



Breached Initiations: Sociopolitical Resources and Conflicts in Emergent Adulthood*

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Annu. Rev. Anthropol. 2015. 44:295–310

The *Annual Review of Anthropology* is online at
anthro.annualreviews.org

This article's doi:
10.1146/annurev-anthro-102214-014012

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*This article is part of a special theme on
Resources. For a list of other articles in this theme,
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10.1146/annurev-an-44-themes](http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev-an-44-themes)

Keywords

youth, transitions, subcultures, language, resistance

Abstract

Work theorizing youth subcultures, especially of the spectacular kind, has provided an influential approach for understanding the lives of young people for the past 40 years in anthropology and sociology. In this review, we frame current literature through a lens we call “breached initiations.” We motivate our organization of the literature into processes we term “delaying,” “hopscotching,” and “opting out,” referring to ways in which youth engage sociopolitical resources and chronotopes to alter the sequencing and clustering of their expected progress through milestones of adulthood. In many cases, youth delay or refuse entry into a world that is considered “normal” and demand a reconsideration of its very premises. We highlight symbolic, material, and networked resources; by considering the commonalities in the structural situations of different youth groups, we do not view them as islands, but instead assert their embeddedness in common change.

If #OCCUPY is to be a revolution, it cannot become a ritual. We must innovate and never imitate.

Micah White, "Imitating #OCCUPY to Death"

INTRODUCTION

According to internationally agreed convention, as laid out in the Beijing Agreement and Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of Child, people across the globe, without regard to sex, ethnicity, or nationality status, enter the age of criminal majority at 18. Prior to that, they are considered children in the eyes of international law. As such, they neither are liable for crimes nor can they be considered for punishments under adult schemes.

Now imagine that you are an eight-year-old from Tehran. If you are a girl, *shari'a* law in your jurisdiction states that you have entered the age of criminal majority at 8 years and 9 months (9 lunar years). At this age, you may be tried as an adult for an offense such as consumption of intoxicants (punishable by stoning), and you may also enter into an adult situation such as marriage with your father's consent. If you were a boy from Tehran, your age of criminal majority would begin at 14 years 7 months, almost a full 6 years later than for your girl counterpart. Nonetheless, a Tehrani boy of 14 cannot sign a deed, apply for a passport, or obtain a driver's license: All those rites of passage into legal adulthood must wait until he is 18.

Across the border in Afghanistan, among the Aimaq people who share the same Persian linguistic family and broad cultural area characteristics, the age of majority for boys and girls alike is not reached until 18. This spread of a full 10 years, from 8 to 18, is for the purposes of this review a crucial example of the fluidity of the notion of youth, the cultural variability in transitions to adulthood, and the difficulty in defining the object of study. Insofar as societies preserve an interest in defining the physical, mental, or rational competencies required for the proffering of actions and the recognition of actors within the public sphere, they police and legislate the boundary of child/youth versus adult. For actors to participate in the body politic, they must be ratified to do so, and the erection of barriers to their participation in society takes place in the heated boundaries between actors that are considered competent versus those considered incompetent to make their own decisions.

Our review of the arena of sociopolitical and semiotic resources for youth takes into account the ways in which youth may be differently defined by state and nonstate actors as well as by youth themselves. Because of the fluidity of the concept, we refrain from setting arbitrary age divisions between life stages. We show how the notion of youth is deployed in contexts where it is convenient for state and nonstate actors to do so. In the United States, for example, definitions of child/youth and adult categories vary according to the behavior being legislated, for instance, drinking (age 21) versus marriage (usually ranging from 16–18, though in some states a monetary bond of \$100 per year can push that age to 14). These decisions are even made ad hoc in criminal cases, depending on the severity of the offense, so that a more serious offense can result in a juvenile being tried as an adult, always with more dire consequences.

