keywords in Youth Studies

tracing affects, movements, knowledges

Edited by Nancy Lesko
and Susan Talburt
We begin this book with some questions: What imaginings of youth exist? How do they work? What do they produce? What do they make possible or impossible? In what forms have youth been imagined, endowed with meaning, and problematized? And how do these imaginings relate to or revitalize other imaginings about, say, society, community, the future, or progress? Our questions direct us to consider the proliferation of social, cultural, economic, institutional, material, and linguistic practices that operate across multiple locations, such as the media, national governments, psychologized advice literature, and international organizations, about problems of youth and how to solve them. Problems can include issues of youth social exclusion, poverty, school underachievement, school violence, gang activity, sexuality, health, or youth’s interactions with and uses of media and the internet, and so on. These interconnected practices, familiar but always shifting, sediment and are sedimented by certain ideas of who youth are, who they could or should be, and who they could or should become, especially given the “right” circumstances and opportunities. Consider the following, rather typical, depiction of the “state of affairs” for youth, who are said to face rapid and threatening changes in the context of social and institutional disintegration:

For youth today, change is the name of the game and they are forced to adapt to a rapidly mutating and crisis-ridden world characterized by novel information, computer, and genetic technologies; a complex and fragile global economy; and a frightening era of war and terrorism. According to dominant discourses in the media, politics, and academic research, the everyday life of growing segments of youth is increasingly unstable, violent, and dangerous. The situation of youth is today marked by the dissolution of the family; growing child abuse and domestic conflict; drug and alcohol abuse; sexually transmitted diseases; poor education and crumbling schools;
and escalating criminalization, imprisonment, and even state execution. These alarming assaults on youth are combined with massive federal cutbacks of programs that might give youth a chance to succeed in an increasingly difficult world.

(Best & Kellner, 2003, p. 75)

In this construction, “youth” is a universal, stable category whose adaptations and successes are disrupted only by the rapid transitions of an increasingly complex world. Embedded in this imagining of youth, like most, is a construction of the category youth as “transitional subjects,” neither child nor adult, but “in the making.” As subjects-in-process, they must acquire knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will enable them to function in society. The meanings of youths’ transitions are uncertain and dangerous, subject to constant rewriting, a construction that makes youth a particularly malleable category, neither this nor that, but always in-between, becoming.

Demonstrating the politics of this precarious development, Valerie Walkerdine (1984, p. 173) has traced how “the rational, the savage, the animal, the human, the degenerate, [and] the normal” were scaffolded into the normalized and regulated child. The youth, like the child, is a particular species; yet the youth differs from the child in terms of its problems, possibilities, and needs. For example, in contrasts made between “child” and “youth,” the child is cast as innocent and the youth as “out of control,” with children’s play depicted as intrinsically creative and constructive and youth “leisure” as potentially “threatening and disturbing” (Nayak & Kehily, 2008, p. 7). Thus, to develop these subjects-in-process, adults, those who are “already made,” must provide social, institutional, and emotional support and guidance for youth to become future workers, citizens, homeowners, consumers, parents, and so on. Because youth are seemingly “everywhere,” and thus always available as a “cultural resource” (Castañeda, 2002, p. 1), youth is a productive category that regulates both youth and adults. Imaginings of youth often invoke a past to orient us to a future based on particular ideas about family, community, nation, responsibility, morality, and progress.

While “youth” invokes a universal category of transitional beings on their way to productive, responsible, and legal adulthood, deviance and exceptions haunt particular youth. The effects of youth discourses mark some young people as exclusions, as failures, as freaks (Ramlow, 2005) and thereby unable to take up the position of awkward-yet-worthy teens. Some young people’s raced, classed, sexualized bodies are read as disabled, violent, or pathetic; for example, Anita Harris (2004) distinguishes girls who live up to contemporary opportunities to achieve, consume, and exercise a voice as “can-do” girls and those who fail the new markers of success as “at-risk.” Cindy Patton (1996) deciphered how policy makers deemed White middle-class youth as not needing protective HIV/AIDS curricula which “other” youth had a responsibility to learn. Tom Popkewitz (1998) emphasizes the system of reasoning of Teach for America, which despite its rhetoric and intentions, produces classroom teaching practices in which urban and rural youth underachieve. Scaffolded discourses about urban and rural youth generate
principles for new teachers’ understanding, participation, and intervention. Scaffolded discourses offer ways of reasoning about abstract “youth” and about particular, marked youth.

Thinking, Feeling, Diagnosing, and Ameliorating: Retheorizing Youth Problems, Knowledge, and Specialists

This book explores connections among a range of anxieties, inducements, satisfactions, problems, knowledges, solutions, methods, and institutions that assemble to produce the figure “youth,” to govern youth and adults, and to constitute a field of “youth studies.” Our goal is to create a history of the present of youth and youth studies that questions the logic of the present time as inevitable by interrogating the orders and knowledges that direct us to think about and act toward youth in particular ways. Histories of the present, or genealogies, point to the possibility of an otherwise by examining “the historically sedimented underpinnings of particular ‘problematizations’ that have a salience for our contemporary experience” (Barry, Osborne, & Rose, 1996, p. 5). The logic of the present has constructed youth as a population with emergent problems and created an attendant variety of knowledges to understand and administer them.

Historicizing the present of youth studies’ discourses and approaches locates them as interdisciplinary constructions with firm ties to economics, politics, and social relations, national and international. As a field, youth studies has moved beyond its roots in subcultural studies of the Birmingham School, psychological developmental research, and sociological studies of socialization and deviance to encompass a diverse array of disciplines and subfields. Interdisciplinary formations that engage Marxism, psychoanalysis, postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, and race and ethnic studies open the field to new configurations even as they carry traces of its pasts. This book interrogates how these knowledges at once (re)produce the subject of youth studies and question it. In the rest of this introduction, we present ways of thinking about the regulation of youth and adults through expert and popular knowledge, positioning this book as an intervention that analyzes dominant rationalities and technologies of youth.

Our initial thinking about youth studies is inspired by a Foucauldian understanding of political rationalities as “ways of thinking about and acting upon one another and ourselves” (Barry et al., 1996, p. 5) that obscures the cultural politics of the creation of problems, ideals, and goals through systems of expertise. Rationalities create and justify the forms by which reality can be represented, analyzed, and rectified. Rationalities ask us to think in particular ways about who youth are, what they need, and how “we” can help them. Following Rose (1996), we argue that rationalities of the government of youth have a moral, or normative, form that identifies ideals and distributes tasks among various authorities (the psychologist, the NGO worker, the after-school program administrator); an epistemological form that embodies the subjects to be governed (the pregnant teen, the obese youth, or the underachieving Latina student); and particular styles of reasoning that render problems and realities thinkable or unthinkable, reformable or not reformable (developmental theory,
sex education, zero tolerance) (p. 42). Rationalities create techniques, or technologies, that employ a variety of procedures, strategies, and actors to construct and enact ends and means. Foucault’s (1991) phrase to describe governmentality, “the conduct of conduct,” refers to the art of acting on the actions of individuals in order to correct, guide, develop, or shape their behaviors. The conduct of conduct is “made thinkable under certain rationalizations and practicable through the assembling of technologies,” (Barry et al., 1996, p. 12).

