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What Animates Place for Children? A Comparative Analysis

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Drawing on comparative work in primary schools in East Anglia (United Kingdom), Oaxaca (Mexico), and the North Slope of Alaska (United States), we explore what children mean when they say places are "special" to them. Focusing on information gathered during walks designed and guided by these children, we examine the experiential, affective, communicative, and dynamic bases of relationality between children and their surroundings. We set out how effective curriculum design can productively incorporate such knowledge. [child cartography, relationality, animation, environmental learning]

In a recent article, Irvine and Lee consider how "play, exploration, and narrative imaginary" underpin the ways in which young East Anglian children talked to them about the significance of their "special places" (2018, 1). The present paper draws on that East Anglian material, bringing it into comparison with the experiences and conversations of young people from Oaxaca, Mexico, and the North Slope of Alaska, USA. By doing so, we expand several key concepts in that article. How do we understand children's engagement with their landscapes as "relational"? How might notions of "animation" broaden our understanding of such engagement? What role does materiality play in the enlivening process? And how might these understandings support a curriculum design that takes the existing specialized knowledge of its students seriously? Recent research demonstrates a significant decrease in the amount of time that children spend outdoors, a diminished knowledge of wildlife, and a sense of disconnect with "nature" (e.g., Hillman 2006; Karsten 2005; Malone 2007; Waite et al. 2016). Our research turns this on its head, exploring what in fact connects children to their surroundings across cultures. Here we suggest that "relationality" and "animation" as modes for understanding child/place assemblages support a nuanced comprehension of the continuing importance of taking into account what Ingold (2000) calls "dwelling places" for children's senses of being/identity.

If we as anthropologists and educationalists understand better how place becomes meaningful to children, we can contribute to curricula designed more effectively to engage young people's curiosity and intellect through this connection. We argue the relational way in which places become animated for children emphasizes the need—in anthropology as well as in education—to recognize cultural specificity even as we see commonalities threading their way across our study sites. This, in turn, points to the need to take children's unique experiences seriously. Recognizing this aligns with current efforts to decolonize the curriculum, especially as it destabilizes a Eurocentric take on "powerful knowledge." Ardoin makes a strong case for the need to see senses of place (or place itself) as being multidimensional with sociocultural, political, economic, psychological, and biophysical dimensions (2006). And indeed, we find that the notion of place is highly

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theorized across many disciplines, including anthropology, geography, archaeology, literature, history, environmental education, environmental psychology, and sociology (see Ardoin 2006; Kudryavstev et al. 2012 for reviews of this literature). Much of this work focuses on what place means to children in different locations around the world, but what is all too often missing is a processual sense of what invests place with meaning for children. In our attempts to ensure that young people remain affectively engaged with the places they inhabit, we often forget to ask them what makes place meaningful. With others, such as Karsten (2005) and Barratt Hacking et al. (2007), our research led us to question if it is possible that practitioners are misrepresenting children's voices. In attempting to help children "reclaim" their localities, are we defining place for them, rather than listening to them? In our research, we thus tried to give children as many ways of communicating their place awareness as possible, not only to hear what they said, but to observe what got them talking. The question thus becomes: What animates place for children, what does this mean for how we understand children's relationships with/in their environment, and what are the implications of this for how we educate them? In using "animating," here we are referring to a shifting awareness that is both informed by and contributes to intimacy with place through having intense, immediate experiences as well as ongoing relationalities with it, something we explore throughout the pages to come.

By linking what Young and Muller (2013) and Young et al. (2014) called the nonspecialized knowledge of daily living and the specialized knowledge of school-based learning, we may become more effective educators, both within and beyond school classrooms. This in turn may improve our capacity to teach issues that spark controversy and anxiety, such as climate change and sustainability. We note that the terminology of "specialist" and "nonspecialist" does not resonate well with our experience of children's knowledge of place. Instead, in a modification of Young and Mueller, we argue that it is important to draw a distinction between different kinds of knowledge (e.g., canonical, discipline-bound knowledge and everyday knowledge of experience). It is our experience that children themselves undervalue their own knowledge of their surroundings; we suggest that an appreciation of what we call their "dwelling-place expertise" can positively influence pedagogy for both learners and teachers.