Our review is centrally concerned with a temporal, chronotopic (Bakhtin 1981) understanding of resources in the production and representation of youth, concentrating on a category called emergent adulthood (Arnett 2000, Bynner 2005). Within the Annual Reviews series in the social sciences, the anthropology of youth (Bucholtz 2002) has been a topic, and there have also been reviews focusing on children and war (Masten & Narayan 2012), adolescent immigrant schooling (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011), youth political participation (Fisher 2012), violence and gangs (Coughlin & Venkatesh 2003, Vigil 2003), bullying (Brank et al. 2012, Juvonen & Graham 2014), and children and work (Heymann et al. 2013). Most closely related to this review are the studies

on the transition to adulthood in Europe (Buchmann & Kriesi 2011) and in the developing world (Juárez & Gayet 2014). For reasons of space, this review covers only the most recent literature, since around 2000, and focuses on literature not already extensively covered in the above reviews. Our main focus then is on sociopolitical and semiotic (commodities, language) resources in understanding youth/emergent adulthood.

Resources are not only options that youth adopt and appropriate in their everyday practices, but also the larger structural constraints given by social actors pressing different agendas on youth, offering both limitations and affordances. Social movements such as war, militarization (up to and including sports), and state appropriations of youth developments (such as the Arab Spring or the Tamarod Youth movement in Egypt) are examples of external actors organizing youth or perceptions of youth for their own ends.

Legal anthropologists Conley & O'Barr (2004) have argued that some of the most revealing cases in the exploration of shared norms are "breach cases" that provide a glimpse into social norms and moral visions. We take up that challenge in Part II of this article by concentrating on cases where the exigencies of modernity have resulted in some kind of derailing of or breach in expected life course patterns. Part I concentrates on highlighting some current trends in the study of youth from the perspective of (a) youth studies and (b) linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics.

PART I: YOUTH STUDIES IN CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Subcultures to Scenes, Neo-Tribes to NEETs

We begin by describing an illustrative controversy in youth cultural analysis partially playing out in the *Journal of Youth Studies* and arising mainly out of traditions in the United Kingdom. The two camps in this debate have been described as the youth cultures camp and the youth transitions camp (Shildrick & MacDonald 2006). The youth cultures camp is anchored in the heritage of the CCCS (Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies) approach, initially articulated in the classic works *Subcultures* by Hebdige [1996 (1979)] and *Resistance Through Rituals* (Hall & Jefferson 1976). These works lay out an influential neo-Marxist framework for understanding commodities as cultural signs through the exposition of the working class, white, and male subcultures of Mods, Teds, Skinheads, among others. Simultaneously, Cohen (1972) develops the notion of moral panics as manufactured by governments and the media. Subcultural theory has been critiqued on the grounds that it has posited the notion of static, island-like subcultures, and thus many researchers have labeled themselves as postsubcultural to account for needed fluidity and agency (Muggleton 2000, Redhead 1993). Other critiques hinge on the fact that subcultures have been theorized primarily through mediatized consumption and in so doing fail to take into account the lived experiences of youth. Furthermore, because of the heavy emphasis on spectacularity and public presence, subcultural theory has generally excluded girls and young women [McRobbie 1986 (2000)].

Some scholars have suggested terms, such as "scene," to supplant the use of subculture, especially in dealing with music-based communities and commodities and their local, transnational, and virtual dimensions (Straw 1991). Bennett (2004), for example, describes how a virtual scene led to the establishment of the "Canterbury sound." "Club cultures" aims to capture spatial aspects of dance collectivities (Thornton 1995). "Neo-tribes" (Bennett 1999, Malbon 1999), after Maffesoli's (1996) "tribus," has also been suggested, further emphasizing aspects of social cohesion and identity formation (for critiques of many of the above terms, see Hesmondhalgh 2005). At the heart of some critiques have been the questions of whether commodities are emblematic resources for

identity and whether the scholarly focus on commodities and their circulation excludes working class youth and racial others who have differential economic and spatial access to the places where scenes happen. Now and again, some researchers attempt conciliatory moves toward rapprochement; for instance, Greener & Hollands (2006) show how the local scene around psychedelic trance dance in Goa, India, aimed mostly at foreign tourists, though a vibrant scene since the hippy 1970s (Odzer 1995), has now acquired a virtual stage, with psytrance music its focus and the virtual subculture maintaining contact primarily through the Internet and only occasionally through in-person appearances at Goa trance parties or psytrance-themed parties elsewhere.