Our use of the term rationalities does not elide affect’s contributions to modern conceptions of youth. Young people are defined as fundamentally emotional, moody, and defiant, traits that are linked to hormonal surges (Lesko, 2001). Youth is said to involve an intensification of self-reflexivity, or turning inward, and affective capacities, such as “emotional intelligence,” must be analyzed, diagnosed, and developed. But affect also circulates in how sturdy images and narratives, say of “problem youth” or awkward youth, hook adults. Part of the operation of rationalities and technologies is affective, evoking an almost-automatic response to stock representations of gang members, innocent teens, or gangling geeks. Thus, educators’, youth workers’, and researchers’ investments in particular rationalities and technologies are often felt ones.

As ways of doing things, technologies have particular purposes and develop in relation to a “practicable object” (O’Malley, 1996, p. 193), shaping subjectivities. Constituted as a practicable object, the category “youth” mobilizes actors, both youth and not-youth, to behave in certain ways. Young people encounter an array of institutions and knowledges that would incite them to develop proper habits of hygiene and diet, material and moral responsibility, cognitive awareness, chaste sexual behavior, and so on. Adults—the mother, the father, the relative, the teacher, the social worker, the activist, the judge—take particular positions to support this proper development. By this, we do not mean to suggest that what constitutes proper development is uncontested but that the idea of development itself is uncontested.

The assembling of rationalities and technologies occurs in shifting configurations at “macro” levels, such as the government department or ministry or the transnational organization, and “micro” levels, such as the school, the juvenile courtroom, the detention center, the mall, the family, or the TV show. “Youthscapes” often confound standard macro and micro analyses as hybrid forms of music, fashion, language, and technology, as well as old and new practices of movement and containment, mix in local, national, and international registers (Maira & Soep, 2005; Nilan & Feixa, 2006). Yet even in globalized youth culture, technologies of government—an array of “strategies, techniques and procedures through which different authorities seek to enact programmes of government in relation to the materials and forces at hand” (Rose, 1996, p. 42)—can be identified. To analyze rationalities and technologies is to uncover the ways they have been produced and have been productive of particular subjectivities, imaginings, logics, institutions, and actions. For example, socialization, a seemingly innocent term employed by the social sciences and popular culture, typically describes how young people are affected by and become functioning
members of the society in which they live. Yet socialization must be understood as a historical process of shifting assemblages of rationalities, technologies, practices, institutions, and individuals. Similarly, the idea of stages or transitions popularized by developmentalists creates seemingly objective norms for youths’ physical, cognitive, and moral progression to mature adulthood, enabling a range of ever-shifting technologies “by which and in which it is proposed that we work on, divide, make whole, sculpt, cultivate, pacify, contain, empower, and optimize” (Dean, 1996, p. 217) youth and those incited to support their development.

We are particularly concerned with interrogating youth studies’ naturalization of certain youth imaginings, many of which, like socialization and developmental stages, are popularizations of “expert knowledge.” Expertise, or “authority arising out of a claim to knowledge, to neutrality and to efficacy” (Rose, 1996, p. 39), has been significant to the invention and administration of youth. Referring to what he calls “a swarm of experts, specialists, advisers and empowerers,” Dean (1996) has written of the diffuse locations of expertise:

These “authorities of truth” operate within and outside local, regional, national and transnational State bodies, demanding they take on or withdraw from their functions, act in new and different ways, form new relations with other bodies and other States, divide, compose and assemble themselves differently, and position themselves in certain networks and relays.

(p. 211)

Expertise functions as an affective apparatus. It appears to support the interests of social order, whether it governs youth through the state, through society and its institutions, or through “the regulated choices of individual citizens” (Rose, 1996, p. 41) who become aligned with its goals through “persuasion, education and seduction rather than coercion” (p. 50).

This book, then, examines various locations at which expertise and the popular, the seemingly rational and the affective, the past and the future, assemble and reassemble to produce the logic of the present. It interrogates how various imaginings of youth, their development, and their potential problems naturalize and are naturalized by an array of perceived social problems and solutions. Taking up the sedimentation and intensification of rationalities and technologies across locations, the book emphasizes the ways in which affective apparatuses incite both youth and adults to govern themselves.

**The Book as Event**

What does this book do? In traditional terms, this book is a blend of reference guide, dictionary, textbook, and critical assessment that presents and historicizes the “state of the field” of youth studies, offers theoretically informed analysis of key concepts, and points to possibilities for the field’s reconstruction. Indeed, the book does the following: (1) it introduces and analyzes the development and present status of the topics and methods of youth studies across its subfields; (2) it historicizes and interrogates key concepts in the field and their relations
across youth studies’ subfields; (3) it introduces “submerged” concepts that have shaped and continue to shape research in the field; and (4) it offers directions for the creation of new theoretical and methodological approaches and new substantive areas of research. But as our introduction suggests, we wish not simply to present ideas about youth studies’ development, discourses, focal areas of attention, and methods—and to offer a linear solution that will “improve” the field and incite readers, whether researchers or youth workers, to conduct themselves in the “right” ways.

We have thus chosen an unusual format for this book: sections introduced by longer conceptual essays followed by shorter keyword essays that create multiple dialogues within the text and between the text and readers. Not only do we place researchers across subfields in dialogue to counter narrow ideas of expertise, but we create unusual juxtapositions of ideas and institutions in order to enact an interrogation of the field’s common sense. Our purpose is to create an active text to which readers must bring their own imaginings and through which they might create other imaginings. The seven sections, which we think of as “technologies of youth studies,” present and analyze the field’s ways of accomplishing certain purposes following particular systems of reasoning. Each section includes an introductory essay that presents theoretical, interdisciplinary interrogations of the field’s assumptions, practices, purposes, and possibilities. The essay is followed by shorter “keyword” essays that explore significant analytical terms, themes, or categories for youth studies through the lens of that particular technology.