Drawing on education and social anthropology, our approach was both comparative (we conducted fieldwork in England, Mexico, the United States, and Mongolia) and consistent (in all field sites, we worked with primary school pupils and their teachers, using walking and talking methods to get to know the landscapes alongside the children). In all, we worked with 400 children aged seven to thirteen, across ten schools over the course of a year and a half. Our older participants were in Alaska (eleven to thirteen), while the majority of English and Mexican students were between nine and eleven. Before turning to the project itself, we bring our attention to some core methodological issues.

Methodological Considerations: Phenomenology

> Where places are involved, attendant modes of dwelling are never far behind and in this dimly lit region of the anthropological world—call it if you like the ethnography of lived topography—much remains to be learned. Places and their sensings deserve our close attention. (Basso 1996, 58)

The power of specific human-land relations, as the above quote suggests, has been the subject of anthropological inquiry, much of it informed by a methodological turn to phenomenology in the 1990s. Feld and Basso (1996) provide a cross-section of beautiful

essays evoking place as profoundly meaningful. In *Do Glaciers Listen*? Cruikshank (2005) explores Athapaskan spiritual relations with their mountainous landscape, as does Diemberger (1993) working in the Himalayas of Tibet. Since 1980, Bodenhorn (1988, 1990, 2000b, 2000c) has focused primarily on the moral, social relations that Iñupiat, arctic hunters, assume hold between humans and other animals. These accounts of "lived topography"—recorded with people whose cosmological systems explicitly extend the realm of the social beyond human actors—invite us to use Tsing's notion of "more than human sociality" as a means of theorizing our research (2014). Not resting with the idea that animate entities interact across boundaries, Weston (2017) asks what conditions of being have the capacity to animate—to bring to life. That capacity, she asserts, depends on relationalities that are open to each other. Of equal methodological importance has been Tim Ingold's (2000, 2006; Ingold and Vergunst 2008) work which brings together notions of dwelling and walking as key phenomenological modes for understanding being in the world, largely in northern Britain. For Ingold and others (e.g., Bryson 1998, 2015; Solnit 2001), walking is the ultimate modality for engaging with such direct encounters. In *Inuit Morality Play*, Briggs (1999) combined attention to cognition and affect in her thick description of how young Canadian Inuit learn both to connect and to be independent. Phenomenological attention to what animates relationality for children lies at the core of our present analysis.

Scholarly attention to animate intimacy, however, is not restricted to anthropology. In environmental education literature as well, Malone (2016) theorizes place through her examination of what she calls "childdog" as an intimate relationality that emerges through the co-constitution of location, child, dog, and circumstance. In this Latin American town, relational meaning animates place, born out of the way that these different elements interact. The places come into being when enlivened by interactions between the different actors in an assemblage. Recent education work on the "philosophy of becoming" is also pertinent (Clarke and McPhie 2015; Gannon 2017). Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's seminal discussion of rhizomic thinking (1987), place is conceptualized as networked and in flux—always emerging from the milieu of changing relations and constituting parts, all of which are interconnected and exist in relation to each other; things do not exist separately in time or space. Exploring the implications of these ideas for how we approach education is a central concern of this paper.

In what follows, we use "place" to refer to the entangled notion of a meaning-filled space that incorporates sociocultural, historical, and geographical constituents. A locality becomes a place for a child through memories of falling over an unexpected stone in a familiar path, unsettling embodied knowledge, and creating a memory from the material encounter between skin, rough ground, and salty tears; it is a memory relived when traveling the path again. A locality becomes a place for a child through memories of learning how to fix a bicycle tire from a brother or learning to skin a seal from one's mother—uniting place, social relations, and materiality at key moments of intimacy. Place meaning is also generated through markers of larger sociopolitical institutions: crosswalks, signs prohibiting children's entrance, places of work, and the regulated spaces of schools themselves. The goal of uncovering the experience of the relations and the visceral encounters which enliven and give meaning to place formed the phenomenological underpinning of our research.

