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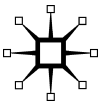

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INTRODUCTION

Immanent Approaches and Liminal Encounters in Youth Work, Early Education, and Psychology

Hans Skott-Myhre, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, and Kathleen S. G. Skott-Myhre

This edited collection is an effort to rethink the set of relations generally referred to as working with young people. The necessity to think again about how various modes of praxis are deployed is premised in an acknowledgment that the sociopolitical landscape, in which this work is embedded, has shifted considerably as we enter the twenty-first century. The advent of global capitalism with its neoliberal imperatives for education, psychology, and child and youth care (CYC)/youth work (YW) has had far-reaching effects, both for the definitional categories that comprise children, youth, and adults, as well as for the sets of relations between the subjects. Indeed we might say that we are in a period in which the terms of civil society generally are being upended, disrupted, and very possibly eviscerated (Hardt, 1995). We would argue that the traditional modes of civil society that were designed to integrate and shape young people as functioning members of society, such as education, the family, modes of psychotherapy, as well as orphanages and other forms of residential care, are in various stages of crisis and reconfiguration.

In some instances, this opens calcified institutions to new and welcome radical practices, while in other circumstances it makes such institutions available for the full predatory incursions of the worst forms of economic and social exploitation. It is this double-edged

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movement that opens this volume to the question of the liminal and the force of immanent praxis. To this end we propose this book as a series of propositions that highlight politicized strategies to working with young people under current conditions of late liberal capitalism. Its intention is to interrogate ongoing approaches, and provide alternative perspectives drawing on the pedagogical affordances of liminal approaches founded in immanence.

The chapters that follow build upon the prior critical interventions of prominent childhood and youth studies scholars (Burman, 2008; Cannella, 1997; Skott-Myhre, 2009) and showcase the work of practitioners, activists, and researchers. To do so, this collection sets out to offer strategies and alternative revisionings of what it means to work with young people at a time of species extinction, climate change, colonial conundrums, technological mediated worlds, and global prescriptions. The authors in the collection draw from a wide range of theories that sidestep developmental and humanist perspectives, highlighting relationality, entanglements, coshapings, and mutual responsibilities.

The writings in this collection are premised in two integrally related philosophical concepts: liminality and immanence. We use these terms as theoretical frameworks because they hold the capacity to simultaneously describe the movements of domination and capture under global capitalism as well as the concomitant movements of refusal, alternative, and revolt (Negri, 1999). The concept of immanence has been used in both these senses by key theorists that map the terrain of contemporary capitalism such as Antonio Negri (1999), Hardt and Negri (2005), Deleuze (1992), Deleuze and Guattari (1977), Deleuze and Guattari (1988), Braidotti (2013), and Gatens (1996) among others. In these works, immanence holds a commonality of essence entwined with a radical distinction in form.

The definition of the essence of immanence derives from the work of the philosopher Spinoza (2000). In Spinoza (2000) immanence is a system that produces itself with no outside. It is an autopoetic substance whose primary, if not sole, impetus is its own expression of an infinite set of capacities. For Spinoza, this is the nature of God or what he calls substance, or in another term, it is the set of conditions under which all things and thoughts are produced. Immanence, as an explanatory framework for the production of everything, stands in opposition to two other significant theoretical frameworks that underlie how human beings in Europe and North America undertook to understand society, the natural world, and history per se.

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The first of these is the philosophy of Rene Descartes (1968) who proposed a dualistic explanation of existence premised in his explorations of human consciousness. In brief, he suggested that human thought is in a hierarchical relation to the body and the realm of the senses. In his reading of the world, materiality operates mechanistically, while the mind has the capacity to operate nonmechanically through the application of reason. The body is, in his view, a machine to be controlled and operated by the mind that has access to the higher realms of reality through reason. Descartes's God exists outside the material realm as pure thought and human's aspirations should be toward an ethics premised in reference to this ideal outside realm of pure reason. Obviously, this is a very different and nonimmanentist view.

Indeed, it has been argued (Deleuze, 1988; Lloyd, 2002) that Spinoza's work was a direct critique of Descartes. Specifically, Spinoza asserted that the mind and body did not exist in a hierarchical relation. Nor was the mind privileged through reason to access the higher realms of knowledge. Instead, Spinoza proposed that the mind and the body operate as parallel functions that operate together to create our knowledge of the world. Rather than see the material realm of the body as simply mechanical, Spinoza proposed that no one could know what a body could do. He also saw the mind as the thought of the body. By which he meant that there is a complex and intricate interplay between the senses and thought, in which the body's capacity to sense gives rise to the very possibility of thought. But, that which is thought can either open or foreclose the capacities of the body to both act and, through action, open the possibilities for more sensate encounters.

