critically consider our role in promoting just and equitable futures for children and youth, as scholars, educators, professionals, practitioners, policy makers, and academics—all of whom hold some influence in the very spaces where young people are demanding to be heard (Daniel Tatum 2017). We hope this issue also allows us to consider our diverse identities on personal and professional levels, and the type of responsibility, privilege, and power that we bring to the table as we navigate our research and applied efforts with children and youth. Finally, we hope scholarship in this issue also lays bare that performative public claims of solidarity with racial justice movements are fraught and woefully inadequate (Okech and Essof 2021) when they are not accompanied by sustained efforts to dismantle white supremacy and advance anti-racism work. These efforts must be done not only within the academy and disciplines like Anthropology, but on the ground in the spaces and places that children and youth live, grow, and navigate. From police militarization and school-to-prison pipelines, to the child welfare system and ongoing state violence, we must act on every level if we are to *eliminate* the unnecessary, unjust, and devastating deaths of not only Black and Brown adults, but also children and youth like Adam Toledo (13), Ma'Khia Bryant (16), and Daunte Wright (20). These realities confront us time again with an understanding of racism—as "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (Gilmore 2007, 28)—that cannot be wished away and rather requires intentional and unapologetic action.

In Closing

At *NEOS,* we consider these questions fundamental and take seriously our responsibility as an open-access publication to facilitate critical conversations and actions that contribute to deeper understandings of systemic oppression and of our roles as educators, researchers, professionals, and practitioners in the pursuit of racial, economic, and social justice for young people, their families, and their communities. This issue serves as a catalyst for an ongoing commitment of *NEOS.* As of the Fall 2021 issue, every issue of *NEOS* will invite articles for a standing column devoted to anti-racism and equity in the lives of children and youth. Additionally, the Fall 2021 issue is dedicated to further exploring how inequity shows up globally through a focus on South-North conversations in childhood and youth studies. Through these standing and dedicated spaces, we invite contributions that interrogate universalist conceptions of childhood and youth and deploy analytical frameworks like intersectionality to understand how childhoods are "constituted by the particular dynamics of gender, race, disability, sexuality, class and geography" (Konstantoni and Emejulu 2017, 11). In doing so, we hope to foster interdisciplinary and "cross-world" dialogue (Punch 2016) about the practices, policies, and research needed at all levels to build and sustain futures in which the lives of children and youth like Adam Toledo, Ma'Khia Bryant, and João Pedro Mattos are not only valued and possible, but nurtured to their fullest extent.

In shared commitment to thriving children and youth,

María V. Barbero, PhD, Co-Editor (Florida Gulf Coast University)
Courtney L. Everson, PhD, Co-Editor (University of Denver)
Delaney J. Glass, MA, Digital Scholarship Intern (University of Washington)

ACYIG.Editor@gmail.com

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ACYIG Advisory Board Update

Elise Berman (University of North Carolina, ACYIG Convenor)
eberman@uncc.edu

It has been a long year for all of us, including at ACYIG. The pandemic has required a pause on many activities, including an ACYIG conference planned for Spring 2021. This pause was both because of the inability to meet in person, and because of the need for everyone, including board members, to have fewer time constraints on their plate at a time when childcare is unavailable, and people are dealing with sickness and loss. COVID-19 has also had a huge effect on youth and schools, as it has on everyone, with implications for professional development, research, and advocacy for caregivers and the youth themselves. Here at ACYIG, we would like to promote the view that pauses in research and professional activity are necessary and not only reasonable but also expected and required for equity.

We are getting back into gear and have some exciting new developments at the organization. We have started a new listserv for ACYIG and other childhood scholars: subscribe at https://groups.io/g/acyig! We will be using this listserv to post opportunities and events, ask questions, and gain feedback. We are also going to be rolling out a new, streamlined website: stay tuned! Our *NEOS* Co-Editors have done a fantastic job keeping *NEOS* going. We are also hosting a virtual speaker series consisting of four speakers over the next couple of months. The first speaker was Dr. Amy Brainer, talking about queer youth, COVID-19, and intersectionality, on April 23rd. Be sure to check out future talks! In the Summer and Fall, we will start planning our conference, and if feasible, we may host a conference in Spring 2022—keep in touch for more information.

Many of our advisory board members are stepping down in November or their terms are soon expiring, so we are currently searching for new leaders! We have openings for the Convenor-Elect, Communications Chair, Membership Chair, Graduate Student members, website coordinator, and *NEOS* Co-Editors. Contact Convenor Elise Berman at eberman@uncc.edu if you are interested in serving or if you know someone who you think might be interested.

We look forward to seeing everyone in person, hopefully sometime soon! In the meantime, join us for our virtual speaker series, read *NEOS,* and keep in touch through the listserv.

Fall 2021 Call for Papers

Theme: Local Realities and Global Challenges: Approaches to Childhood and Youth Studies from the Global South

NEOS welcomes submissions for the Fall 2021 issue: *Local Realities and Global Challenges: Approaches to Childhood and Youth Studies from the Global South.* This upcoming issue aims to amplify anthropological and interdisciplinary scholarship that explores childhood and adolescence in a myriad of Global South/Majority World contexts. Anthropology has experienced major imbalances in the funding, recognition, and dissemination of research, especially prioritizing Global North researchers, research, and populations during publication. In an effort toward redressing imbalances in scholarship on childhood and youth, in fostering cross-regional dialogue, and in responding to calls from our membership for a Global South dedicated issue, we encourage research on the following themes within Global South contexts:

1. Articles that analyze the complexity of health and illness among children and adolescents;
2. Research that investigates how children and youth are affected by and cope with issues of migration and asylum;
3. Scholarship that unpacks critical issues in cultural, place-based, and generational experiences of gender and sexuality;
4. Submissions that explore changing roles, expectations, or dynamics of childhood and adolescence;
5. Scholarship that discusses innovative methodologies for conducting research in cross-regional and collaborative contexts with children and youth;
6. Scholarship on social movements and struggles for equity and racial, economic, and social justice as they intersect with the lives of children and youth;
7. Research and commentaries that unpack, challenge, or propose ways to move beyond South/North divides in childhood and youth studies.

We invite short-form original research articles (1,000 words max, excluding references), as well as commentaries (500 words max, excluding references) that address the issue's theme. *NEOS* also welcomes original research articles that—while not necessarily directly connected to the CFP theme—highlight recent "hot off the press" research in the field. Finally, we invite short pieces (750 words max, excluding references) on scholarship and applied research that uplifts racial, economic, and social justice and the dismantling of systemic oppression, for a new dedicated standing column on anti-racism and equity in child and youth studies. Submissions from Global South scholars or authors with long-term engagements in Global South contexts will be prioritized for publication in this issue.

NEOS is an open-access publication of the Anthropology of Children and Youth Interest Group (ACYIG) of the American Anthropological Association (AAA). We publish research on childhood and youth from scholars working across the four fields of anthropology, as well from those interdisciplinary fields in conversation with anthropological theories and methods. Articles published in *NEOS* undergo a double-blind peer-review process and commentaries are reviewed by the *NEOS* Editorial Team.