Language and Communication

As Paul Ricouer observed (1976), "lived-life-as-lived" can never be fully shared with another. Language as a symbolic system can only point to meaning; it is inevitably only

partial. In Lee's words, "As an adult my knowledge of my locality is held within the way I move around it, the familiarity I have with its obstacles and inhabitants, my expectations of diurnal and seasonal changes brought on by my observations over time. I can journey from my house to the village shop with no thought for direction or position, even crossing roads safely without thinking about it. Yet no matter how well I describe this journey verbally, speech can never entirely replicate the journey itself. This is (at least partly) because the knowledge of my journey is held within the embodied experience of it. If it is not possible for me as an adult to do this, then how much more difficult is it for a child to express their experience of place verbally?" (research diary, September 2016). Indeed, Basso's (1970) essay "To Give Up on Words" explores Apache practices of not speaking in order to allow understanding to occur in ambiguous circumstances. Part of our approach, as we have said, is phenomenological—seeking to learn from the children's embodied experiences by participating in them and not being exclusively reliant on writing and talk.

Nonetheless, to return to Ricouer, language is a prime mode of human communication, albeit incomplete. We thus paid close attention to what the children said to us, to one another, and to others, learning from children's own complex forms of communication something of the processes through which their engagement with their landscapes were "animated" or "enlivened."

Minimizing Power Imbalances and Taking Context into Consideration

Although classrooms are key to children's daily experiences of place, the authoritarian, hierarchically structured protocols for much classroom behavior can hinder children's freedom of expression. We felt our status as researchers from academic institutions with claims to Young and Mueller's "powerful specialized knowledge" might contribute to the children's sense that only cognitive knowledge of facts and things—divorced from the children's sensation and experience of daily lives—had any value, thus stifling their free expression further. We were committed to reducing the power relations that infuse children's lives as much as possible and freeing their agency to communicate their thoughts and feelings with us.

We recognize that there are alternative education projects designed explicitly to counteract these sorts of dynamics. Some, such as Montessori, Steiner, or Summerhill-type schools, are international in their reach. Our participant schools, however, were more conventional. That being said, many of the teachers as well as school directors across all of the settings were themselves actively interested in giving children agency over their own learning, as well as working toward efforts to decolonize the curriculum in different ways. This was a significant factor in the enthusiasm with which they participated in this project.

These dynamics clearly reflect larger societal processes. The fact that our participant communities are all rural suggests that all—to varying degrees—are caught up in urban/rural tensions concerning political decisions about the dissemination of resources and the degree to which local voices are heard at the political center. The fact that all three communities are relatively prosperous in regional terms only highlights the existence of pockets of economic inequality, with accompanying feelings of exclusion on the part of individual students.

Although East Anglia has historically had an uneasy relationship with the English monarchy, what sets the Oaxacan and Alaskan schools aside from the East Anglian schools more recently is colonialism's footprint: the imposition of Spanish and/or English as the language of instruction, the erasure of local historical processes and local knowledge, and

the emphasis on "success" as something that happens away from the community. The legacies do not play out in identical ways, and pushback does not take on the same form, something we explore below.

We draw attention to two moves that have been explicitly developed to counter the systematic disempowerment of children, not in relation to classroom protocols, but with regard to knowledge. Young and Mueller's (2014) notion of powerful knowledge, invoked earlier, is seen as disciplinary, specialized knowledge that frees learners to rise above their circumstances to understand what they observe through the application of universal concepts. It has become particularly important in the design of curricula, as it is seen as a way of democratizing education through providing everyone with the same tools to understand the world and their place in it.

However, Beck (2012), among others, argues that this can devalue and even ignore the knowledge of the everyday. This kind of universalizing "powerful knowledge" can colonize the curriculum, overwhelming and devaluing local knowledges, local history, and local experiences. One result can be disempowerment for children whose expert knowledge of the important matters of their daily lives is obscured and rendered powerless in the classroom. We appreciated that this dynamic might influence how our participants felt about sharing their everyday knowledge with us in the classroom context.

The counter move has been to valorize local specificity. We encountered teachers at all schools who expressed frustration at feeling that "the center" was increasingly dictating what "should" be taught and how. This was particularly explicit in Ixtlán, where teachers were collectively insisting on greater inclusion of local material into the curriculum and in Alaska, where calls to "decolonize" education were most clearly heard from the School Board. It should be noted that local oversight in Oaxaca is structurally introduced through parent committees who are active in providing support and approval to school ventures. On the North Slope, an elected regional School Board likewise provides regular oversight to school initiatives. To draw out this everyday dwelling-place expertise, we aimed to mitigate potential sources of inhibition by taking the children out of the classroom, and into their neighborhoods, into the terrain where children are experts, and where knowing is playing and doing.