In selecting technologies and keywords, we have drawn from what we consider to be both “stuck places” and “open places” in conceptualizations within and across a range of disciplines and subdisciplines, including anthropology, criminology, education, psychology, sociology, social work, and women’s studies. Our choice of the technologies and keywords strikes a balance in representing some traditional approaches and issues (such as resistance, subculture, and citizenship) and some more recent approaches and concerns (such as transnational governance organizations, hijab, and musicking)—keeping these concepts in constant dialogue. The seven technologies offer something of a structure, in which the first three sections—A History of the Present of Youth Studies, Research and Regulation of Knowledge, and Populational Reasoning—offer a history and overview of the field of youth studies, in particular how knowledge in the field has been constituted and institutionalized. The next three sections—Citizenship Stories, Mobilities and the Transnationalization of Youth Cultures, and Everyday Exceptions: Geographies of Social Imaginaries—shift the focus to specific social, political, national, and global dimensions of youth studies that are increasingly salient in the field. The final section, Enchantment, represents what we identify as a dominant mode of address in the field in perpetuating particular representations of youth and youth development to researchers and practitioners.

Following these entries are “keywords,” an idea we borrow from Raymond Williams’ (1976) classic Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society and Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler’s (2007) Keywords for American Cultural Studies. A keyword is neither a dictionary nor a glossary but, according to Williams, a “record of an inquiry into a vocabulary” (p. 15) that emphasizes the ways in
which meanings are made and altered over time through contestations among diverse social groups or constituencies. A focus on youth studies’ keywords creates a method of mapping the presence and transformations of words, ideas, practices, and institutions within a particular domain. As Desai, Bouchard, and Detournay (2010) suggest in their analysis of enduring concepts in transnational feminist studies, to center on keywords effects “a shift in emphasis away from the individual scholar’s or feminist’s capacity for self-reflexivity and toward the enabling structures, paradigms, and assumptions of the concepts that many of us working in this area of inquiry use” (p. 48).

We selected keywords for each section that represent concepts that have been central to youth studies or that have a peripheral, repressed presence in the field’s thought. The keywords are in dialogue with the multiple disciplines and subdisciplines in youth studies, youth-related policies and institutions, and the material conditions of youths’ lives. At the same time, these keyword essays bring analytical strategies from fields outside youth studies to foster a revisioning of the field’s past, present, and future. Like Williams’ (1976) desire for inquiry to remain open, we make no claim that we offer the definitive keywords or that we can map their relations with certainty. Rather, as Burgett and Hendler (2007) say, the keywords provide a counterpoint to the discourse of expertise. They treat knowledge not as a product of research that can be validated only in established disciplines and by credentialing institutions, but as a process that is responsive to the diverse constituencies that use and revise the meanings of the keywords that govern our understandings of the present, the future, and the past.

The process of selecting keywords entailed developing lists of terms and concepts based on our readings in youth studies, followed by an iterative process of adding, eliminating, and placing keywords in relation to the sections, or technologies. The groupings of the words are quite intentional, as the position of an entry changes its meanings, interrupting usual connections in order to open up spaces for critique or reconstruction. To foster questioning of naturalized imaginings and systems of reasoning, rather than placing keywords in “obvious” sections, we shift their seemingly natural placement in order to demonstrate linkages across technologies and concepts and to invite readers to think differently about their roles and frameworks in the field. The keywords deliberately interrupt a narrow idea of “expertise” and promote creative, idiosyncratic, and unpredictable approaches to the use and revision of keywords that regulate imaginings of youth and understandings of youth studies’ present, past, and future. To this end, we asked authors to design keyword essays that address the following questions in relation to (but not limited by) the “technology” in which the keywords were placed: Where does the term come from? What have been its uses and meanings over time? What effects have those uses produced? What knowledge or ways of thinking has it enabled? What has it obfuscated? What might be some alternatives?

In choosing and placing terms, our goal was to balance “classical” and “newer” work in the field, placing those keywords in such a way that neither
writers nor readers would fall into traditional chains of reasoning (such as identifying a problem, describing the theoretical and/or material conditions of that problem, and then moving to propose a correction or solution to the problem). We include unusual terms to highlight subordinated categories and to bring concepts from different subfields into dialogue. As we worked through keywords, we found that using certain terms salient in youth studies literature would only repeat the field’s common sense, rather than asking readers to engage alternatives. A significant example lies in “identity categories,” such as Black, Asian, Latino/a, gay, straight, male, female, and so on. This set of terms could have filled the third section, Populational Reasoning, in very predictable ways. Rather than simply repeat the field’s proliferation of social categories, we included one “identity” term, “trans,” in this section, intentionally choosing a keyword that receives less analysis in youth studies literature and allowing it to “trans” any reasoning based on stable populations. At the same time, we included “classic” youth studies words, such as “resistance,” “subculture,” “style,” or “culture,” not only to highlight their importance in the field, but to open them to new readings. Readers will note that many of these terms could be grouped in other sections. That is precisely our point—by interrupting the usual chains of reasoning we seek to call attention to the thinking and reading that the positioning of these concepts demands. We wish for readers to ask themselves how concepts become ossified in chains of reasoning and what might happen if their usual associations were to be disrupted. For example, the placement of “subculture” under Populational Reasoning invites critique of ideas of a fixed, discrete group (youth) entering into an Oedipal conflict with a parent culture and calls for a reconceptualization of subculture. Alternatively, if it were placed in a section such as Mobilities and the Transnationalization of Youth Cultures, “subculture” might suggest dual processes of the creation of new forms of critique and commodification.

The blending of introductory essays to the technologies and focused keywords creates a rhizomatic approach to youth studies that works against linearity, inviting readers to enter the text through multiple points and to create their own unique connections across concepts. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue against understanding books as closed systems that have a meaning that imitates the world, reflects nature, or represents ready-made meanings and hierarchies. They compare such a book to a tree or a root, which “plots a point, fixes an order” (p. 7). If a tree-book “composed of chapters has culmination and termination points” (p. 22), a rhizomatic book is not based on foundations, beginnings, and endings. It is comprised of multiple connections in which “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be” (p. 7). A rhizome is always in the middle. The blending of conceptual essays and disruptively placed keywords functions as rhizomatic representations “entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” (p. 12). We hope that readers will enter the text with this openness to creating connections, perhaps keeping in mind Deleuze and Guattari’s words:
We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities.

(p. 4)

Our hope is that readers will move between familiar concepts and ideas, germane to their work in, for example, sociology of youth cultures or adolescent literacies, and unfamiliar ideas, terms of analysis, and theories, say, from geography, history, or sexuality studies. This juxtaposition of familiar and strange, common and uncommon, is what we seek to offer readers, thereby promoting novel or original readings through a movement of content and form.

As readers engage with individual contributions and the linkages and disjunctures among them, we hope they will question what the present urges us is necessary to think and to do. Our goal is to invite readers to move across essays and keywords, asking questions of the text and of themselves, making connections that are at once obvious and not, evaluating the implications of the present, and inventing new possibilities for thought and action.