The deadline for submissions is **August 16, 2021** (end of the day). Rolling submissions prior to

August 16 are also welcome. While not required, authors are encouraged to submit a brief message about their intent to submit to the Co-Editors by August 2, 2021. The *NEOS* Editorial Team may be reached at acyig.editor@gmail.com Visit our website for further information on *NEOS*, as well as submission guidelines and instructions. You may access the submission portal for the Fall 2021 Issue here.

Commentary: Dismantling White Supremacy: The Role of Ubuntu Epistemology and US Universities

Velicia Hawkins-Moore (Prairie View A&M University)
vhawkinsmoore@student.pvamu.edu

The new millennium brought with it necessities for new paradigms that facilitate transformative and restorative social justice initiatives for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and other People of Color) youth and children. This commentary chronicles an instance of the application of Ubuntu epistemology within the African diasporic community as a means of dismantling White Supremacy. The primary tenet of Ubuntu epistemology is communalism. This project articulates the autonomy and liberation of African descended children/youth, reinforces their resilience and resistance, underscores the importance of authentic BIPOC child/youth joy, healing and community awareness, and promotes political activism. Ubuntu epistemology serves to empower BIPOC children/youth on a micro level. Ultimately, it facilitates the dismantling of white supremacy by decentering whiteness and by prioritizing ethnic ideologies and paradigms.

The heightened incidences of civil unrest and revolutionary stratagem led by BIPOC youth sparked a renewed interest in and commitment to a more than 2,000 year-old African-centered philosophical theory of knowledge. Ubuntu epistemology disrupts racial injustice and accentuates self-advocacy among BIPOC communities (Tavernaro-Haidarian 2018). In the Xhosa tradition, *Ubuntu*, or humanity, translates to *Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu:* "A person is a person through their relationship to others" (I am because you/we are). It is symbolic of the inter-relatedness of human beings (Tavernaro-Haidarian 2018) and pushes the social justice paradigm for young people beyond performative measures and posturing by exposing Black children and youth to an epistemology that empowers them, by giving them access and onus.

BIPOC children/youth often suffer the greatest impact of racial injustices and oppressive tactics. The cities of Chicago, New York, and New Jersey are prime examples of the longitudinal impact of decades-long policies perpetuating institutional racism, structural inequalities, anti-Black rhetoric, and opportunity deserts. However, Ubuntu offers alternative possibilities under this context. In the summer of 2019, a group of fraternity brothers from the Montclair Kappa League of Kappa Alpha Psi Incorporated took a group of six high school mentees from New Jersey to Ghana, West Africa (Watch the Yard, n.d.). The Montclair Kappa League hosts an annual international travel series and the Kappas wanted to make sure that youth from the area that they serve had a chance to experience *The Year of Return* hosted by the Republic of Ghana that year (Watch the Yard, n.d.). *The Year of Return* is an African diasporic initiative designed to reconnect historically displaced/dismembered African descended individuals with Africa. For example, the *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Homecoming Initiative* seeks to create an inter-university exchange between HBCUs and African universities. It is a part of the largest, most successful, and comprehensive reorientation/cultural/socio-political revolution throughout the African diaspora. *The Year of Return* was a clarion call for African descendants across the diaspora to "return" home. They could metaphorically revisit the place of their ancestors' birth through interactive conferences, diasporic academic initiatives, or transnational symposiums. There were opportunities for collaborative business investments, technology-based partnerships, and artistic and Afro-futuristic expressions. Acquainting these youth with the African origins of their history through the *Year of Return* trip had a powerful effect on the Kappa Leaguers. One of

the Kappa Leaguers stated, "Walking down the same path some of our ancestors followed to their last bath (before being sold into slavery) I felt connected" (Watch the Yard, n.d.). Connecting these young men to their history can help them become the change agents of tomorrow, empowering them to be the authors of a new narrative that uplifts, unifies and edifies Black children/youth.

Ubuntu epistemology is rooted in humanness. The Montclair Kappa League applied Ubuntu epistemology by creating the bridge that connected the youth to their ancestry. They displayed Ubuntu by acting on the behalf of the youth in their community. Ubuntu epistemology can further grow this group's efforts by partnering with other Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) to host more students in a wider array of African nations. Another initiative that connects Black youth to their African roots is the Divine Nine (D-9), a group of BGLOs whose traditions include "stepping" and "calls" (DeGregory 2015), both traditions that can be traced back to their African roots and are examples of Ubuntu, connection, and community. These ancestral connections build and solidify the African-ness in African American youth, empowering them to dismantle White Supremacy and live a life of true Ubuntu.

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Author contact: Velicia Hawkins-Moore (Prairie View A&M University), vhawkinsmoore@student.pvamu.edu

Commentary: On Engaging Racial Privilege: Youth, Whiteness, and the Confines of Empathy

Laura Moran, PhD (independent scholar)
lkmoran@gmail.com

Young people growing up in the United States are now on the frontlines of grappling with race, racism, and multiculturalism in their daily lives. They have seen the election of the first African American president, followed by one elected on a racialized promise to deport "illegal" immigrants. They are witness to daily news of police brutality towards Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and the uprising of the *#BlackLivesMatter* movement in response. In this landscape of racialized injustices, popular and scholarly attention has expanded its scope of "minority" negotiations of racism and racial identity to include negotiations of whiteness and the implications of white fragility undertaken by the perceived white majority.

Ethnographic studies demonstrate the role of class (Kefalas 2003), socialization (DuRocher 2011; Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001), privilege (Bonilla-Silva 2006) and agency (Moran 2020; Winkler 2012) on youth perceptions of race and racism. Building upon these frameworks, the works of DiAngelo (2018) and Hagerman (2018) have each promoted the lens of whiteness for deepening our understanding of inequality. Careful consideration of how the next generation of White youth make sense of, develop a consciousness about, and engage with whiteness, is of critical significance to understanding how racial inequity and the behaviors and ideals that foster it persist.

Consider empathy. Consider its role in how young people emotionally and intellectually engage with race and their own sense of whiteness. How does empathy both enable and prohibit racial inclusion? Take, for example, my daughter. Consider how, at as young as four years old, she described people who did not look like her (i.e., non-White) by the particular shade of their skin—they were brown, beige or tan, never black. When speaking about herself at the same age, she called herself "White" perceiving it as a category to which she belonged, even though it didn't precisely describe the color of her skin. And consider how, in more recent years, she described her hope that Black people would win in the Olympics, demonstrating a sense of empathy that effectively highlights and perpetuates the racial exclusion she laments.

This simple, anecdotal example illustrates the relevance of empathy as a potential mode of youth engagement with whiteness. As DuRocher's (2011) work on the socialization of racism demonstrates, the concept of whiteness is fluid and requires constant justification and upkeep. Invoking empathy as a mode of engaging race and whiteness indicates a rejection of color-blind ideology in favor of color consciousness (Hagerman 2014), inarguably a positive step towards racial equality. However, careful consideration is needed to unpack the extent to which social hierarchies are, in fact, troubled or dismantled by instrumentalizing empathy in this way.