Combining Methodological Approaches

We drew on phenomenological accounts from anthropology such as Feld and Basso (1996), already mentioned, as well as Ingold's (2006) and Ingold and Vergunst's (2008) work on walking where the anthropologists get beyond "representation" and engage with experience. Together, these approaches gave us ways of foregrounding the immediacy of physical experience without giving up on narrative. We should also recognize here the importance of the transactional approaches of Öhman and Östman (2007) and Sund and Öhman (2014) who are proponents of John Dewey's work. The result was what we call an emergent ethnographic approach—one that ensured some consistency of activities across all field sites to facilitate systematic comparative analysis but also enabled responsiveness to different conditions, and collaboration with our participants.

It is important to note here that although our study took place over a period of about 18 months, our choice of sites was at least in part informed by the researchers' existing familiarity with the context and supported by already present social networks. Members of the research team had already worked in East Anglian schools for about 4 years; Bodenhorn lived in Barrow for several years and has collaborated with North Slope institutions on research

projects since 1983 (Bodenhorn , 1997, 2000a; 2000 with F. Akpik; 2013). Similarly, she has collaborated with local Sierra Norte colleagues on environmental education projects since 2004 (with Ruiz-Mallen et al. 2010; with Lee et al. 2016; with Irvine et al. 2019).

We should make a final note about our choice of comparative ethnographic sites. Bodenhorn was invited to begin working in Ixtlán because it was held as a flagship community for its commitment to caring for its resources on a sustainable basis. She immediately began thinking comparatively through her Arctic experiences for several reasons: ecological conditions are radically different, Barrow is a minimalist system and Ixtlán has one of the highest rates of biodiversity in the Americas. Despite these differences, both communities are organized around the principal of common property over which they have legally recognized rights and responsibilities, and both are embedded in nation states that value privatization over communality. We talk about colonialism's footprint in the respective state-run education systems elsewhere. But we should also note that the local dynamics of children's upbringing are starkly different in terms of hierarchy and autonomy. Across the circumpolar north, social dynamics are characterized both by the inculcation of individual autonomy and the exhortation to be responsible for others (see, e.g., Bodenhorn 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Briggs 1991; Brower and Brewster 2004; Nelson 1980). The Sierra Norte, on the other hand, is marked by hierarchy and social distinction, which can be seen in adult interactions and even more distinctly in the ways in which young people address—and are addressed by—their elders.

Methods

In their review of place literature from environmental psychology, Kudryavtsev et al. (2012) argue that multiple research approaches that combine experiential and instructional methods create fertile opportunities for gathering accurate data without missing out on the richness of detail and complexity, a position reflected here.

Access to schools was undertaken slightly differently in each community. In East Anglia, we invited school gatekeepers such as head teachers to attend a conference at the Faculty of Education, where they met with teachers and students from schools that we had been working with on our pilot project. Schools expressing interest were then visited in order to begin planning. In Ixtlán, a community of about 4,000 inhabitants, Bodenhorn approached the principal of the local primary school, who sent her directly to the teachers responsible for the Year 4 group. They subsequently codesigned a series of activities over the course of the year that would meet project objectives and further their own curriculum aims. In Barrow, at the suggestion of a local School Board member, Bodenhorn sought out a middle school IT instructor who had a wide range of students. The teacher had enthusiastically adopted School Board directives to incorporate Iñupiaq knowledge into her lesson designs and was keen to participate. With the principal's approval, she and Bodenhorn developed a plan of activities that simultaneously met project and curricular needs.