The worsening 1980s UK recession and rising rates of youth unemployment led to some impatience among other critics. Why, asked Clarke (1982, p. 1), were scholars so enamored of the investigation of the “stylistic art of a few,” when so many youth were unemployed, falling into the criminal justice system, or seen as participating in the widespread processes of urban decline in Europe? The youth transitions camp argues that orderly transition through education, into the labor market, and into adulthood is the most pressing problem, and public discourses reflect those concerns about youth (Bynner 2001). To some extent, generous government funding for studies of school-to-work transitions and widespread preoccupation about NEETs (youth 16–24 Not in Education Employment or Training) have wrested dominance from the earlier, more “cultural” perspectives and, Cohen & Ainley (2000) argue, replaced them with an agenda rooted in “economism.” Increasing ethnic tensions in the West, as evidenced by the 1990s youth riots (Adorjan 2011, Best 2007, Greenberg 2014, Shannahan 2011), as well as frustration over the separation of the culture versus transitions camps have served only to entrench these positions further. As government funding poured in, more has been made of attempting to understand NEETs as a category, and many of the research results have been widely implemented, for instance, through the 16-to-19 vocational study programs from the British Department of Education, based on the Wolf Report (Wolf 2011). The concept of NEET has achieved broader take-up as well, and Toivonen (2011) documents what she terms a policy-led Japanese moral panic around the prospect of young Japanese children turning into *nito*.

Linguistic Anthropological Understandings of Youth

Linguistic anthropological studies of youth in the past couple decades have concentrated concurrently on identities-based frameworks and on studies under the theoretical rubric of communities of practice (CoP). Identity-based studies, long a staple of the social sciences, have enjoyed a resurgence in organizing research on youth and language after the work of Hall and Bucholtz, the latter an established youth researcher, published an influential framing of identity (Bucholtz 2010, Bucholtz & Hall 2005). Researchers in pursuit of the understanding of “identity” categories have drawn particularly on the discussions of authentication of Bucholtz and Hall (Chun 2011, Cutler 2003).

Related to identity, the concept of CoP, pioneered within linguistics by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992), emphasizes a Bourdieuvian notion of praxis, hexis, and everyday community organization that includes language and other semiotic indices (more on CoPs below). Although space limits prevent our doing justice to the intricacies of these frameworks and their related discussions, this division represents two strains: language and youth studies. Two other frameworks for describing activities of youth are the language socialization approach (pioneered by Ochs & Schieffelin 1984) and the semiotic/indexical approaches. The socialization into language is, for all intents, the socialization into relationships. This approach is now being used particularly in conjunction with the analysis of interaction to understand exclusion through bullying and instigation (García-Sánchez 2009, Goodwin 2002), dynamics of family life (Ochs et al. 2012), socialization

by peers (Martí 2013), gossip (Mendoza-Denton 2008), and discernment and status aspirations (Bucholtz 2007, Orellana 2009).

A notable new study grounded in the ethnography of communication approach addresses communicative inequality of young people who have been diagnosed with cancer. In his study of a Barcelona cancer ward, Clemente (2015) documents how children and youth, in their interactions with their families, hospital caregivers, and doctors, are routinely kept in the dark as to their diagnoses and prognoses. This buildup of uncertainty, patterned through absences both in talk and of talk, plays an important part in patients' distress: They are often able to ask pointed questions about their treatment and chances of survival, only to have their questions met with either silence or various forms of linguistic sleight of hand. Nevertheless, youth carry on with small rituals of normality, such as furtive smoking on the back stairs of the cancer ward or playing bald-headed basketball in wheelchairs in the waiting rooms, delighting at the shock of onlookers.