Broadly conceived as a kind of antidote to racism, the notion of empathy can instead serve to perpetuate power dynamics; the ability to express it, after all, is related to the extent of one's sense of belonging in a particular social context. Moreover, empathy is, in essence, a relational capacity—it reflects our role in relationship to other people. Such emphasis on the other can arguably prevent a deeper self-reflection of one's sense of whiteness and the power and privilege attached to that whiteness (Hagerman 2014). It is, I propose, in the space of self-reflection where the potential to disrupt hollow deflections of racism in favor of a more substantive grounding in

anti-racism is born (Kendi 2019). Of critical significance then, is the extent to which empathy, or at least the performance thereof, serves to enable a White identity that maintains inequality.

Efforts to dismantle white supremacy and white privilege must consider how young people learn of, rely upon, and challenge their own whiteness. Shifting youth ideology increasingly engages empathy as a mode of emotional and intellectual engagement with race and whiteness. Exploring the complex relationship between whiteness and empathy, as one expression of color consciousness among young people, will propel our understanding of how white supremacy and white privilege might ultimately be maintained or upended.

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Author contact: Laura Moran, PhD (independent scholar), lkmoran@gmail.com

Commentary: The Burden of Demonization: Muslim American Youth on the Marginalization Spectrum

Noor Ali, EdD (Worcester State University)
nali2@worcester.edu

Muslim American students navigate educational spaces at a time when the 2016 Presidential Election has unleashed a rhetoric that is riddled with Islamophobia. Institutionalized oppression against Muslims ranges from microaggressions, microassaults, and microinvalidations to outright violence and blatant bigotry (Bonet 2011; Sue 2010). Being born or growing up in a country that seeks to avoid, ignore, invalidate, and demonize one's experiential narrative is akin to being shunned to a life of invisibility or consistent apologetics (Shields 2004; Sirin and Fine 2008). Criminalized for the crimes of others, Muslim youth face repercussions in a society where they are consistently judged for not being American enough if the label of religion is tagged to them. Carrying the burden of guilt by association when acts of terror are perpetrated, these youth face experiences that are particular to their demographic. Suarez-Orozco argues that regardless of their differences based on language, culture, ethnic origin, etc., Muslim American youth are bracketed as "designated Others" due to their religious identity and made "targets of reflexive hatred" by the mainstream (Suarez-Orozco, as quoted in Sirin & Fine 2008, xiii). According to Sirin and Fine (2008), in the post 9/11 context, the "two cultural identities, "Muslim" and "American" were reinvented" (11). In light of the attacks on the Twin Towers, the possible multiplicity of identities for Muslim Americans was not only questioned but also sabotaged as they were demonized for their religious association. Each time there is a mass shooting or terrorist attack, the immediate concern of Muslim Americans is not where and how it occurred, but an internal plea that it's not a Muslim who perpetrated it, as that translates itself into a blanket demonization of everyone with that religious association.

Muslim American youth today continue to face a dilemma of twoness similar to that which Du Bois (1903) explicated more than a century ago in his discourse on race and national identity. This was a dilemma where being Black and being American were antithetical to each other and thus demanded a continuous effort on the part of the marginalized demographic to consistently prove how these two aspects of identity could be present in any one individual. The Muslim American experience similarly involves practicing a hyphenated identity that questions the legitimacy of nationality because of the religious guilt by association attached to it (McCloud 2010). How one can be truly American if they are Muslim as well is a question that faces this demographic because of the presumed exclusivity of these two titles.

The greater irony lies in a double marginalization that exists for Muslim American youth, as not only are they not considered American enough by the mainstream, but they are also just as often not considered Muslim enough within their own communities. Providing a space for recognizing the demonization that Muslim American youth experience as their lived reality is of paramount importance, because on a spectrum of invalidation, this definition of terrorism tagged onto youth has perpetual ramifications. Carrying these burdens since birth of "guilt by association" is no easy task.

Muslim American students often find themselves in the perpetuated practice of being invalidated by others, or engaging in a self-invalidation by considering their own lived reality to be in-significant or irrelevant to the mainstream. For educators and mentors who work in settings where Muslim American students are present, the first step must always be one of recognizing

and acknowledging their presence as it stands. It becomes equally important to check for explicit and implicit bias and stereotypical views that one may hold of Muslim American lived experiences. Muslim American youth are not a monolith and must therefore be allowed a space for expression without assumptions. In all my work with Muslim American youth, I cannot recount how often Muslim women are perceived to be oppressed, are expected to be used to being dismissed, and are reminded that this is America and therefore they need not be afraid. It is found surprising when they speak "without an accent," or have an intelligent opinion, or do science, or play sports, or know popular culture. Microaggressions like these and blatant demonization of this demographic urges us to create safe spaces for Muslim American youth to just be themselves.

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Author contact: Noor Ali, EdD (Worcester State University), nali2@worcester.edu

Beware of Generationalism: The Structural (In)visibility of BIPOC Youths in Global Climate Summits

Laura Bullon-Cassis, MSc (New York University)
Lb3124@nyu.edu

Screenshot from Instagram story of the UNFCC account by Laura Bullon-Cassis.

On December 11, 2019, a group of Fridays for Future activists performed a sit-in on the stage of an event on "the climate emergency" at the UN Climate Change Conference in Madrid, also known as COP25. The sit-in was unsanctioned, namely it was not pre-approved by UN Security, but was nonetheless received with great excitement by delegates: "this young generation holds great promise," a fellow researcher confided as we exited the room. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Instagram account embraced it as part of their event, posting a story that featured the protesters and the tagline "Special #COP25 event on the #climateemergency."

Later that day, an intergenerational group of 200 or so – which primarily included Indigenous groups and other people of color – held another unsanctioned protest. They were not received with enthusiasm but with disapproval: they were forcibly removed from the premises and threatened with being blacklisted from this and future COPs. All in all, the young people that participated in the afternoon protest received much harsher treatment.

The afternoon protesters are expelled from the conference area. Photo credit: Laura Bullon-Cassis.

I conducted two years of participant observation of assemblies, meetings, protests, and plenaries, inside and around UN climate summits in 2019 and 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic that put in-person summitry on pause. This was complemented with 56 semi-structured interviews that sought to capture the comparatively different experiences of the young people who foreground their age and engage as "youth" in UN summits with those of young people who choose other categories of representation such as "Indigenous Peoples." Returning to the above example, the young people who participated in the afternoon protest had chosen to foreground

other identities than youth, such as their belonging to (or their allyship with) Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) communities rather than with "youth" and paid a hefty price for it. At stake is thus to understand why the category of "youth" has been conferred a preferential status and thus receives a more lenient treatment in multilateral conferences over other identities.