We took into account

- the affordances of the physical space;
- the individual preferences of the human participants (including the children, teachers, parents, and researchers);
- the requirements of the schools within which we operated; and
- the distinct sociopolitical, -economic, -cultural, and historical contexts in which each school was embedded;

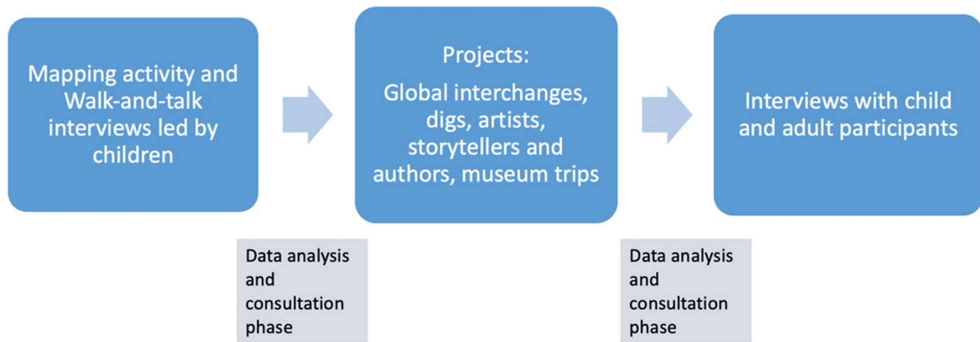

FIGURE 1. The staged method of data gathering for the pathways project. [This figure appears in color in the online issue.]

We then designed a three-staged method (see Figure 1) that started by opening up and inviting broad and inclusive participation through a series of walks conducted by students in all schools. We then encouraged schools to cocreate follow-up activities that resonated with their particular students' interests but in new ways: bringing in storytellers, local archaeologists, and artists, and/or arranging for cross-cultural videoconference meets and letter writing. In all cases, students were encouraged to participate creatively, expanding the modes through which they could communicate their environmental knowledge. After all activities were complete, at a teacher's request, we invited teachers from all participating schools to attend a workshop in Cambridge where they could compare notes about their experiences. Through Lee's support, each school was then invited to contribute a brief article about their experiences to a special issue of the National Association of Environmental Education's journal (2016). In our final phase, we conducted evaluative interviews with a full range of selected participants: students, teachers, parents, and artists.

Data Analysis and Consultation

In Phase 1, we encouraged children to talk about their own places. We asked them to tell us about something that they felt they were experts in (they mentioned things like "football," "annoying my brother," "looking after my dog," "playing with my toys," and so on). We then suggested that they were experts in the places where they lived. We asked them to think of a special place which they know well and we asked them to write about it, bringing in a photograph or a drawing of the place.

We then gave the children local maps and asked them to plot a route starting from the school and taking in some of their favorite and familiar places. The local playground was often included, as were their homes or favorite dog walking spots. The teachers and researchers then planned walks for groups of students that took in as many of their suggestions as possible.

These walks in East Anglia have been described elsewhere (Irvine and Lee 2018; Irvine et al. 2019; Lee et al. 2016). We pay only scant attention to them in this paper to create more opportunity for comparison through asking what diverse experiences can add to our understanding of place for contemporary children. To our English material, we add accounts from walks taken in Ixtlán de Juárez, a forest community nestled in the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca in Mexico, and Utqiagvik (Barrow), Alaska—arctic homeland of Iñupiaq

whalers. Both are rural villages, similar in size to our participating East Anglian communities. In addition, however, both Mexican and Alaskan settings are organized as communities based on common property for which members have a legally recognized caretaker responsibility. One of our expanded goals, then, is to ask whether such collective ownership resulted in any significantly different senses of students' individual relationships to their surroundings. Across all sites, Barrow was the most diverse and included students from Barrow, urban Alaska, Samoa, and the Philippines, among others.

In what follows, we explore how localities become places for children, we see how children's very presence may enliven those places and we consider how a growing intimacy between individual children and their surroundings brings meaning to them. This may well include swings to play on, brooks to jump across, or animals to watch, but it often also includes a sensee of spirits, or ghosts, associated with particular sites on a child's landscape.

Findings and Discussion

The participant group in Ixtlán was the fourth grade of the local primary school, seventy-nine children divided into three classes. All children took part in three walks; the first—during which students guided us around town—was conducted on a class-by-class basis; the second was a yearwide outing to the Eco-Tur cabins (part of a communal project which community members often enjoy but cannot access on foot). The third was a collective hike along the *Camino Reál* (Royal Way), an historically important path which passes through Ixtlán's cloud forest—another site valued by many students, but which required special arrangements to reach. Whereas the first walks were the sole responsibility of the students to organize and guide, the others were organized by the teachers; they brought in parents and young local university students to walk with the students to expand the latter's engagement with these places as historically and ecologically key to the community.