Descartes's body-mind dualism and view of nature, as a mechanism to be controlled and managed through reason, has had significant implications for how we have thought about the natural world, our bodies, and other species. It has given rise to systems of taxonomy and hierarchy in both the fields of natural and social sciences. Within the world of adult-child relations, it could be argued, with some force, that the very distinction between adult and child bodies with its explicit and implicit levels of hierarchy and disciplinary functions is rooted in Cartesian logic (Skott-Myhre, 2009). Similar arguments apply to race, gender, sexuality, and interspecies conceptualizations of taxonomy and hierarchy with immense implications for current social and environmental ecologies. All of this has direct implications for the fields of childhood studies, CYC/Youth YW, and psychology.

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The other theorist of significance here is G. W. F. Hegel (2004) whose work on the dialectic has had deep implications for our views of history, society, and politics. Like Descartes, Hegel also proposed an understanding of the way the world is produced as being dependent on an ideal outside realm of perfect form. The material world was composed in a hierarchical relation to this realm of pure form as inferior and incapable of attaining perfection. However, as human beings were able to perceive the possibility of pure form through reason and rationality, they could attempt to build social institutions and practices that attempted to strive toward the realm of absolute pure form or Hegel's notion of God. Of course, these efforts would be found lacking and would ultimately fail, but in their effort to achieve pure form they would construct better and better social, economic, and political forms and drive history forward. Hegel's view of human progress would also have immense implications for how we view the world today. His teleological view of progress has direct implications for notions of development in psychology and education, and his dialectal view of history, driven by lack, similarly influences our notions of disability and models of emotional and neurological deficits.

Contrary to this model, an immanent perspective has no concept of lack. Immanence derives its force out of the productions of the moment which are always exactly all they can be since they are all there is. Similarly, in immanent conception there is no teleological progress toward an ideal outside because there is no outside. There is no progress in immanent thought, simply pure production. Movement is driven by the capacities of all elements of a given moment rather than by any sense of an abstract outside set of ideals or principles.

The chapters in this volume will operate in an immanent fashion in striving to avoid dualism, lack, taxonomies, hierarchies, and teleological notions of progress. In doing this, the authors here are attempting to rethink adult-young person relations within the problematics of the twenty-first century. It is, of course, somewhat ironic that this volume is, to a greater degree, premised in the work of a seventeenth-century philosopher, in order to think the politics of the twenty-first century. However, as Negri (1999), Holland (1998), and Casarino (2011) have pointed out, it is with the specific atmospherics of the twenty-first century that the neglected and misread work of Baruch Spinoza becomes truly relevant and perhaps for the first time comprehensible in ways it could not have been before.

To some degree, this is true because of the fact that the current mode of global capitalism is now also a form of immanence (Casarino,

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2011; Hardt and Negri, 2009a; Holland, 1998). It is Niklas Luhmann (1995) who proposes that the current form of society is composed of autopoetic communication systems. He theorizes that these systems are self-enclosed and self-producing systems whose sole impetus is their own proliferation and extension. Baudrillard (1994) also suggests that the current mode of society is an infinite system of autoreferential reproduction, an infinite regression of copies of copies. Hardt and Negri (2009a) propose that the current mode of global capitalist rule they call Empire is a decentered self-producing network that spreads itself rhizomatically through overcoding the creative capacities of living labor. All of these descriptions suggest that capitalism is an immanent system that functions as an abstract system of code that extends itself immanently through overcoding living systems. Under such conditions, the terms of exploitation and appropriation of living things are taking place at the level of code—perhaps more importantly, through the overcoding of our unconscious desiring production (Deleuze, Guattari, and Massumi, 1977), our capacity to form social relations (Hardt and Negri, 2009b), and at the level of living bodies and their capacity to create and produce between and across species.

It is at this level of the struggle, between immanence as a parasitic system of abstract code and immanence as living material force, that the question of the relationship between young people and adults is engaged as a contemporary politics. To the degree that those working with young people continue to try to frame social relations on Hegelian and Cartesian models, the work will have little or no effect within the overarching framework of global capitalism. Put simply, if the theorists of capitalism and immanence, we have cited above, are even partially correct, Cartesian and Hegelian models are irrelevant to the living concerns of young people growing up in the twenty-first century. Everything, from social relations, to psychological constructions of desire and identity, to pedagogy and learning is being gradually overcoded within the virtual machine of immanent capital. For the authors in this volume, the overcoding of social relations by an abstract parasitic system with no regard for its host must be resisted and a life affirming set of praxis and politics proposed.