Semiotic/indexical approaches in linguistic anthropology frame the problem less in terms of topics specific to youth, but they include important studies that show the transition to modernity as strongly imbricating youth (McIntosh 2010, Shankar 2011). Inoue's (2006, p. 5) work claims that Japanese [young] women's language "is one of the key differentiations—if not the key differentiation—that marks the specificity of Japan's modernity on the global stage." By providing an historical analysis of negative assessments and moral panics around Japanese girls-turned-consumers circa 1880, coupled with an account of their scandalizing presence in nondomestic spaces including the street and the newly Westernized secondary education system, Inoue shows how an indexical inversion propelled so-called schoolgirl speech from the status of a corrupt form of speech used by rebellious teenagers, both vulgar and sugary, to the very marker of femininity and docile domesticity. Adding contemporary and ethnographic detail to this historical argument, Miller (2004, p. 298) writes about Kogals, self-styled Japanese girls who shock with (*a*) their unusual makeup and style practices, "combining calculated cuteness and studied ugliness"; (*b*) their rejection of traditional femininity; and (*c*) their linguistic innovations, which are alarmingly perceived to be sweeping into mainstream speech. In continuity with the processes traced by Inoue (2006), Miller (2004) shows how Kogals pose a serious challenge to Japanese mainstream gender and sexual norms (on Lolitas, see also Gagné 2008) and are simultaneously ostracized and celebrated in their notoriety as the new arm of Japanese soft state power (Mathews & White 2004, Miller & Bardsley 2005).

Age and Youth in Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics has had its own different schools of thought in dealing with the issue of youth and language, and within quantitative sociolinguistics, an important dimension is language change. Modern sociolinguistics began in the 1970s with a survey-based, social stratificational approach to age and aging that was borrowed into linguistics from American sociology. By dividing age brackets into evenly distributed time periods (i.e., ages 15–30, 30–45, 45–60) and tracking covariation in language usage and age brackets, sociolinguistics discovered some of its most replicable and enduring constructs. The apparent time construct (Sankoff 2006), unilinear and irreversible language change, and age-graded variation (Wagner 2012) are all concepts that derive from this particular view of the life cycle (but see Tagliamonte & D'Arcy 2014). In this view, children and youth acquire and speak the language of their peers, and as they move through the age brackets, they propagate linguistic change, all the while, and especially in adolescence, differentiating themselves from their parents by advancing language change seeded by previous generations. Here, a generation cannot go back and "undo" language-internal change: Older adults do not talk like middle adults, nor do younger adults talk like youth or children. In traditional sociolinguistic

variation, age brackets are defined by the researcher both as exhaustively accounting for all cases and as nonoverlapping ranges. Although some linguistic variables are understood to be in stable variation, many are actively participating in community-wide language change, thereby defining the nature and scope of historical change. The extent of individuals' participation in this process can be more or less predicted by their "social address," that is to say, their peculiar combination of race/ethnicity, gender, age, and social class. Although there have been some challenges to this rigid perspective on language variation and age (cf. Eckert 2012, Mendoza-Denton 2001), it is the dominant approach to understanding language change. Eckert (1997, p. 157) points out that "only the middle aged are seen as engaging in mature use, as 'doing' language rather than learning it or losing it." For quite a while now, the dominance of the "survey era" has been waning, as more ethnographically informed approaches to social class and gender among youth have come of age.

The CoP approach is influential in sociolinguistics as well as in anthropology, because the youth communities identified ethnographically by researchers and drawing on participants' own knowledge can be correlated with differences in linguistic variable use. CoPs that have been studied quantitatively include "jocks" and "burnouts" in the Detroit suburban area (Eckert 2000), Latina youth involved in the Norteña and Sureña gangs in Northern California (Mendoza-Denton 2008), Italian youth collectives in Turin, Italy (Boario 2004), young professionals shifting between different linguistic personae as they move between their leisure and professional lives (Podesva 2007, Zhang 2005), Danish and British teens in urban schools (Moore 2004, Pharoa et al. 2014, Quist 2008), Scottish schoolboys deemed "violent" (Lawson 2013), young Orthodox Jews acquiring the features of "learnedness" (Benor 2001), American college fraternity "dudes" (Kiesling 2004), and Asian-background high school students in the United Kingdom and their engagement with local vernaculars [as in Alam's (2007) study of Glaswegian]. Because of the premium that CoP studies place on the description of and accounting for cohesive group dynamics, including processes of joint engagement in practices and shared repertoires, very few of these contributions have focused overtly on ruptures, on dissent or overt political activity, or on the processes of delay and oscillation that have been identified in the literature on adolescence and modernity in general.