The answer stems out of a structural feature of multilateralism: its intergovernmental nature. Indeed, the UN was created as a club of Member States in the aftermath of the Second World War to maintain global peace. Thus, the participation of non-state actors is subject to a protocol aimed at ensuring they do not upset this goal. For example, protests or actions must be pre-approved, and "naming" specific countries or corporations in these protests is forbidden. Thus, overt dissent against extractive processes is virtually impossible.

The UN welcomes a "young citizen," who "represents the symbolic accommodation of [youth] activism into liberal democratic codes" (Kennelly 2011, 25) and is thus undisruptive to the intergovernmental nature of multilateralism. Further, "youth" has been shown to be a particularly useful social category for the neoliberal project of renegotiating previous welfare and development state entitlements and expectations (Sukarieh and Tannock 2014). Categories such as Indigenous peoples are instead fundamentally disruptive. As a young Indigenous woman shared during COP25, "White climate leaders are endorsed by politicians because they fit into a narrative that does not challenge colonialism and capitalism. We as Indigenous youth have to name the corporations coming into our territory, the decision-makers, the police forces. We have to name those because we are facing them immediately." In doing so—contrary to the figure of the "young citizen," they resemble the "young activist [who] is a troublemaker and hooligan, disrupting the apparently legitimate practices of the state" (Kennelly 2011, 14).

This contributes to explaining why, when they foreground BIPOC identities over their youth, young people are "adultified." Adultification, a term used in sociology of youth, describes a phenomenon which reduces or removes the consideration of childhood as a mediating factor in Black youths' behavior (Epstein *et al*. 2017). Carmen, a Fridays for Future spokesperson, recounted: "Journalists and policymakers have a lot of affection for Fridays for Future, because they see us as kids, as 'cute.' We realize that when you introduce yourself as a Fridays activist or from another group, you get a very different response." Youth, and especially the white youth that Fridays for Future represents, are instead afforded special treatment as "children" in the multilateral space. I interviewed a young Bahamian man not far from where people were queuing to see Greta Thunberg give a press conference. He seemed very defeated and said, "I've been doing this work for years, so have many of others in the Global South. This is racism. It's white Europeans, getting attention for what we've been doing all along."

"Generationalism," namely the systematic appeal to the concept of generation rather than other principles of division such as race in narrating the social and political (Wohl 1979), masks these profound structural racial inequalities. A dominant feature of political, media, and popular discourse in recent years, particularly in the area of climate change since the rise to fame of Greta Thunberg, generationalism encompasses the framing of climate change as a threat to young and future generations. This temporal framing of the Anthropocene does not recognize, for example, the environmental destruction that Indigenous peoples have been facing since colonization.

Thus, generationalism has repercussions on the visibility of climate justice movements. Social

categories such as generations can indeed become central to symbolic struggles to impose and legitimize a vision of reality (Bourdieu 1991). Interrogating generationalism could offer a useful entry point to highlight structural inequalities that perpetuate and complexify the impacts of racism against Indigenous and Black young people in global politics. Not only do BIPOC youths experience exclusion through "adultification," but the social category of "youth" is weaponized to avoid difficult discussions relating to climate justice such as extractive capitalism and historical responsibilities.

That such structural inequalities exist in multilateral fora could be surprising as multilateralism involves adherence to principles such as inclusion and solidarity. Generationalism could thus be understood as part of a form of discrimination which sociologist Bonilla-Silva (2014) describes as an "ideology of color-blindness" that obfuscates larger structural inequities. Critically examining generationalist narratives, as well as a broader commitment in policy, reporting, and research which foregrounds principles of division specific to BIPOC communities when narrating "youth" and climate change would a long way.

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Author contact: Laura Bullon-Cassis, MSc (New York University), Lb3124@nyu.edu

The Matter of Child Lives: Police Violence and the Limits of Children's Rights[1]

Rania Kassab Sweis (The University of Richmond)
rsweis@richmond.edu

On January 29, 2021, in Rochester, New York, three adult police officers handcuffed and pepper-sprayed a 9-year-old Black girl before forcing her into a police car.[2] As the girl refused to get into the car, resisting and screaming for her father, one of the police officers was caught on body camera chastising her, "You're acting like a child." The girl immediately responded, "I am a child!" Police were dispatched to a domestic dispute before they encountered the girl. Her pepper spraying and being forced into the police car follows a series of more tragic cases in the United States, including that of 12-year-old Tamir Rice, who was shot and killed by the police in Cleveland for playing with a toy gun, and 17-year-old-Trayvon Martin, who was simply walking in a Florida neighborhood when he was violently assaulted and killed by a community watchman. Like these cases, the incident in Rochester garnered condemnation against the police officers. Black Lives Matter protests denouncing systemic police violence quickly erupted in the aftermath of the video releases, and the three police officers involved have been suspended.

Without any prospects of police reform soon, the case in Rochester raises broader questions about childhood and the police, both in the United States and abroad. My anthropological research in Cairo, Egypt parallels the situation in Rochester in unexpected and illuminating ways. In Egypt, as we have seen in the United States, being a child is an unstable designation, particularly when it comes to policing. Police reform, therefore, is a matter that impacts child lives as much as those of adults.

While in Cairo during two years (2007-2009) of ethnographic research on global healthcare with children, I worked in a French-based aid organization that ran a mobile medical clinic for "street children," a category the organization defined as people under the age of eighteen who live or work on the streets for protracted periods of time (Sweis 2017a). While in this clinic, I observed and interviewed local Egyptian medical aid workers and child patients during routine medical encounters. The organization defined Egyptian street children according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and universal children's rights discourse. These doctrines promote a Western, modern, middle-class model of the child that paints a "child" as inherently apolitical, undeveloped, and lacking personal agency. The model assumes that childhood is a life phase marked by protection and play, not work or politics. In Cairo, one of the organization's main goals was to ensure the local police approached young people who lived or worked on the streets as "children"—that is, according to children's rights, as innocent subjects who were dependent on adults and who required compassion, not punishment. While this approach was seemingly benevolent, it also obscured the many ways in which children acted as social and political agents, particularly with respect to state violence and the police. As time

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[2] From "Three Rochester police officers are removed from patrol after a 9-year-old girl is handcuffed and pepper-sprayed." Ray Sanchez and Mirna Alsharif. *CNN*, Tuesday, February 2, 2021.

went by in the clinic in Cairo, I learned how central the state and, in particular, police violence, were in the lives of child patients. This routine violence included handcuffing, intimidation, detention, and physical and sexual abuse on par with what adults experienced in prison.

A key lesson I learned from my fieldwork in the clinic is that although rights-based discourse framed the children as agentless, our patients resisted what they saw as unjust treatment by the police in an assortment of ways. From small acts of resistance to participating in mass demonstrations—as Egyptian children did during the mass protests of 2011 (Diana 2021)—they made their own calls for social justice. For example, one teenage clinic patient proudly flashed a series of razor blade scars on his chest once he entered the clinic. He claimed that he cut himself in order to bleed in front of police officers and thereby avoid detention. He had used his body as a "rhetorical devise" (Cox 2015), in harmful ways as a means of resistance because for him, self-inflicted wounds were a better fate than detention. Such resistance practices trouble our romanticized notion of protected childhood and urge us to question how children's rights, which depoliticize children and promote agentless childhood, figure into police and structural violence.