It is in this regard that we are putting forward the notion of the liminal as a counterforce to the abstract immanent machinery of global capitalism. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) suggest that one strategy for contesting a system that functions at the level of code is to create spaces of noncommunication or to open flows of creativity that exceed the capacity of language—to engage life as art which they

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define as blocs of pure sensation. Deleuze (1990) in his investigation of the sensate in *The Logic of Sense* opens sense as a space of indeterminacy, wherein the body senses that which is prior to any capacity to articulate. We are proposing the liminal as just such a space between that which operates prior to the ability to articulate and that which frees articulation immediately following speech. Put simply, the liminal operates both before and after articulation, as a space as yet uncoded. It is what Deleuze and Guattari (2009) call becoming. That which is becoming is never anything in particular because it is the intuitive sense of pure possibility—of what could become as the dynamic extension of immanence as infinite expressive capacity.

To rethink working with young people, in this way, is to open a field of immanent relations. Such a field holds several key characteristics: (1) it operates without a reference to ideal form; (2) it opens onto capacity rather than lack or deficit; (3) it exceeds the ability of overcoding to capture it within a value system of exchange or the dollar; (4) it is premised in an ecology of material bodies collectively engaged in common projects; (5) it is inclusive of histories of struggle without being captured by the logics of appropriation and domination that produced them; (6) it welcomes struggle and indeterminacy; (7) it does not sacrifice sensation to reason nor the obverse but uses both productively; and (8) it seeks to propose a field of living immanent relations over abstract coded forms of society.

In this volume we have collected authors who, we propose, work within some combination of the above. We have chosen to focus on three settings where young people and adults work together: childhood studies, CYC/YW, and psychology. As a result, the collection includes three parts. The first part, "Rebelling, Refusing, Becoming, Fleeing, Creating, Deconstructing, Imagining, and Thinking Youth Work/Child and Youth Care," highlights a set of possibilities for rethinking YW and CYC theories and practices. This part proposes YW and CYC as ethological enterprises centered on the generative possibilities of the collective capacities to be found in the institutions where CYC and YW take place. Collectively, the chapters have three related aims. First, they argue that YW and CYC sites (such as residential programs, group homes, emergency shelters, schools, streets, and so on) hold the capacity for developing subjective and social forms of revolt and resistance. Second, they examine the innate capacities of the assembled bodies of youth and adults as they argue for a machinery of creative force that exists, by definition, as a monstrous space of deviance. Finally, drawing on postmodern, postmarxist, postcolonial, and nomadic feminist writing and thought, the chapters seek

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to refound YW and CYC work outside the traditional frameworks of phenomenology and development.

The second part, "Intensities, Experimentations, Diffractions, Embodiments, and Affects in Early Education," brings education in conversation with recent scholarship on posthumanisms and materialisms. In particular, the part draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Indigenous knowledges, and feminist science and technology studies scholars to rethink relations in classrooms and schools. The chapters aim to engage with "life as we know it" in education differently, dismantling hierarchies and proliferating entanglements, relationships, affects, and networks in the lives of children. In this part, the authors not only consider the implications and challenges of critical scholarship as they unsettle colonialisms and anthropocentrisms in education, but also provide new possibilities for new modes of life and relating with children.

The final part, "Immanent and Critical Encounters with Psychology," engages with recent literature in the field of psychology to open up new spaces for creative conversations in childhood and adolescent psychology. The chapters rethink concepts such as deficits and deviance and contest the dominant constructions of pathology premised in the dialectical approach to difference as lack. Collectively, the authors in this part propose "struggle and difference" as fields of resource and possibilities. This part seeks to bring childhood and adolescent psychology into the realities of twenty-first-century postmodern capitalist society. The part seeks to provide viable critiques to developmental, diagnostic, and patriarchal models of childhood and adolescent psychology.

In the first part on Child and Youth Care/Youth Work, we begin with Hans Skott-Myhre's chapter titled, "Schizoanalyzing the Encounters of Young People and Adults." In this chapter, Skott-Myhre proposes the encounter between young people and adults as a liminal space of plenitude absent any abstract outside third term or dialectical relation. Utilizing Deleuze and Guattari's (1977) concept of schizoanalysis in combination with Merleau Ponty's (2013) work on intersubjectivity, the encounter of bodies in the context of CYC/YW is reformulated as a space of revolutionary political force and social reinvention. In their work, Deleuze and Guattari (1983) delineate two positive tasks and four theses for, what they term, schizoanalysis. Skott-Myhre investigates the ways in which these historically neglected clinical proposals might reinvigorate the field of CYC/YW in terms of both practice and theory.