PART II: UNDERSTANDING BREACHED INITIATIONS

We posit an understanding of youth as a shifter (Durham 2004), a category made salient when the normative stages and sequences of social life are not followed in the expected manner. Thus we adopt a modified life course approach, investigating what we call "breached initiations," loosely inspired by Turner (1974) and Van Gennep (1908). We want to stress that we do not see "breach" cases as failures in any way, but rather as cases that do not fit normative expectations and are thus symptomatic of the conditions under modernity and globalization that we wish to discuss.

Expanding youth populations, educational systems mismatched with economic spheres of production (Nakassis 2013), and dependency on families have created an environment of social anxiety and political frustration. Globally, rising numbers of youth have begun to respond to these forms of alienation and marginalization through civil disobedience and protests. Facing political alienation and a lack of social mobility, a critical youth counterculture vis-à-vis governmental policies, corruption, nepotism, elite privilege, and state structural and economic violence has responded to this crisis of economic, social, and political absorption with a conscious decision not to participate in the system. The partial and complete opting out of youth is the result of rising economic challenges exacerbated by dwindling social and economic safety nets.

These kinds of phenomena have given rise to a curious worldwide linguistic explosion: Portmanteaus and neologisms rain down, usually from the media, to describe the various trends:

“Waithood,” the morphological combination of the base “wait” and suffix “hood” (for adulthood), is used by Honwana (2014). As she describes its meaning, “on the one hand, people are no longer young children in need of care, but on the other they are still not able to become independent adults [owing to] their inability to access basic resources” (Honwana 2014, p. 29). In the English-speaking world, aside from the NEETs discussed, “twixter” has been used to describe young adults who will not grow up. *Mileurista* is used in Spain to refer to young people living off 1,000 euros a month, and *bamboccioni* (big babies) have been critiqued in Italy by Minister of Economy and Finance Tomaso Padoa-Schioppa (Corriere della Sera 2007). In Japan, “parasite single,” “freeter,” and “herbivore man” have been coined to describe both the gender and policy consequences of young adults mostly choosing to opt out of the given social metronome. Although delay is the most common manipulation of time, the chronotope expands as well as contracts: Chinese youth (especially women) are subjected to anxieties about being “left by the train” and finding new capital in their youth and beauty as they eat from the “rice bowl of youth” (Woronow 2015, Zhang 2000).

Delay

In terms of delay, some types of delay are largely voluntary and refract some of the above dimensions of the prolongation of “youth.” For those who can afford to do so, a category called “youth travel” has emerged, and with it the ideology that travel is something that youth should be privileged in doing because they have not yet “settled down.” Framing travel in this way not only shows that there is a perceived temporal flexibility in the time to become an adult, but also indicates that notions of settling down preclude the idea that travel will change an individual’s eventual life course trajectory (Amit 2011).

Other kinds of delay occur involuntarily. A striking feature of the literature on experiences of youth is ethnographic studies of boredom. In the contexts of unemployment, underemployment, homelessness, war, or incarceration, boredom arises as a major theme, which has been exquisitely detailed in its linkage to “trouble” among American Indians in reservations (Jervis et al. 2003) and in rural New Mexico (Willging et al. 2014) as well as among unemployed youth in India (Jeffrey 2010). Boredom is also linked to shame among young men in Ethiopia (Mains 2007), unemployed *diplomés* in Niger (Masquelier 2013), and incarcerated youth (Bengtsson 2012). Describing humanitarian workers in Afghanistan, DeLauri (2014) cites Toohey’s understanding of boredom as being “the result of predictable circumstances that are very hard to escape. Long speeches or long church services . . . are typical examples. This sort of boredom is characterized by lengthy duration, by its predictability, by its inescapability—by its confinement. And, when you feel like this, time seems to slow, to the point that you feel as though you stand outside of these experiences” (Toohey 2011, p. 4). Many authors link such a state to the lived experiences of socioeconomic inequality in developing nations. However, for foreign humanitarian workers in Afghanistan, their movements are restricted, field visits are few, and their days consist almost entirely of time spent at the guesthouse, at the office, and fraternizing at expats-only pubs. Thus, paradoxically, their state of chronic boredom is in coexistence with a state of chronic crisis, which is why they are in Afghanistan in the first place (De Lauri 2014). As a result, boredom and crisis come to be mutually constituted for these young relief workers.