The young patients I encountered in Cairo made decisions for themselves that maximized their safety, sense of independence, and personal dignity. The paradox of their situation is that the rights-based healthcare we were providing them did nothing to alter the ongoing police violence in their lives and the ways that violence shaped their health. Patients recognized this and understood that institutions like the state repeatedly violated their bodies. Like the 9-year-old girl in Rochester, New York, they openly resisted by confronting police, talking back, and even challenging state power using their bodies.

Childhood is a slippery concept, as scholars across disciplines have shown for decades (Ariès 1962; Malkki 2010; Marshall 2014; Stephens 1995; Sweis 2017b). There is much to be learned from the slippages that are present in conceptions of childhood in contemporary Egypt and the United States. A question remains: When is the Western model of "childhood" deployed, and for whom? For Black children in the United States and street children in Cairo, modern Western childhood is not a universally applied category. Historian Crystal Webster (2021) recently argued that the tendency in the United States has been to "adultify" Black children while ascribing childhood—as well as innocence and social protection—to White children. This means that Black children can be objects of police violence, while White children can play cops and robbers with guns without fear of getting shot themselves. Similarly, in Cairo, where Western-based aid organizations attempt to promote children's rights among "street children," young people continue to face the same militarized police as adults.

As we have seen with the case of the 9-year-old girl in Rochester, and as my research subjects in Cairo revealed, we can conceive of some young people as children—as dependent and innocent subjects—when the police do not. It is critical we understand these dueling definitions and recognize when each is deployed and why. Despite young people's resistance, the slippages between childhood and adulthood could lead to terror, violence, and even death for them.

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Author contact: Rania Kassab Sweis (The University of Richmond), rsweis@richmond.edu

Childhood Innocence and the Racialized Child in a White Space

Alisha Nguyen (Boston College)
alisha.nguyen@bc.edu

In Summer 2020, the well-circulated surveillance video footage of the murder of George Floyd tore up the American illusional cloak of diversity and woke millions of White Americans from their racial amnesia, leading to one of the largest social justice movements since the 1960s. The escalation of racial conflicts urged educators to engage in long-overdue conversations to address the prevalent "-isms" in educational institutions. School districts across the U.S. started sending out emails confirming their anti-racist stance and highlighting the messages of diversity and inclusion. Directors of diversity were appointed, teachers' professional development sessions were scheduled, and PTO book clubs were created. Yet, amidst these performative efforts, little attention has been paid to curriculum and instruction, especially in the context of early childhood education.

Childhood Innocence: Burden & Privilege

Early childhood is a unique realm where the overwhelming discourses of care, love, and protection often dominate and can justify the silencing act of social injustice issues. In American culture, children are often seen and perceived as racially unconscious, asexual, and cognitively incapable of understanding complex matters such as race, gender, and sexuality. Early childhood teachers and parents often avoid touching on these issues in order to protect "childhood innocence" (Robinson and Jones-Diaz 2016). It is crucial to understand that childhood innocence is a literacy formation from the Romantic era and a social construct that functions to uphold the child/adult binary and to project adults' "longing for something lost and forever unattainable" (Robinson 2008, 116). The mystified innocent child forever resides in the over-filtered space defined by the absence of sins (Bernstein 2011). Racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, discrimination, hatred, bigotry, and violence do not exist in that imaginary world. Social injustice issues, hence, must be purposely ignored or hidden.

Problematically, innocence has always been a racialized *and* gendered concept: it is White-exclusive as historically in Western culture "only White kids were allowed to be innocent" (Bernstein 2011; 2017). In addition, it strongly relates to the notion of idealized White femininity: childlike, innocent, and dependent. For children of color, childhood innocence is neither presumed nor entitled. Many researchers have raised serious concerns about the criminalization of Black boys and adultification of Black girls in U.S. classrooms (Dumas and Nelson 2016; Epstein, Blake, and González 2017). To justify dehumanizing treatment against Black children, White logic affirms that Black children are less innocent and therefore, should receive less protection and do not deserve the same level of tolerance compared to White children. Across educational settings, Black and Latinx students suffer tremendously from structural racial discrimination, harsh discipline practices, and microaggressions (Bryan 2018; Kohli, Pizarro, and Nevárez 2017; Skiba and Losen 2016; Wun 2018). Childhood innocence, hence, is a burden and a contested privilege that needs to be debunked, in order to reclaim child rights of civic engagement, participation in critical conversations of social justice issues, and access to important knowledge.

The Racialized Child in a White Space

During recess, two 5-year-old girls, Mia and Zoey, went to the playground and raced to the swing set together. Giggling and enjoying the cool breeze of the spring, Mia and Zoey tried to swing in sync and went as high as they could. Suddenly, Pete, a male classmate, came and pushed Zoey off the swing.

"That is not nice!" – Mia helped Zoey get up and said angrily to Pete

"Mia, you should not play with Zoey anymore!" – Pete said

"Why?" – confused and surprised, Mia asked Pete

Pete answered, "Because you are White and Zoey is not!"

(Note: Zoey is Black Latinx, Mia is Asian, Pete is White)

Such a racist incident is not an isolated event. It happens more frequently in White spaces where children of color are often racialized and suffer from racial discrimination and oppression (Troyna and Hatcher 2018). Troubling playground examples like this one, call for the urgent task to implement anti-racist intervention programs in White spaces.

In Fall 2020, I conducted an ethnographic case study in a kindergarten classroom located in a White-predominant neighborhood in the Northeast (Dyson and Genishi 2005). Guided by the anti-bias education framework (Derman-Sparks and Ramsey 2011), the research project was a collaboration with a White female teacher to implement an anti-bias read-alouds curriculum. The classroom case was selected as it represented a typical White-predominant early childhood classroom in which the teacher and students engaged in the shared context of read-alouds sessions. As a veteran teacher and a community treasure, the teacher is well known, well loved, and respected by the school community. Based on my participation assisting in learning activities, I observed that similar to other early childhood teachers, the kindergarten teacher adopted a colorblind approach and her classroom practices sometimes touched on the issues of diversity, kindness, and tolerance, but they were "more illusionary than real" (Boutte 2008, 166).

As a graduate student, I remembered feeling like walking on eggshells to gain access to the research site. Entering the White space with an anti-racist agenda, I certainly violated a stereotypical perception of the "nonthreatening kind of person of color" (Nguyen 2020). My research project received little attention and support from the school administrators. As explained by the principal, who is White, my research might give the impression that the school did not already engage in "this work." In this White affluent district, "this work" merely included professional training sessions in which (mostly White) teachers read books, sat through lectures, and reflected on their implicit biases and stereotypical thinking of (mostly racialized) students and families. Families were not involved even though nondominant families and students of color have been sharing their troubled schooling experiences fueled with discrimination and marginalization. And nobody was interested in doing "this work" with young children even though racism is a reality for children of color like Mia and Zoey. However, it is certainly a misconception to think that talking about race and racism is only needed in racially diverse classrooms. As reflected in the vignette above, White children like Pete need anti-racist

interventions to combat their internalized White supremacy. We should nurture White children to become anti-racist allies and foster their commitment to racial justice from an early age.