Scott Kouri and Jeff Smith open the next chapter, "Street Analysis," as a story about the experiments of two youth workers

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and the emergence of a liminal form of YW peer supervision. They present this experience both theoretically and by practice example to articulate how their multiple personae worked through processes of desiring production (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988. They show how explorations of our unconscious and material surroundings created new opportunities for them to move beyond the traditional supervisory dyad (supervisor/supervisee) into something less stable, constrained, and therefore more uncertain and productive. They use Deleuze and Guattari's concept of group formations to assess the revolutionary capacities of bodies and subjectivities acting for, with, and against each other within the academic, clinical, supervisory, personal, and impersonal contexts that assemble to produce their current supervisory praxis.

Nicole Land, in her chapter "Riddling (with) Riddled Embodiments," engages embodiment as a riddle, arguing that we might conceptualize embodiment as multiply performative and iteratively active. Thinking embodiment(s) as continually riddling the body amid the fractured, material-discursive, and transcorporeal matters of a productive, emplaced, and enfleshed world, she carefully and experimentally foregrounds the following inquiry: if embodiments are riddled, what possibilities for embodiment(s) emerge? Drawing from research with female adolescent hockey players, the question "what can a hockey-body do?" is used to interrogate using images and discussion. Land thinks embodiment(s) with various feminist materialist scholars and new materialist philosophers, drawing their work into momentary experiments with hockey bodies. The fractured, incongruent, and tangential character of this chapter, Land tells us, is intentional, consistent with the contention that riddling is to engage with liminality, tension, impermanence, and indeterminacy, while finding fleshy nourishment in the contingent and contested riddles of embodiment.

In the final chapter in this part, "Boundaries, Thresholds, and the Liminal in Youth Suicide Prevention Practice," Ian Marsh and Jennifer White explore some of the ways youth suicide and suicidality are discursively constructed by young people, academics, and professionals working in the field of youth suicide prevention. They critically examine some of the assumptions commonly made about what it is like to be suicidal, what causes suicide, and what are deemed appropriate practices of prevention in relation. Three areas are focused on: (a) suicide as a historically constituted object of inquiry, presently in transition from modernist medical-scientific thought and practice to more community-focused, social justice-oriented, and decolonizing

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understandings; (b) young peoples' experiences of suicidality; and (c) the uncertainties, "threshold concepts," and "troublesome knowledge" of practitioners undertaking suicide prevention work with young people, and the promise and potential of these ideas as pedagogical resources.

The next part, premised in childhood studies, begins with a chapter by Sylvia Kind and Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw titled "Charcoal Intensities and Risky Experimentations." Here they argue that experimentation in early childhood education is a complex social-affective-political phenomenon. It opens up worlds and creates new venues for thinking and doing. It actively extends experience. By testing new and unpredictable mixes of bodies, forces, and things, experimentation invents. Yet, experiments are not without risk, of course. Outcomes cannot be predicted or known in advance. Drawing on an art exhibit, they propose that the production of art between children and adults is an opportunity to pause and pay attention to regions of intensity and affectivity through experimentation.

Denise Hodgins follows with "Hope and Possibilities with/in Car(e) Pedagogies." Drawing on science studies, in particular Puig de la Bellacasa's notion of *matters of care*, she takes seriously toy cars in the classroom to consider what they might teach us about our pedagogies with young children. Following a diffractive methodology, this chapter includes many car(e) stories to performatively (re)present cars in, near, and far from the classroom as matters of care. These stories highlight how early childhood materials are not innocent, but that both their troublings and loves are ethically, sociopolitically, geohistorically, and material-discursively situated. The chapter concludes with imaginings of how a framework of matters of care might support commonworlding pedagogies.

In the next chapter, "Touching Place in Childhood Studies: Situated Encounters with a Community Garden," Fikile Nxumalo is inspired by recent provocations to consider what it might mean to inherit colonial histories in these times of wounded places, where seeking possibilities for more ethical relations with more-than-human others remains an important task (Haraway, 2011; Rose, 2004). She seeks to open up possibilities for an engagement with childhoods' situatedness within ongoing settler colonial relations by paying attention to everyday encounters with a community garden in an early childhood education setting. In this, she experiments with orientations that bring attention to messy historical and sociomaterial relations, while interrupting all too easy moves to romanticize children's "nature" encounters. She asks us to consider how this close noticing

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might generate different stories of this particular place and, in so doing, create anticolonial resonances for environmental education.