Note

1 We extrapolate from the child to the youth as we draw on Edelman’s (2004) theorization of the political uses of the child to regulate the present and naturalize “reproductive futurism” (p. 11) and Castañeda’s (2002) theorization of the ways in which “each figuration of the child not only condenses particular material-semiotic practices, but also brings a particular version of the world into being” (p. 4).

References


Williams, R. (1976). Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society. New York: Oxford University Press.
SECTION I

A History of the Present of Youth Studies

Susan Talburt and Nancy Lesko

Young people have not been enfranchised by the research conducted on their lives. The history of youth cultural studies of the last four decades tells us more about the politics of academic research than it does about young people.

(Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 1998, pp. 21–22)

This section of the book initiates a partial history of the present of youth studies. By history of the present we mean a method of historical analysis that problematizes the very terms and concepts through which we know and understand a topic. A history of the present starts with questions around categories and discourses in use and interrogates how, where, when, and why they emerged and became popular. Therefore, we ask: Who are the youth that youth studies examines? What are the systems of reasoning youth studies draws on to know and engage youth? How might we imagine youth and youth studies differently? In creating a history of the present, we do not assume “youth” as a biological reality or age-based category. Rather, we emphasize systems of reasoning, or discourses, that circulate across sites and times to create the concepts that produce “youth” as a category to administer through such social and institutional locations as schools, families, the labor market, correctional institutions, popular culture, and scientific expertise (see Tait, 2000, p. 11; Wyn & White, 1997, p. 8). We name three historical moments and their sedimented discourses that define the boundaries of what can be thought or said within youth studies: (1) the “mental hygiene” movement’s use of pastoral power to regulate youths’ mental and physical health at the end of the 19th century; (2) the popularization of psychological developmental stages and sociological studies of adolescent society and deviance of the 1950s and 1960s; and (3) the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies’ (CCCS) turn to subcultural studies of youth in the 1970s. Discourses produced within these moments assemble in the present to construct youth as defined by age: in a transitional moment to adulthood, they are “at-risk” for deviations from proper development for adult work and family roles; they serve
as barometers of societies’ and nations’ social and economic well-being and future potential; they are enmeshed in peer culture, yet developable through adult administration in formal and informal institutions, such as schooling, scouting, sports, and families.

These discourses incite adults and institutions to orient themselves to youth through systems of reasoning that universalize youth as a unitary category with particular needs at the same time that they differentiate youth according to their alignment with desired developmental norms. An incitement to know and help youth progress and succeed demands a “forgetting” of the dismantled social, political, cultural, institutional, and economic resources that could support their well-being (Duggan, 2003; Quinn & Meiners, 2009). We return to this “forgetting” of diminishing resources and supports after first sketching dominant rationalities that animate thought and action in the present.

Creating Systems of Reasoning: Three Historical Moments

Pastoral Power, 1880s–1890s

Dramatic changes in the United States in the 1880s and 1890s, including industrialization, immigration, urbanization, the rise of science, women’s entry into the labor force, and the emergence of consumerism, created changes in family and social life, and accompanying anxieties. Adolescence emerged in this context as scientists and social reformers offered prescriptions for raising the next generation of American boys and girls in an uncertain future. Adolescence became a way of talking about the future of the nation and developing modern citizens who were rational and self-disciplined (Lesko, 2001). Modernization entailed measuring, monitoring, and standardizing time, a zeitgeist applied to civilization and development. As Lesko and Mitschele (2011) point out, “Modern ideas of adolescence came into being as clock time became the central way of ordering past, present, and future events and their meaning” (p. 7). With adolescence understood to be a turbulent time, development—in-time became a dominant way of ordering the adolescent. G. Stanley Hall argued that, as they develop, individual children recapitulate the same evolutionary steps as do human groups as they reach toward higher, civilized stages. The job of science was to measure and guide this development.

Systems of reasoning cobbled together in this era emphasized youth as a distinct population, a universal adolescent who was nevertheless gendered, raced, and classed, and whose body proclaimed a healthy, moral status or its dangerous specter, social degeneration. The playground movement, scouting, and the YMCA governed developing bodies to support self-improvement, respectability, and productivity. Central to these practices was the expertise of the “boyologists,” who collected data from young people. Their pastoral power merged scientific techniques of knowledge production, an understanding of the importance of peer relations, and an ability to act like a friend (Hunter, 1994; Laqueur, 1976). Teachers were, in turn, admonished to become more like peers
and confidants: sensitive, honest, and tactful as they instilled “self-doubt and self-correction” (Hunter, 1994, p. 81). This pastoral power distributed discipline among adult authorities and youthful subjects who internalized regulations to monitor the self.

**Teenage Markets, 1950s–1960s**

In the 1950s, an increasing emphasis on consumption, style, and leisure and an array of goods and services aimed at a new market, youth, inaugurated the “teenager” and, with that invention, the incessant crossing of images between youth-as-fun and youth-as-potential-offender (Valentine et al., 1998, p. 4). As young men were gaining financial independence and cultural spaces apart from their families, moral panics about delinquency and urban gang activity fueled academic study, born in criminology, of youth (Cohen, 2002 [1972, 1987]). Teenage popular culture, especially music and comics, became a target for censors who rallied against the moral corruption of bad uses of leisure (Gilbert, 1986). Rock and roll music, with its clear African American origins and explicit sexuality, was another frightening indicator of wayward and/or rebellious youth. John Waters parodied the hysteria linking racial integration, rock and roll, sexuality, and marijuana in his film *Hairspray* (1988), in which a psychologist is consulted to brainwash Tracy, the central character, into dating White boys. The 1960s free schools and student-centered pedagogy (Cuban, 1984/1993; Graubard, 1972; Neill, 1960) offered reassurances that the “kids were alright” if schools, adults, and textbooks would get out of their way. Romantic ideas of youth—for example, youth was a creative and generative time—gained ascendancy in these practices, which also dovetailed with marketing spins on the teens as the “best years of one’s life.”

In a context of anxiety about youth behavior in changing times, legions of psychologists and sociologists were recruited to identify and solve youth problems. Erik Erikson (1950/1985, 1968), for example, focused on youth commitment within social change and called for a moratorium of responsibilities for young people, which would allow them to work through the developmental challenges of identity consolidation that he considered an essential task of youth. Lawrence Kohlberg and Rochelle Mayer (1972) championed moral development through guided discussions of cases in which values were in conflict; for example, in the Heinz dilemma, students debated whether Heinz should steal money in order to save his wife’s life. These stage-oriented measures of youth progress intensified earlier iterations of development-in-time.