In the research project, I presented multiple titles of anti-bias picture books and co-designed the lessons with the early childhood teacher to engage students in critical conversations of important topics such as racism, White privilege, gender stereotypes, gender nonconformity, sexism, and homophobia. Still, the teacher tried to avoid titles that explicitly present the negative effects of racism, bigotry, and transphobia. While the titles selected for read-aloud use mostly focused on the messages of acceptance and inclusion mainly offered and determined by the dominant group (White or gender-conforming/heteronormative characters), the unselected titles were written from the perspectives of the oppressed. Most importantly, they amplified how the main characters investigate and actively resist, either through personal transformation, and/or participation in collective actions against social injustices. Justifying the decision of dismissing these picture books, the teacher labeled them as "not developmentally appropriate" and "too heavy." Contradictorily, at the end of the project, the teacher also expressed her surprise with students' insightful comments on race and gender issues. She reflected on how they listened and interacted with the selected titles in ways that proved wrong her assumption and underestimation of their capacity to "handle the stories." Commenting on the younger learners, the teacher shared, "I find that generally they are very accepting of others and they are very accepting of any range of differences. I think because they have like an innocence… a lot more than other age groups do." To the early childhood teacher, the kindergarteners are special because of their perceived innocence, the level of which purportedly decreases with age. This was exemplified through the teacher's censoring act that was mostly influenced by her adult-centric stance and colorblind ideologies. These ideological obstacles appeared to prevent the teacher from investing into a long-term anti-bias project. She eventually opted for using and teaching what are deemed, from her perspective, as less risky materials. Hidden under the surface are the teacher's own fears and discomforts in relation to certain topics present in anti-bias picture books: "*I am not comfortable with this title*," she wrote on a sticky note placed on the cover of *Something Happened in Our Town*, which is about police brutality and racial violence against Black people in America.

We all know what happened in our town in Summer 2020.

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Author contact: Alisha Nguyen (Boston College), alisha.nguyen@bc.edu

Indigenous Youth and Experiences with Transitional Justice in Canada

Jaymelee Kim (University of Findlay)
jaymelee.kim@gmail.com

Introduction

In the wake of human rights violations, international bodies have encouraged the use of transitional justice models to provide redress for assimilatory and genocidal policies enacted upon Indigenous peoples. Transitional justice tools have included the use of investigative truth commissions or tribunals, monetary compensation, memorialization projects, national apologies, and amnesty for perpetrators (Hinton 2010). Created in the aftermath of World War II, transitional justice was not intended to address colonial violence, yet it has been adopted with varying degrees of formality to do exactly that in countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United States (Keynes 2019; Kim 2018; Nagy 2013).

The government of Canada (GOC) implemented a transitional justice program as part of the 2006 Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement which sought to provide justice, accountability, and reconciliation for over 86,000 survivors of the government-funded and church-administered Indian Residential Schools. The schools operated from the 1800s until 1996 as part of a system of forced assimilation fraught with sexual abuse, physical abuse, and medical experimentation (Mosby and Galloway 2017). These institutions were similar to the U.S. Indian Boarding Schools which operated until the mid 1970s (Kim 2014; Mosby and Galloway 2017). The settlement agreement aimed to engage the now-adult survivors of the Indian Residential School System and to identify the whereabouts of the 6,000 children who "disappeared" from residential school custody.

While vast literature has critiqued the implementation and efficacy of transitional justice, less attention has been paid to Indigenous children's experiences with transitional justice redress, and even less so the experiences of children not directly targeted by the narrowly-defined anti-Indi-genous policies in question. *What of those who did not experience the human rights violation firsthand, but experienced the lasting impacts? Where was justice for Indigenous youth? How did they seek justice and reconciliation?* This piece draws on 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork spread over four years to identify the on-the-ground Indigenous perceptions of Canada's transitional justice response to the Indian Residential Schools. Participant observation of state-sponsored, grassroots, Indigenous, and non-Indigenous transitional justice events occurred primarily in British Columbia, Canada. Informal and semi-structured interviews included but were not limited to, those affiliated with Indigenous non-profit organizations, the legal sector, involved churches, and the media. No single Indigenous ethnic group was selected, since all were impacted by the residential schools and the subsequent transitional justice investigations, compensation, commemoration events, and apologies.

Youth Engaging in Transitional Justice

Canada's national transitional justice implementation had spotty awareness among settlers. However, notions of justice permeated Indigenous communities and urban Indigenous youth

sought the opportunity to create and participate in justice and reconciliation-related events. Repeatedly, over and over, youth vocalized that they "did not know" about the existence of residential schools (which had been masked through historical revisionism), about the abuses their families endured, or about how residential schools played a hand in their own family dynamics. For many, familial experiences of acculturation through forbidden use of language, rites, rituals, and cosmological beliefs existed as a painful memory not to be discussed, leaving youth without explanation for intergenerational trauma that impacted many in the Indigenous communities. A Voices Youth Conference, organized by youth to engage with community elders and family members aimed to break this silence. Indigenous music artists performed, and youth presented what they learned about the residential schools. Open mic sessions allowed youth to share how the residential schools continued to impact them and their families and ask the elders in attendance questions about their experiences with residential schools and the after-effects.

There were strong parallels between the transitional justice-inspired youth conference and an addiction recovery graduation ceremony. The group home specifically served Indigenous youth overcoming substance abuse problems. Programming drew on traditional skills and practices from local Indigenous ethnic groups. Case managers used diverse traditional and tribal-specific music, dance, art and skill-building to facilitate the recovery process while attempting to undo colonial assimilatory policies. The teenagers participating in the graduation were overwhelmed with emotion and showed pride in their creative and traditional achievements while singing songs and drumming. Facilitators confided that they feared relapse as the young men and women graduated out of the program and returned to the greater settler-dominant urban community that did not support Indigenous identities.

With these events happening during times of transitional justice, an underlying thread became clear: identity could be conceptualized as a resource that youth ardently sought. The residential school system, like many colonial policies—both past and current—strived to erase, stigmatize, and racialize Indigenous ethnic groups. As one young man explained during a reconciliation event hosted by a local church, many Indigenous adults and youth experienced pressure to commit to "walking either the red road or the white road". Some settlers in the pews surrounding the young man met this statement with confusion, but the sentiment is common as Indigenous youth continue to have their identities challenged by colonial policies and settler refusal to accept the idea of Indigenous modernity.

Understanding the experiences, trauma, traditions, and beliefs of their families and communities allowed youth to better understand their own positionality and identity. For some, cyclical familial violence began to make sense; for others, relationships between past and current colonial violence were clarified. While they did not attend residential schools themselves, they experienced the widespread impacts of the schools' and government's assimilation policies.