The notion of boredom permeating a whole state, as in the case of postglobal crisis Romania (O’Neill 2014), and a corporation recognizing this situation and offering itself up as the antithesis of boredom is ironically in line with Comaroff & Comaroff (2000). They write, “assertive, global youth culture of desire, self-expression and representation” creates unrealistic expectations (Comaroff & Comaroff 2000, p. 293). Picture Nescafé’s Romanian campaign to “*Învinge Plictiseala!*

Alege Pasiune!—Defeat Boredom! Choose Passion!” (O’Neill 2014, p. 9) coupled with a TV ad that shows a young man emerging from school-induced boredom as soon as he has a Nescafé while a spontaneous (dancing) flash mob materializes around him. Not only does global capitalism in its transformations and structural adjustments generally exclude impoverished youth from social advancement, but it also does so while standing at the ready to profit from the subjective states it has helped to create. As he writes about the downward emotional spiral of the newly homeless afflicted by boredom in Bucharest, O’Neill (2014, p. 11) writes, “In this sense, boredom is a persistent form of social suffering made possible by a crisis-generated shift in the global economy, one that has forced tens of millions of people the world over to come to terms with diminished economic capacities.”

Hopscotching

Another way to view the alteration of “classical” life course milestones and their chronotopic sequence is to look at the phenomenon of “hopscotching.” We define this term in reference to the act of hopping backward and forward into and through, and then out of, different milestones, both voluntarily and compelled by circumstances. Where in the past milestones (education completion, marriage, formation of own household, financial support of children, etc.) were conceptualized as linear and successive events marking the passage into adulthood, a scholarly consensus (Arnett 2000, Brown et al. 2009, Butcher & Mandy 2003, Bynner 2005, Coté & Bynner 2008, Juárez & Gayet 2014, *inter alia*) has emerged pointing to the limited validity of these assumptions. Twixters, Freeters, NEETs, all these terms point to various forms of delay, as outlined above, but they partially obscure hopscotching phenomena. In some ways, immigrant and minority populations are already hopscotchers par excellence, attempting to manage the sometimes disparate life course priorities of their heritage and matrix cultures, even confronting state authorities in the process (Addo 2012, Cammarota 2008, Chatty et al. 2005, Coe et al. 2011, Corsaro & Johannesen 2014, Ciotti 2011, DeJaeghere & McCleary 2010, Pollock 2004, Potowski & Rothman 2011, Tetreault 2009). For example, Dole & Csordas (2003) found that, among American Navajo youth living on a Navajo reservation, marriage and children were neither unproblematic nor sufficient criteria for being recognized as Navajo adults. “Instead of marking youth’s entrance into adulthood, these events only problematized this transition” (Dole & Csordas 2003, p. 364). Because Navajo adulthood was demonstrated partially in terms of cultural competency, youth were left to negotiate the two cultural frames of reference: Many were able to overcome feelings of isolation from the community through a growing interest in traditional Navajo ceremonies and cultural practices, long after other segments of society accorded them adult status.

As Whiting (1996) recognized, climbing on the “modernity escalator” puts pressures on parents and children alike. Another example of hopscotching comes from Perry’s (2009) study of three young men in the Wolof hinterland in Senegal and their explosive conflicts with their fathers. Changing ideas of what constitutes a good parent and a good child are evident when *gendarmes* (police) are recruited by fathers to discipline and rein in (through vicious beatings) sons who have defied their authority. Amid a mediatized moral panic about *waxambaanes* (idle youth), the use of state power to prop up patriarchal authority has effectively returned the wayward sons back onto the traditional life course path. Furthermore, in that same field site, some parents have accelerated certain transitions while delaying others: For example, Aziz was a “good son” and was forced to marry without enough money for bridewealth, thus becoming head of household and triggering the obligation to support many family members. Reflecting on his situation, Aziz reasons, “If you look at how things turned out for me, I could have gone after [my father]. . . If I was a kid who was just a little, you know, bad, I would have hit him or maybe I would have left. But instead I didn’t

want anyone to hear about it. Other waxambaanes would argue and fight with their fathers, but I didn't" (Perry 2009, pp. 54–55).