*The Adolescent Society* (1961) positioned James Coleman as the preeminent youth sociologist, and his research portrayed youth as preferring to spend time chatting with friends rather than studying for a test. Youth, even those identified as middle class and college-bound, were choosing leisure activities over achievement-oriented ones. Coleman (1974) later focused on reintegrating youth into a society that was in transition, thereby linking psychology and sociology as centers of expertise about youth problems and possibilities.
Youth Subcultures, 1970s–1980s

With antecedents in sociologists’ studies of deviance and delinquency from the 1920s to the 1960s, the Birmingham CCCS continued a stage-of-life approach to studying youth (Tait, 2000) in a context of social change. Their Marxist approach to ethnographic and semiotic research of youth subcultures centered a class analysis of how youth resisted, subverted, or appropriated dominant cultures and ideologies as they created their own meanings, styles, and practices. The CCCS positioned youth subcultures’ counterhegemonic practices as reasonable responses to their material conditions. At the same time, researchers’ “neglect of the young people who conform in many ways to social expectations” (Valentine et al., 1998, p. 24) perpetuated a construction of youth as potentially disruptive, locating youth subculture somewhere between delinquency and normalcy (Tait, 2000, p. 45). Whether conceptualizing youth as a mediated version of or an Oedipal conflict with a parent culture (Halberstam, 2005, p. 160), the emphasis on generational distinction to characterize subculture recirculates ideas of youth as “different” from adults. Moreover, the centering of age to define subculture downplays the significance of popular culture and style in constituting youth as a category (Bennett and Kahn–Harris, 2004, p. 10).

Youth studies surged as mass market commodity and new scientific specialization in the later decades of the 20th century. Reviving Ophelia (Pipher, 1994) and Real Boys (Pollack, 1998) are two examples of cross-over books that are read by parents, social scientists, physicians, and Oprah. Part-voyeurism, part-social science, and part-therapy, the books reaffirm youth as an endangered “separate tribe.” Another swath of books focuses on analyzing and curbing violent young men and women (e.g., Garbarino, 1999, 2007); one such book, Queen Bees and Wannabes (Wiseman, 2002), crossed quickly from the bookshelf to the comic film, Mean Girls (Michaels & Waters, 2004). Finally, neurology has recently discovered the “teenage brain” and its hidden vulnerabilities; medical doctors in white lab coats on YouTube discuss the undeveloped frontal lobe of the teenage brain, thereby reworking the age-based, biological difference of youth in new language (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RpMG7vS9pfw).

In sum, the systems of reasoning identified here continue to produce youth in certain ways. Youth are trapped in “becoming,” and their bodies, actions, and emotions are read as evidence of their immaturity. Condensed phrases, such as “raging hormones” or “peer pressure,” efficiently telegraph their position. The developmental framework, consumed at-a-glance in age, requires youth’s “less than” status. Researchers, activists, and educators strive to help young people, but on the established terms, which reduce and homogenize them while forgetting the play of power and resources in these representations.

“New” Conditions and “New” Responses

There is a circularity in which universal discourses of youth and their needs perpetuate a “forgetting” of the diminishing social and economic resources
available to them; in turn, this “forgetting” of social dislocations and inequitable material relations perpetuates the sedimentation of systems of reasoning that individualize youth in relation to supposed universals in order to make their lives better. For example, the present logic of high-stakes testing adopts a discourse of youth empowerment that seeks to ensure that young people have skills and knowledge to succeed in a global economy and contribute to society. Yet, as the inevitable and inequitable failures and successes created by high-stakes testing reveal, not all youth, particularly poor youth and youth of color, are offered equal institutional resources or are equally empowered (Su, 2009). This individualizing empowerment discourse intensifies a neoliberal “can-do” attitude, or a “belief in [young people’s] capacity to invent themselves and succeed” (Harris, 2004, p. 14) that erases the cultural politics of school achievement.

In a context of economic change accompanied by diminishing state and institutional supports and collective social ties, success and risk are individualized. This shift to a privatized, neoliberal present is “forgotten” when experts and popular culture mobilize sedimented systems of reasoning to help youth. As Harris (2004) argues,

In the modern period of the late nineteenth century, youth were disciplined directly by the state and its agents so that they would develop slowly, under close supervision, to serve a unified and progressive nation. Late modern times, however, are characterized by dislocation, flux, and globalization, and demand citizens who are flexible and self-realizing . . . direct interventions and guidance by institutions have been replaced by self-governance; power has devolved onto individuals to regulate themselves through the right choices.

(p. 2)

Self-governing citizens must

make choices and create life trajectories for themselves without traditional patterns or support structures to guide them. They must develop individual strategies and take personal responsibility for their success, happiness, and livelihood by making the right choices in an uncertain and changeable environment.

(p. 4)

Youth become individually accountable for being able to adapt, conform, be innovative, be flexible, and be successful—all the while monitoring their own progress toward their future trajectories.

Youth studies offers means of measuring young people’s self-government and progress by drawing on familiar developmental discourses. For example, in the guise of attending to socioeconomic changes related to increased educational demands in the information economy, Tanner and Arnett (2009) confidently assign individuals aged 18–25 years to a “new,” distinct developmental period, “emerging adulthood,” a stage characterized by “identity explorations, feeling ‘in-between,’ instability, self-focus, and possibilities” (p. 9). Emerging adults’ three-stage process of “recentering” is reminiscent of the identity crisis, role confusion, and developmental tasks Erikson (1950/1985, 1968) attributed to
adolescence half a century ago. Emerging adults move from dependence to mutual responsibility, explore romantic and career roles and opportunities, and end by “making commitments to enduring roles and responsibilities of adulthood (e.g., careers, marriages, and partnerships, commitments to the parental role)” (p. 40). Like development-in-time a century ago, or the middle-school movement that identified specific needs of 10- to 15-year-olds in the 1980s, the young person is inserted into ever more fine-grained segments of panoptical time through which to be understood. Panoptical time emphasizes the endings toward which youth are to progress and places individual adolescents into a temporal narrative that demands a moratorium of responsibility yet expects them at the same time to act as if each moment of the present is consequential. (Lesko, 2001, p. 107)

In this prolonged moratorium, the individual continues to be responsible for monitoring and directing her movement forward.

In turning to the present, rather than joining talk of the contemporary “war on kids” (Grossberg, 2005, p. 5) or the “assault on youth” (Giroux, 2000, p. 10) that identifies commercialization and commodification of youth, failed institutional policies and practices, and dwindling spaces and resources to foster youth creativity, we turn to three programs intended to make young people’s lives better: teaching emotional resilience, bullying prevention, and “Slumdog Basketball.” These programs, which circulate globally, appear to combine “new” psychological and sociological expertise to approach contemporary problems youth face in changing socioeconomic and cultural contexts.