The final chapter in this part on Early Education, Luke Kalfleish's "An Ontological Curriculum: Liminal Encounters of Subjectivity and Affect," proposes that, as we move past disciplinary practices of enclosure and into a society of control, public institutions will find themselves in a "transition" or what Deleuze believes to be a more accurate description—a complete dismantling (Deleuze, 1995). He points out that this dismantling has been outlined by current scholars in the field of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2011) and curriculum theory (Pinar, 2012) alike, and its origins have been labeled many names such as neoliberalism, empire, and casino capitalism. He delineates how its tactics have been outlined with great lucidity as austerity, standardized testing, and anti-intellectualism to name a few. He suggests that what is needed now is a conversation on what curriculum or pedagogy can be and the postmodern conceptual tools that can be used to reorientate pedagogical practices away from reductionist value systems of quantification and technocratic methodologies of behavior control. Drawing on the recent emergence of affective pedagogy (Dahlbeck, 2014) and a Spinozist/Deleuzian ontological theory of Affect, he proposes what Hardt and Negri (2009b) refer to as building institutions of constituent power rather than constituted power. This reorientation, he tells us, is an attempt to constitute institutions of education as spaces of generative affect sparked by liminal encounters of subjectivity and the relationships that these encounters produce.

The next part on Psychology begins with Kathleen Skott-Myhre's essay, "Youth: A Radical Space of Pilgrimage." Skott-Myhre utilizes the theoretical perspectives of Gloria Anzaldua's work on border subjectivity and Rosi Braitotti's proposals about nomadic subjects to propose that youth is a time in which one is suspended in the *space between* and should be understood as holding the potential for revolutionary experience. Rather than viewing young people as enduring a period of storm and stress, a phase that one will simply "get over," perhaps psychologists and psychotherapists might begin to see youth redefined as a "radical space of pilgrimage" (Watkins and Shulman, 2008, p. 134) with both personal and political implications.

In the next chapter, "Some Liminal Spaces in Lacanian Psychoanalysis," Kareen Ror Malone looks at how one might understand liminality in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Lacan is associated with structuralism, an approach in which formal distinctions, their juxtaposition, and organization are prime analytical categories. Malone's

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chapter challenges this view of Lacan through two examples. First, the Lacanian idea of the institution of Symbolic functioning is elaborated in a case study of a severely traumatized child. At the most fundamental points, there is an interstitial overlap and differentiation that operate in what could be considered a zone of liminality, even if conceived in somewhat different terms. Second, she turns to Lacan's exegesis of one of Freud's best-known examples from *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1998) in which the cusp of perception and consciousness, sound, and representation are seen as the dynamic space where the coordinates of one's consciousness are inscribed, translating what is unsayable and intimate in to anchors of one's daily awareness.

Bethany Morris takes up issues pertaining to childhood schizophrenia in her chapter, "Lines of Flight: Minoritarian Literature as a Means to Deterritorialize Early-Onset Schizophrenia." She proposes that theories stemming from the antipsychiatry movement of the 1960s can provide an alternative way of understanding the behaviors demonstrated by those diagnosed with mental disorder and offer therapeutic interventions that could be far less detrimental to the individual. By exploring alternative modes of understanding human experiences within this framework, it is possible to open up a range of opportunities, both for ways of being in the world, as well as for different forms of therapeutic aids for those in distress. One such therapeutic tool that could provide a means to explore the occurrence of alternative experiences with young people is literature. In this regard, she makes a case for how literature can provide insight into the experiences of those children who have been diagnosed with early onset schizophrenia.

The final chapter is Emaline Friedman's "Problematizing Mindfulness with The Creative Production of the Self." Friedman tells us that, despite the oft-cited difficulties of faithfully integrating Eastern meditation and mindfulness practices and the demands of the Western world, many European countries have begun to introduce these practices into the school curricula of young people. She engages the question of youth mindfulness theoretically by considering the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of the refrain alongside psychological theories and speculation on the nature of synesthesia. She argues that recent transdisciplinary interest in *affect*, inextricable from the intersection of thought and the univocal plane of immanence, can assist in reframing suggestions about which elements comprise an enriching early education (and to what degree they are useful) for young people in the postmedia era.

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This collection is situated in a liminal space of its own. It operates across and between disciplines with all of the chapters borrowing richly from theoretical frameworks that trouble the boundaries between childhood studies, CYC/YW, and psychology. Although each of the authors is writing from a set of concerns located within their particular discipline, the common thread is an attempt to break the strictures of the discipline and open the field of child/youth/adult encounter to political projects of common purpose. It is our hope to be evocative and troubling to ourselves and to our readers. With this in mind, proceed with due haste or appropriate caution.

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