Opting Out

On January 25, 2011, in a televised speech, Omar Suleiman, Egypt's newly appointed Vice President, called on Egyptian parents to order their children to leave Tahrir Square and return home. This patronizing attitude by a state figure was mocked and contested by a new generation of Arab youth questioning on- and offline existing longstanding authoritarian and bureaucratic structures that have limited their active political, economic, and social participation (Boum 2013, Joseph 2013). During the first decade of independence of Middle Eastern states, patriotic young Arabs expressed optimism and saw the end of European colonialism(s) as an opportunity to play a primordial role in the economic and political developments of their countries (Meijer 2000). In North Africa, this dream was confronted with intermittent riots and uprisings since the 1980s. The recent Arab revolts are a chapter of this history of doubt and despair as governments have failed to create jobs that could accommodate its rising unemployed and educated youth. This Middle Eastern story is also a global one as more youth face unemployment locked in a state of "waithood" (Rosen 2009, Saraví & Makowski 2011).

Rising wealth disparity, unemployment, and the inability of youth to start a family are at the center of prodemocracy uprisings in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and the United States. With the expansion of neoliberal economies and their economic bias in favor of global corporations, youth today are fighting for their socioeconomic dignity and political freedom. The Ukrainian Orange Revolution (Diuk 2012), Iranian Green Movement (Salehi-Isfahani 2011), Tunisian Jasmine Revolution (Murphy 2012), Chilean Winter, and American Occupy Wall Street (Appel 2014) are all cases of the growing youth disenchantment with the expanding collaboration between political elites and transnational corporations. This rejection of the influence of corporate political power and the imminent demise of the welfare state is largely manifested through police harassment and racial as well economic injustice in Europe's suburbs, American inner cities, and Middle Eastern overpopulated medinas (Aparicio 2007, Duncan-Andrade 2007, LaPierre 2012). The 2005 French, 2011 UK, and 2014 US riots symbolize globalized youth's rejection of increasing state structural violence epitomized by the police. These confrontations with the police serve as a synecdoche for ongoing political violence and economic and social unrest.

However, unlike the majority of cases where youth challenge states and their security forces, other examples of youth dissent and opting out show that in many instances young protesters (male and female) fail to transcend state repressive barriers and family laws. The threat of sexual violence by state security compels women protesters and sometimes men to avoid public forms of dissent, fearing for their dignity and loss of honor because of potential sexual mistreatment (Sano 2012, Van der Molen & Bal 2011). There are serious implications for opting out for female protestors who face discrimination and physical as well as emotional violence for choosing to leave the family and normative political structures. Political, legal, religious, and cultural laws continue not only to limit the participation of women but also to force them to engage in self-censorship as they negotiate the role of subjectivities in the public domain for an engaged citizenship (Wellgraf 2014). States also control youth sexualities to ensure the reproduction of normative gender regimes. Opt-out narratives of sexuality and gender are framed as illicit and dangerous (Livschiz 2009).

In response to these bureaucracies, youth have relied on diverse political strategies for opting out that involve economic, sonic, and cyber forms and methods of warfare engagement. For example, the Alternative Banking working group of Occupy Wall Street is an instance of an economic possibility for youth to resist the burdening debt of the financial system (Appel 2014).

Financially opting out is a challenge to the lack of fairness of the entrenched political and economic systems whose roots are grounded in corrupt electoral representation.