**Emotional Resilience: “You Can Do It!”**

Following the popularization of Goleman’s (1995) *Emotional Intelligence*, schools in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and other countries began to employ curricula to teach emotional resilience to young people to develop their internal strengths and social skills. Justified by “recognition that in the current climate of social, political and economic upheaval young people need to be resilient more than ever” (Leach, n.d., para. 34), teaching emotional resilience is said to level the proverbial playing field for young people to develop into healthy, productive—and self-governing—adults. Leach explains,

> There is increasing global awareness of the need to improve life chances for all young people. Life chances relate to having autonomy, engaging in positive social and community networks, accessing education and employment opportunities, being economically stable, experiencing health and well-being and living in a safe environment. (para. 1–2)

Rather than pathologizing youth, emotional resilience training claims to mark a shift “from simply fixing what is seen to be wrong with them, to promoting their strengths and potential contribution to society” (para. 4).
Psychologists typically define resilience as individuals’ or groups’ capacity to cope in the face of risk or adversity (such as poverty, crime, substance abuse, natural disaster); resilience is fostered by “protective factors,” such as social or family support, a sense of belonging, and community involvement (Luther, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Yet “emotional resilience” represents a stripped-down, individualized version of how young people can cope that ignores the social. Emotional resilience curricula, such as “You Can Do It!,” teach a “social-emotional competence called emotional regulation” (Bernard, n.d., p. 1), or “toughness,” based on an idea that “with emotional control, one has the calmness to make rational behavioural decisions that are in one’s best interest” (p. 5). Because angry students are said to be underachievers (p. 1), young people learn through “You Can Do It!” to control how anxious or angry they become, moderate behavioral impulses, and calm down quickly when upset. The University of Pennsylvania’s Penn Resiliency Program, dubbed “Emotional Health 101” in at least one New York City KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) Charter School, helps youth to control their reactions to situations by “replac[ing] negative thinking with more realistic and flexible thinking” (Aubrey, 2010, n.p.). The curriculum teaches late elementary and middle-school students “to detect inaccurate thoughts, to evaluate the accuracy of those thoughts, and to challenge negative beliefs by considering alternative interpretations” (Resilience Research in Children, n.d., para. 1). A school administrator using this curriculum explained the need for students to develop tools to manage their emotions: “They’re constantly looking for fairness in the world, and they’re spotting unfairness in the world’ . . . This can lead to a lot of hurt feelings, sadness, stress” (Aubrey, 2010, para. 9).

Forgetting the conditions that create “perceptions” of unfairness teaches youth docility and acceptance and diminishes possibilities for constructive action against injustice. Moreover, teaching emotional resilience as adaptive behavior recirculates discourses of “cultural deficits of inner-city children and/or families rather than the real-life conditions plaguing schools in inner cities” (Su, 2009, p. 22). It is worth noting that KIPP schools have been portrayed as “successful in improving the educational attainment of poor children because of their emphasis on teaching middle-class mores and aspirations” (Theoharis, 2009, p. 202). An emotionally resilient mantra of “You Can Do It!” forgets, and quite possibly supports, the social and material relations underpinning inequitable access and outcomes in stratifying institutions by placing the focus of “corrective” action on youth.

In a reiteration of the mental hygiene movement’s construction of the good student, youths’ academic achievement and developing emotional control are measured and monitored. Emotional resilience follows the late 19th and early 20th centuries’ blending of morality, or obedience to rule-based discipline, with a science of skills and utility to promote efficiency and mental health and to reduce social conflict (Boler, 1999, pp. xxii, 31). As a form of pastoral power, emotional resilience individualizes governance so that young people “internalize rules of self-control and discipline” (p. 21). Social science can harness this
emotional technology to identify types of young people to develop in desirable directions and to address social problems, such as bullying.

**Bullying**

After the 1999 school shootings at Columbine High School, and a series of publicized shootings in Europe and North America, public concern with school violence stimulated interest in bullying as a potential cause of such violence. A proliferation of research, school programs, and parenting manuals related to bullying ensued, focusing on creating types of youth and means for adults to administer them.

A best-selling popularization of bullying discourses that addresses parents, Coloroso’s (2003) *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander*, positions all young people as potentially one of these “three characters in a tragic play performed daily in our homes, schools, playgrounds, and streets” (p. 3). The book warns of future risks: the bully will continue to have poor social skills and respond aggressively to others; the bullied is at risk of violence against self or others, such as a “rampage” (p. 9); and the bystander risks growing up guilt-ridden or desensitized to violence (pp. 8–9). Concerned that youth have “no opportunity to develop more constructive social skills” (p. 5), Coloroso urges parental interventions:

> We can re-channel the governing or controlling behavior of the bully positively into leadership activities. The nonaggressive behaviors of the bullied can be acknowledged and developed as strengths. The role of bystander can be transformed into that of a witness: someone willing to stand up, speak out, and act against injustice.

(p. 5)

Parents can identify these characters through “assessment tools listing warning signs of possible violent juvenile behavior” (p. 56) and help them to develop skills aligned with emotional intelligence. Not only is the child individualized, but so is the responsible parent who must listen to his or her child and become more aware of what is happening in the school and playground (see Baez & Talburt, 2008). The text is silent about the social, political, and material contexts of competition, evaluation, and narrowing acceptable social roles that feed school cultures that encourage the formation of exclusionary peer groups. Thus, in another act of forgetting, the individual parent, armed with expert advice, is responsible for monitoring their child and creating the healthy families, caring schools, and community involvement said to be necessary for their children’s success.

**Slumdog Basketball**

The last approach to improving young people’s lives that we turn to is Gamechangers, a partnership between Architecture for Humanity and Nike Inc. designed to “encourage community organizations to empower youth
through sports by proposing programs that spur social and economic development in a community” (About Gamechangers, 2008). Bearing the same name as Nike’s Jordan Game Changer shoe, Gamechangers awards grants for the construction of facilities that offer youth access to sports and play spaces, improve physical activity, develop social cohesion, and create opportunities for social and economic empowerment in communities lacking resources. The Gamechangers’ website announces a featured program: “Slumdog Basketball aiding in the psycho–rehabilitation of slum dwelling youth in Mumbai thru sports!” Slumdog Basketball will bring four basketball courts and a space for computer training to “fill two voids, recreation and education . . . This program will create dynamic social change and life long learning by arranging daily sports and life training for at–risk slum dwelling children” (Gamechangers, n.d., para. 1). Slumdog Basketball promotes well-worn discourses of “healthy lifestyles” and “job skills” as resources for youth to move successfully from a life of poverty to self-determination. How the program is to be sustained beyond facilities construction, not to mention how the success of the young people beyond a few rounds of hoops or some internet surfing will be sustained, is unclear. What is clear is that this global program follows an established system of reasoning that incites adults through the discourse of the underdog who will make it in the world: “Beat Anything. Change Anything” (Nike Gamechangers, 2009). This incitement blends sports and the swoosh logo with enthusiastic humanitarianism to create a collective forgetting that little sustained scaffolding is available to young people to change the conditions of their lives.