Conclusion

When considering justice for Indigenous youth, practitioners should recognize that youth can be impacted by the silences and voids created by historical violence just as potently as the current physical and structural violence. Erasure of critical pieces of settler-Indigenous histories obfuscate formative experiences not just as part of settler youth indoctrination, but as part of the obliteration of youths' Indigenous identity as well. Symbolic gestures and failure to recognize the relationship between past and current forms of violence experienced by Indigenous youth allow the attack on Indigenous identity to continue. Rather, tangible and substantive support for

Indigenous identity that challenges structural and colonial violence, such as that seen in the youth conference dialogue or the recovery program cultural skills-building, can be used to center justice processes.

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Author contact: Jaymelee Kim (University of Findlay), jaymelee.kim@gmail.com

On Their Own Terms: Painting as Self Expression for Black Muslim Youth

Irteza Binte-Farid (University of Pennsylvania)
irtezab@gse.upenn.edu

As part of my dissertation research in 2019, I facilitated an afterschool Muslim Students' Association (MSA) club with a dozen low-income, Black Muslim youth in a West Philadelphia charter school.[3] My research question was: "How do Black Muslim youth experience their religious and racialized identities at school?" I used participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups to address my question. While not the original focus of my study, students' artistic self-expression emerged as an important topic for analysis.

As an ethnographer, I co-ran the club with a Muslim teacher at school, Ms. Ina (all names presented here are pseudonyms). We introduced painting as an enrichment activity and noticed that it became the students' favorite activity. Observing students painting revealed two main ideas: 1) how an afterschool space within a charter school can be an asset-affirming, free, and joyful space for Black youth, and 2) how artistic expressions are filtered through students' identities, including religious identities, which are often unacknowledged in school.

Scholars have noted how afterschool programs for low-income Black youth are often framed within a deficit lens; clubs are viewed as a way to keep "culturally deprived" youth off the street (Baldridge 2014; Halpern 2002; Kwon 2013). In contrast, Ms. Ina and I implemented the asset-based framework that Baldridge (2014) advocates by allowing students to bring their full selves to the club. Ms. Ina and I hoped that ultimately this creative space for Black youth could serve the pursuit of racial justice by encouraging students to view themselves as agents, capable of unique self-expression and social action, rather than as passive consumers. As anthropologist Aimee Cox (2015) notes in her study of Black women in a Detroit homeless shelter, creative performances allowed the women to be acknowledged on their own terms, rather than being viewed as individuals in need of intervention. Bell (2010) also notes how arts can tell "counterstories," while Garcia (2017) applies a "funds of knowledge" approach to arts education in working-class schools. Drawing from these frameworks, the MSA painting sessions allowed low-income Black Muslim youth to visually represent themselves on their own terms.

Artistic Creativity

During a painting session, the students described MSA as a space of freedom. When I asked the students to keep the paint area clean, 10th grader Mikael commented, "I don't know why afterschool curriculum teachers think like it's a hassle for us to do something. Cause you said, sorry sorry (to clean up). For us, it don't mean nothing. But when a teacher asks us to do it, you're in my grade, why are you asking me to do something, unless you're cool with that teacher." Mikael made the distinction between afterschool as a place of voluntary participation in contrast to grade teachers who commanded student obedience. Mikael was happy to clean up because he viewed MSA as a volitional space.

While Mikael emphasized the freedom he enjoyed in the afterschool program, other students viewed painting itself as a form of free expression:

> Uma: "What I like about art is you can be creative."
> Lana: "That's not how it be in art class."
> Keshawn: "My teacher say, 'if you don't get it right, I'll call your parent.'"
> Lana: "In my art classes, you cannot be creative."
> Uma: "She call your mom for that?"
> Lana: "Yea."

Uma, a 7th grader, expressed pleasure at having the freedom to be creative, for example, to paint her own canvas without strict specifications (how many colors to use, no defined topic, etc.) 10th grader Lana explicitly contrasts this afterschool freedom with her restrictive art class. She shares that her teacher believes art should be done "right;" if not, she would call Lana's parent. Uma's incredulous tone suggests that she does not believe Lana's claim that art teachers could police creativity in such a way. Lana, however, re-affirms her perception by distinguishing between the school classroom and afterschool as qualitatively different. Lana's sister, 7th grader Keshawn, agrees: "In my art classes, you cannot be creative." Lana and Keshawn both experienced in-school art classes as a place where their creative expressions were policed, in contrast to MSA.

Islamic Expressions

As the girls chatted, 10th grader Yahya, a Salafi-leaning Muslim, shared his views.

> Yahya: "There are a lot of things Muslim not supposed to…I can never draw nothing with my eyes open. My dad told me. You're creating something that's not alive. So Allah (SWT) is going to ask you when you die. You can't draw the face of the Prophet (peace be upon him)."
>
> Uma: "Right, so you don't draw the Prophet."

Uma agreed with an Islamic viewpoint in which the Prophet Muhammad's face (peace be upon him) could not be depicted because of the danger of idolatry (Taluğ and Eken 2015). The strict Salafi interpretation of Islam went a step further, banning the drawing of human faces and new art forms because such actions would lead to Allah's (SWT) [expression glorifying God] judgment after death (Esposito 2011). Yahya's views on artistic limits were shaped by his Salafi-leaning dad's influence on his religious life outside of school. Nonetheless, in school, Yahya painted his initials on a blue canvas. While Yahya did not draw human faces, he did not reject painting either, instead using art as a form of self-expression.

Uma and Keshawn also employed painting as a form of faithful self-expression. Uma painted stars in a night sky, over which she painted the Arabic word "Allah" in white. Keshawn, unable to write Arabic, asked Uma to paint "Allah" on her own canvas, which consisted of bright yellow and purple stripes. Both girls exhibited their Islamic identity through inscribing the name of Allah (SWT) on their canvasses.

Painting by Uma. Photo by Irteza Binte-Farid.

Painting by Keshawn. Photo by Irteza Binte-Farid.

Painting allowed Black Muslim youth to engage in creative forms of self-expression that they did not often experience in the classroom. It also allowed them to represent their religious identities in visual form. By modelling what creative self-expression looked like, Ms. Ina and I hoped that our students could craft future spaces for themselves in which they could freely express their racial and religious identities and perhaps someday become agents of social change.

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Author contact: Irteza Binte-Farid (University of Pennsylvania), irtezab@gse.upenn.edu

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NEOS is the flagship publication of the Anthropology of Children and Youth Interest Group (ACYIG), American Anthropological Association. The bi-annual publication consists of peer-reviewed original short-form research articles as well as editor-reviewed commentaries and feature pieces. *NEOS* relies on the work of many volunteers, including the full editorial board, peer reviewers, the ACYIG communications team, and a multitude of advisory board members for both *NEOS* and ACYIG. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact acyig.editor@gmail.com.