Soundscapes are another battleground where Western and Middle Eastern states face youth opting out of the political systems and their reliance on violence and terrorism as a method of contestation. Music, especially hip-hop, provides a venue where US and Middle Eastern governments struggle with revolutionary rap (Alim et al. 2008, Roth-Gordon 2012). Whereas the US State Department relied on hip-hop diplomacy and “good Muslim hip-hop” to fight Islamic radicalism (Aidi 2014), some Middle Eastern states co-opted many of the rappers involved in the Arab uprisings (Boum 2012) as a way to limit the expansion of protests especially as a few rappers became the voice of opt-out movements demanding change. Youth protests have also mixed art with activism in public spaces to highlight the possibilities of youth engagement in local and global politics (Abu El-Haj 2009). These new forms of street art are usually grounded in local cultural understandings; therefore, their political frame is bounded by locality (Hayashi & McKnight 2005, Khosravi 2013).

In addition to the rising numbers of uprisings, protests, and sit-ins against totalitarianism and economic disparities, this new generation of youth has made the Internet a space of its activism and political dissent. Under the name “Anonymous,” young hackers and digital whistleblowers have exposed not only governmental and corporate secrets, but also the abuse of power and human rights. As a grassroots social movement, Anonymous has thrived on decentralization, allowing global participation of online activists and hackers. As a digital protest movement, Anonymous is open to anyone willing to contribute to its mission of cyber attacks. Similar to youth protesters in the streets of Chile, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, online youth hackers fight for free speech, access to information, and meritocracy (Coleman 2014). Youth also use the Internet to create new spaces of cultural identity and virtual homes outside the state and family panopticon (Alinejad 2013, Good 2013, Herrera 2014, Slama 2010, Wilson 2006).

Youth approaches to opting out of the structural violence of the state and its supporting bureaucracies remain challenged by the aftermath of the street protest, the cyber hack, or the musical ridicule. How can youth sow the seeds of a new foundation against established systems? Opt-out actions fluctuate between on- (and off-) line civil disobedience and “criminal” action. We can think of this as resistance by silence or resistance by force. At their core, such actions are about new flexible ethical and moral codes as well as religious views of being and living (Deeb & Harb 2013, Jacobsen 2010, Pandolfo 2007, Rosas 2011). The challenge of opting out is the translation of the act of resistance into new possibilities of building.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the above-described situations, we conclude with the implications of these opt-out moments in terms of policy making. Is it better for youth to change the system from within as actors and agents or from without as protesters, hackers, or state-branded “criminals”? This takes us back to key questions in anthropology revolving around youth, family, socialization, civic participation, and model citizenship (Taft 2010, Taha 2013, Woolard 2013). More studies need to look at the connections between family and state and their roles in the formation of youth (Allison 2012, Hemment 2012).

For sociolinguistic studies, one of the challenges of future research will be to pay more attention to what is now a tidal wave of evidence on the progressively changing engagement of youth with institutions, especially given the prolongation of education, changing engagements with (new) media, dire prospects of employment, and, especially in the developing world, the acute precarity surrounding the transitions in moving from the category of child to adult. How will linguistic

communities, which have been imagined as relatively orderly and homogeneous (*pace* Rampton 1995, 1999), be affected by mass unemployment of young people or by the oscillating fortunes of young people who enter the linguistic market at a particular point only to be spat out? What happens to language variation when a young person goes from a white-collar job, loses it and returns to the parental home, and then has to engage in the politics of tea and the conversational dynamics of boredom? How does the orderly sociolinguistic bracketing account for young adults living at home or for the continued exposure of their late-middle-aged parents to more youthful speakers? We are hopeful that studies of variation in interaction can help to transcend the multiple ways in which delay, hopscotching, and opting out are constituted among today's youth.

And what of the future generations of adults who may have opted out of the choices that were presented to them? Weisner (2002) may shed some insight on this issue: Using a survey methodology combined with a panel study, his team studied cohorts of young countercultural families in the 1960s and compared them to normatively married ones. His team found that, although the countercultural arrangements tended to be temporary and children's development was neither straightforward nor unidirectional, the values that were passed on to the children were rich soil for social change. As teens, the children of countercultural parents "favored a cluster of values including humanism, egalitarianism, tolerance and pronaturalism" (Weisner 2002, p. 290). As Honwana (2014) argues, waithood is transformative. With all its attendant challenges and frustrations, the experimentation, creativity, and social innovation emanating from these breaches gives us reason to hope for social change.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors are not aware of any affiliations, memberships, funding, or financial holdings that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

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