Each intervention—emotional resilience, bullying prevention, and Slumdog Basketball—names itself as a response to cultural worlds and material relations, yet recirculates discourses that universalize youth categorically, employing pastoral power to individualize them as responsible for overcoming obstacles to succeed. Each support incites adults to clear a space for young people, only to position them more firmly in panoptical time where they must govern the self as they develop skills for successful transition to adulthood. The intensification of the ideal of a youthful “can-do” attitude ensures that some youth will not succeed on the terms laid out for them.

**Alternative Spatiotemporalities in the Present**

In considering the possibilities of a youth studies that refuses present neoliberal discourses that reframe a public sphere in terms of personal responsibility and moves beyond systems of reasoning that delimit youth in terms of problems and solutions, we draw on several projects that attend to the sociopolitical and material realities of young people’s lives in the present. These projects suggest reworked relations of adults and youth along with glimmers of counterdiscourses.

*Our Schools Suck* (Alonso, Anderson, Su, & Theoharis, 2009) centers youth voices in order to counter the dominant public discourse of a “culture of failure,” offering “an intervention into the adult–driven debates on inner–city youth” (p. 5). The text’s emphasis on young people’s affect and activism connects their
anger, their seemingly “poor choices,” and their work against injustices to “the conditions in which they live, work, and attend school rather than essentialized ‘cool pose’ values” (p. 6). It offers a powerful antidote to emotionally resilient neoliberal “can-do” discourses by attending to youth’s awareness of and struggles against their positioning via incoherent messages of personal responsibility in the face of systemic material inequalities in their lives: “Despite living in an urban center with a small employment base for low-skilled young workers, attending under-resourced schools, and facing discrimination in their job searches, they were repeatedly told that success rested on their motivation” (p. 25).

Chávez and Soep (2005) present an analysis of Youth Radio, in which adults and youth coproduce media products, a project that pushes against the romanticizing of youth voice as intrinsically emancipatory, a deficit model of youth, or an authoritative role for adults. Youth media projects often position young people as sources for intimate details of their lives but not as editors or as compensated contributors. But youth media production, they argue, “can provide a resource for young people to rewrite the stories that are told about them, against them, or supposedly on their behalf” (p. 410). In what they call a “pedagogy of collegiality,” adults and youth depend on each other’s skills and knowledges to communicate to an audience, which acts as witness, mediating the dialectical power dynamics between students and teacher. Like the authors of Our Schools Suck, Chávez and Soep refuse to invoke “youth voice” divorced from political, social, and relational contexts or in order to establish their own progressive credentials (p. 413). Youth Radio intentionally puts “youth development considerations” first, but this policy of “collegial pedagogy” has “baked in” generative tensions (pp. 418–419) that they discuss as “joint framing, youth-led inquiry, mediated intervention, and distributed accountability” (p. 421). The authors note: “Participating as an adult in collegial pedagogy means always searching for that shifting balance between sufficient mentorship and excessive intervention” (p. 424). And the program’s “distributed accountability” refuses the individualized accountability of most pedagogical contexts and “functions as an iterative process of forming and weighing judgments about the work being produced as it relates to a series of criteria—including those shaped by considerations of accuracy, originality, aesthetics, rigor, and matters of social impact” (p. 430). Chávez and Soep offer a multifaceted portrait of the pedagogy of collegiality that consciously avoids romanticizing, forgetting inequalities, and erasing power differentials. Youths and adults take on many roles and characteristics, and while no one saves anyone else, together they produce award-winning programs.

These authors construct youth within social, political, and relational contexts, not as always—already figured by biology, age, and difference. We understand these “breaks” with conventional youth figurations as operating in distinctive temporal imaginaries. While conventional youth studies focuses
relentlessly on the future and on “becoming,” these authors emphasize the present with its inequalities, limitations, and lines of action in relation to past and future. The temporal imaginary is a dynamic one that not only keeps past, present, and future in relation but also takes into account space. In other words, this is a spatiotemporal imaginary that does not figure only time as the active figure, but space as well. This is a significant reconceptualization, for time has been the privileged term in conceptualizing adolescence. But time and space are mutually constitutive and are constitutive of our imaginings of the social world and the human. In relation to the child and the adult, youth “defines a moment of disturbance: a space in between” (Oswell, 1998, p. 38).

A more supple youth studies attends to youth–adult relations of research or pedagogy in specific, material spaces as well as attending to imaginings of space. For example, at Youth Radio, external audiences and criteria shape the radio stories and the collaborations of youth, peer educators, and adults. Each collaborator interprets the “external” criteria, such as originality or social impact, differently and the product and process must be negotiated in relation to those interpretations. Alonso et al. (2009) also locate themselves with youth in specific urban school spaces, refusing the usual discourses and affects of such locations and working, instead, to establish a good urban school. Yet their work gestures to a more metaphorical understanding of spaces as an effect of relations and connections that represent “constellations of temporary coherence” (Massey, 1998, p. 125). This is a political view of space, in which it is not static but dynamic. Space is not a container where youth action takes place (Ruddick, 1998, p. 346) but, like time, is integral to producing youth as a social category. At the same time, space itself is produced through action and interaction. To organize youth spatially, whether by mandating their presence in schools or prohibiting it in malls after dark, is a strategy of “spatial organization [that is] deeply bound up with the social production of identities” (Massey, 1998, p. 127). And this production of identities, imaginations, and actions has much to tell us. For example, Dillabough and Kennelly (2010) explore “the role that particular spatial landscapes and their symbolic assemblages play in framing” the moral-inflected identities of youth groups as “‘disgusting,’ ‘superior’ and/or ‘shameful’” (p. 72). Their ethnography of youths’ relational and emotional geographies in Toronto and Vancouver neighborhoods offers phenomenological portraits of shifting urban landscapes, identities, and symbolic resources, as well as the production of discourses of “lost youth.” Youth are making themselves and also being made within sedimented and changing locations, economies, and discourses.

These explicit uses of temporality and spatialization, or different spatiotemporal imaginaries, in studies of youth offer counternarratives to the biological, developing, and othered youth. They suggest a politics of making explicit both youth studies’ and youths’ spatiotemporal imaginings and actions in the production of knowledges, identities, and practices. Whether these theoretical
orientations can interrupt conventional progressive practices and the relations of adults and youths in research is an open question.