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Launched in 2007 as an Interest Group within the American Anthropological Association, the Anthropology of Children and Youth Interest Group (ACYIG) now boasts more than 1200 members in over ten countries. Members include academics and practitioners who publish on and work with children all over the world. The need for an anthropological interest group concerned with children and childhood continues to center on the fact that, despite growing interest in the area of cross-cultural research on childhood, children's experiences, and children's rights, there are very few established places to discuss and publicize such work, especially outside the realm of education and health disciplines. To read more about ACYIG, visit our website at http://acyig.americananthro.org

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Maria V. Barbero, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Integrated Studies at Florida Gulf Coast

University. She has a PhD in Global and Sociocultural Studies from Florida International University an M.A. in Comparative Studies from The Ohio State University. Maria is currently working on a book manuscript on south-south youth migration to Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her work on migration, nationalism & youth, has been published in journals such as *Citizenship Studies*, *Race and Ethnic Studies*, and the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Maria's research focuses on the migration-security nexus and how it impacts migrant populations in the Americas. She is particularly interested in the experiences of young people who straddle elusive boundaries between childhood and adulthood and how they experience state practices, discourses, and policies of protection and control.

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Matilda Stubbs' primary research focuses on the anthropology of social service administration, specifically the role of documents and bureaucratic culture in U.S. child welfare, adoption, and foster care services. She also teaches on a range of other topics including automobility and vehicularity, visual and material culture, communication, tourism, and sensory studies. Her most recent project focuses on the global political economy of youth slime culture and ASMR on social media platforms.

Assistant Editor – Alexea Howard, MA

Alexea Howard, MA is a recent graduate from California State University, Long Beach whose focus is in Medical Anthropology. She graduated at the top of her class with awards such as Distinguished Graduate Student, Academic Excellence, and Best Thesis. Alexea earned her BA (Honors) in Anthropology with a focus in Medical and Psychological Anthropology from the University of California, Los Angeles and received post-baccalaureate training in Psychology and Addiction Studies. Her research explores the way that concepts of health and illness are impacted by a sense of community and a gained sense of agency. Her most recent work focuses on reasons for continued use among those who participate and frequent pro- anorexia websites and how the use of these sites has impacted the community's conceptions of health and illness as it relates to anorexia.

Assistant Editor— Tiffany Pollock, PhD

Tiffany Pollock holds a Ph.D. in Gender, Feminist, and Women's Studies from York University. Her award-winning research has examined how young people negotiate transnational mobilities through artistic practices. Her current book project is based on ethnographic research with young labor migrants who perform in Thailand's tourism industry. The manuscript explores how moralities are created and utilized to erect boundaries of belonging among young people from Myanmar and rural Thailand who work together on the Thai islands. She has also conducted collaborative research with young Syrian refugees in Canada to generate youth-centred knowledge about migration experiences through a variety of arts-based outcomes. Currently, Tiffany is the Centre Coordinator at the Centre for Feminist Research (York University). She is also a consultant specializing in child- and youth-led program evaluation and cross-sector knowledge translation.

Assistant Editor – Kimberly Garza, MA, MPH

Kim is a PhD Candidate in Biological Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). Her research takes a biocultural approach to how daily social interactions influence levels of stress and health status in adolescent girls. Working with middle school girls in the American South, she examines girls' use of social interactions through ethnography and the

use of biomarkers to better define the ways girls use social interactions in the development of identity and define social hierarchies – and how interactions, life events, and coping strategies are embodied. Kim has an MA in Anthropology and an MPH from UIC.

Copy-Editor—Sujatha Subramanian

Sujatha Subramanian is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, The Ohio State University. Her research interests include girlhood and youth studies, juvenile justice and feminist geography. Sujatha is also an editor with the Detention Solidarity Network.

Digital Scholarship Intern – Delaney J. Glass

Delaney J. Glass is a Ph.D. student in Biological Anthropology at The University of Washington in Seattle. Her research area is at the intersection of human biology, evolutionary anthropology, and cultural anthropology. Her current work aims to understand how physical and social stressors are embodied (with impacts to Darwinian fitness and health) during adolescence and how this relates to cultural niche construction. She is currently a Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellow in the Middle East Center at UW, a trainee at the Center for Studies in Demography & Ecology and has recently joined the Advancing Arab American Health Network & Allies Research Group. She is pursuing training in qualitative and quantitative methods and is passionate about rstats and applying skills from Data Science to social science research.

NEOS Author Bios

Noor Ali, EdD

Dr. Noor Ali teaches at Worcester State University and Arizona State University. She is also the principal of Al-Hamra Academy, Shrewsbury, MA. Dr. Ali is involved in several projects involving social justice in education and critical race theory.

Irteza Binte-Farid, M.Ed

Irteza Binte-Farid is a joint degree PhD student in Education and Anthropology at UPenn, studying the experience of Muslim youth in Philadelphia high schools and religious spaces. Irteza is also interested in the education of secondary history teachers and in particular how teacher education programs approach the teaching of history in culturally diverse classrooms that include Muslim students of color.

Laura Bullon-Cassis, MSc

Laura Bullon-Cassis has written extensively on social movements and climate justice, as well as on youth participation in global summits. She is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University, and a Visiting Fellow in the Albert Hir-schman Centre on Democracy and the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at The Graduate Institute. Laura's work looks at new forms of transnational collaboration that are emerging in the environmental emergency and the ways in which these challenge or complement established processes of political cooperation such as multilateral diplomacy. She has conducted fieldwork with youth activists in United Nations climate summits in New York, Madrid, and Nairobi. (No author image provided)

Velicia Hawkins-Moore

Velicia Hawkins-Moore is a first-generation college graduate. She attended the University of Maryland International Branch campus in Bad Kreuznach, Germany. Velicia has taught and worked in Abu Dhabi, Ghana, West Africa, Xi'an, China and Houston, Texas.

Jaymelee Kim, PhD

Dr. Kim is an associate professor in the University of Findlay's Department of Justice Sciences. Her research focuses on human rights, humanitarian, and disaster response interventions for survivors.

Laura Moran, PhD

Dr. Moran is a cultural anthropologist specializing in youth cultures and participatory youth research. She holds a PhD in anthropology from the University of Queensland and a master's degree in social anthropology from Oxford University. Her recently published book, *Belonging and Becoming in a Multicultural World: Refugee Youth and the Pursuit of Identity* (Rutgers University Press 2020), examines racial identity among refugee youth in Australia. Dr. Moran teaches anthropology in both university and community-based settings and is currently the Refugee Project Director for children's literary magazine, Stone Soup.

Alisha Nguyen, M.Ed
Alisha Nguyen is currently a Ph.D. fellow and instructor at the Department of Teaching, Curriculum, & Society at Lynch School of Education & Human Development, Boston College. Her scholarship mostly focuses on the intersectionality of language, power, race, class, and gender in early childhood and elementary settings.

Rania Kassab Sweis, PhD
Dr. Sweis is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Richmond. Her research centers on gender, global health, and medical humanitarianism in the Middle East. Her publications have appeared in journals such as *Childhood*, *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, the *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, and the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. She is author of the book *Paradoxes of Care: Children and Global Medical Aid in* Egypt (Forthcoming from Stanford University Press, June 2021).