References


BIOLOGY/NATURE

Elizabeth Seaton

The words *nature* and *biology* are two primary means by which the category of youth is “put into discourse” (Foucault, 1990, p. 11). In fact, for the Western world, the very term “youth” immediately connotes a biological reality. Young people (both children and adolescents) are foremost defined by their age and physiological development (or their “stage in the life-course”). Processes of biological and behavioral change are seen as germane to youth: so much so that their particular qualities are said to comprise their essential nature. Such processes of change must not only be monitored and understood, but managed in order to cultivate the best adult human possible. In this respect, our very idea of youth rests upon a dialectic: youth is both a “natural” and universal state of difference and a process of physiological change and development; youth is not only a time of freedom and experiment, but it is also a period of strict regimen and discipline in the biologically and socially guided activity of becoming an adult.

Torn between the ontological and the teleological, this idea of youth is reflected in our understanding of nature as both a quality and a process. Raymond Williams has famously written that “Nature is perhaps the most complex word in the [English] language” (1983, p. 219). In its general usages, the word may mean either “i) the essential quality and character of something; ii) the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both; and iii) the material world itself, taken as including or not human beings” (p. 219). In this variability, *nature* describes both a quality (the nature of things, or life itself) and a process (that abstract inherent force which directs them). Nature as a quality of something is derived from its original uses in both the Latin and old French “natura” or “nasci,” meaning “to be born” or that which is native or innate. The second connotation of nature as an essential force or process which directs all life came later (14th century). This latter notion was, as Williams describes it, impelled by “the assumption of a single prime cause,” a singular, universal nature which is “structurally and historically cognate with the emergence of God from a god or ‘the gods’” (p. 220). This shift from a multiplicity of qualities (the nature of things; “the gods”) to an abstract singularity (a universal and inherent force which directs all things; God) was to further change in the 18th and 19th centuries with the development of Enlightenment sciences. Here, as Williams puts it, nature “was altered from an
absolute monarch to a constitutional lawyer, with a new type of emphasis on natural laws” (p. 222).

While Williams’ use of “natural law” is more commonly associated with juridical common law, it is clear that he is referring to the development of modern biology as a means to understand the “laws of nature.” Supported by techniques of classification (e.g., Linnaeus’ 1735 taxonomy of the natural world), and advancements in visual technology (e.g., Anton van Leeuwenhoek’s [1632–1723] development of the microscope, which later allowed for the early 19th century discovery by the German biologists Schleiden and Schwann of the cell as the basic organism of life), biology has lent validity to the universal “laws of nature.” Inspired by the Greek words for life (bios) and its study (logia), biology’s methods of empirical observation are designed to discover and illustrate consistencies of pattern, growth, and behavior of all living things. This project was to advance considerably with the development of evolutionary thought initially forwarded by Comte de Buffon and later, and more famously, in the theories of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744–1802) and Charles Darwin (1859). The concept of evolutionary change is central to biology, in its assertion that all life stems from a common origin, and that life evolves through historical response (or adaptation) to its environment. These underlying laws of nature—its regularities of qualities and processes—may then become accepted as conditional and yet universal truths.

By the 20th century, most biological scientists had abandoned the theist view that attributed the universal order of nature to God’s design. Nature was found to have its own design: in the development of species through natural selection, in the regularities of the life process, and the conditional structures of evolution. And yet, “the laws of nature” are often utilized as rhetorical devices calculated to insist upon normalized or orthodox truths (e.g., in the claim that same-sex marriage is counter to the “laws of nature”). In these instances, biology as a science loses its grasp of empirical authority and is made a servant to ideology. Thus, the pseudo-science of social-Darwinism, with its perversion of theories of genetic branching and natural selection, has been used as a popular apologist for the racist excesses of imperialism and the continuation of White privilege. Such occurrences remind us that the history of biological science is as much sociopolitical context as it is transcendent discovery.

The Science of “Natural” Development

Uses of evolutionary theory in the aid of modern scholarship on child and youth development often suggest such sociopolitical influence. Industrial modernity brought with it an emphasis on the idea of “development” and “progress” as universal and positive goals. This mandate for a new age was influenced not only by Charles Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* in 1859, but the ideas found in Herbert Spencer’s *Social Statistics* (1850/1888), which held that development and progress for modern civilization was not only a certainty, but also a necessity. In this respect, as Emily Cahan (2008) writes, “The child’s development served to demonstrate the connection between development in
Such conceptual linkages were developed in the work of G. Stanley Hall—often called “the father of adolescence”—whose two-volume work, Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education (1904), sought to establish the nature of progress in human civilization via the adolescent as object of empirical study. Hall based his ideas of adolescent development on a Lamarckian theory of evolution, which, in line with dominant beliefs of the early 20th century, emphasized Lamarck’s (1809/1984) proposal that the “acquired characteristics” of a species are inherited through accumulated experience (p. 113). This allowed Hall to propose his well-known view that adolescence is inherently a time of “storm and stress” due to the accumulated generational memory of a moment in human evolution marked by turmoil and disruption. For Hall, then, the practice of challenging parents, the flights of temper and the depressions of mood, and the propensity for risk and sensation seeking are all aspects of a “recapitulated” memory, now manifest in the storm and stress of modern adolescent development.

Hall’s work has lent a number of key axioms that continue to structure and define the discourse of adolescence today (Sercombe, 2010, p. 41). The legacy of his development thesis can be found in our common understanding that a young person’s life is temporally and spatially organized into “stages and scripts” (Kovarick, 1994, p. 103), with each progressive stage (toddler, preschooler, school-aged, teenage, etc.) assigning qualitatively different scripts of conduct. This process of development is dutifully recorded in the archives of growth charts, school records, psychological reports, vaccination histories, and family photo albums, each providing a means by which to discipline the necessary progress of young people.

The Discipline of Natural Bodies

“Storm and stress” also remains discursively operative, if only in its more popular vestiges. Yet, today we tend to understand it in biological, rather than psychological, terms (even if the psychological is recapitulated as physiological and evolutionary memory). There are ancient precepts to the biologized understanding of young people, as evidenced in Aristotle’s statement that youth are “heated by Nature as drunken men by wine” (as cited in Arnett, 1999, p. 317). Such “heats of Nature” are now understood as the epidemiological changes taking place within young bodies during puberty.

Puberty is known as the process of physical change in which a child’s body begins to mature into one capable of reproduction. While puberty involves a number of psychosocial, cultural, and physical changes, it is primarily based upon the hormonal stimulation of growth in a young person’s body which then initiates the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics. Yet, because puberty is premised upon the emergence of a sexually reproductive body, the understanding of puberty as a physiological process becomes tempered by social connotations