Bodenhorn had been working in this community since 2004, but in walking with these children, she encountered an unfamiliar childscape. This became evident not only in the routes the children chose but also in the way they moved through the spaces: a relaxed, comfortable even gleeful mobility which demonstrated a sense of familiarity with the terrain and its idiosyncrasies. We felt this sense of intimacy in all communities although it was true to varying degrees for different students. Overall, children were not only confidently able to negotiate pathways with ease, but they took obvious pleasure in talking with one another about which routes to take, which shortcuts were "cool," which brooks were most fun to jump over and knowing where to walk without paying the kind of conscious attention that we, as researchers unfamiliar with the terrain, were compelled to do. The sociality of being able to show knowledge is clearly not the only factor in developing animated relationships with and through these childscapes, but it is certainly a factor to be recognized. In these communities, at least children do indeed continue to be intimately interactive with their dwelling places.

What follows reflects Bodenhorn's notes of the first of the three student-led walks in Ixtlán; even though each group selected different places to visit, all walks gave evidence of lively and emotionally entangled engagements with local surroundings.

"The list of favorite local places was far too extensive to cover in the allotted time, so the kids had to select down: the *juegos*, or playground; the lower football pitch; or the secondary school. Our walk gave me a completely new view of Ixtlán—for the routes chosen (shortcuts/trails rather than streets) more than the places themselves. The trail to the *juegos* leads off from the southern approach to the communal forest. Located in a eucalyptus grove, it has a very pretty view of the community and the surrounding

mountains. As we approached, one of the students mentioned that you could "get scared" coming up at night. I asked the others about this and there was a flurry of enthusiastic contributions about "*duendes*" (goblins), Katarina, *la llorona* (a woman who wanders around crying—some people say like a child; others say like a woman crying for her child). This park was chosen by children in all of our walking groups. When we asked why students had chosen it, the answers were similar: "it's fun," "it's pretty," "it's a nice way to have fun with your family." On all of the walks, however, the park generated unprompted talk of spirits who are to be found in the surrounding forest and who elicit a sort of uneasy excitement.

Having to jump across a couple of mini *arroyos* en route to the community football pitch led to talk about the kinds of food you can gather in and around Ixtlán. The grounds were "good" because of the different sorts of activities that take place there. The importance of place as a food source reoccurred on all three of our initial walks: herbs useful for salad were found in the churchyard, the sight of a bougainvillea provoked discussion about how to prepare a curative tea, and fruit trees hanging over a house wall into the street sparked memories of other walks. All of these were talked about with reference to family members as authoritative sources of information ("my uncle makes tea from this bush when he has a stomach ache," "my mum says these are really good in salad"). Although the knowledge seemed clearly "kinshipped," it was much less explicitly gendered or generationed: parents, grandparents, siblings, and aunts and uncles were all brought into the conversation.

As we headed downhill again to the secondary school, a couple of students came up to me to continue some of the conversations already started. One of the Guelatao girls said she really liked to go to the cemetery to read to her grandfather (who died shortly after she was born); from there she was close to a trail that would take her quickly down to Guelatao, the nearest village some 4 miles away. A short time later, one of the boys mentioned that he liked to go with his family to the cemetery to visit their relatives. This feeling of the cemetery as a lively social space which brings together relatives across time is, of course, most famously celebrated in the Day of the Dead, but it is also part of daily life. By this time, it was already 6 p.m., so we needed to head back—this time straight up the hill to the town center (field report to project, June 2014)."

In the United Kingdom, place also generates associative meaning making; on passing a pub, a group of girls recalled how villagers would gather there at the end of their Halloween trick-or-treat walk; other students pointed out where family members worked or were educated. In Ixtlán, however, a strong sense of collective identity is associated with the community as communal space. The forest is the communal patrimony, and most of the places that children chose to visit—the park *el monte* (the mountain), *el cerro* (the mountaintop), *las canchas* (the football field), and *las cabañas* (the ecotourism cabins)—are all found in communal territory and are taken as markers of that communal ownership.

In Barrow, sixty-four students were asked to write short essays that identified important places and explained what made them special. A smaller group of students prepared for a videoconference meeting with a single classroom in East Anglia by discussing what they thought was special about Utqiagvik in general and what challenges they thought the future would bring. And finally, a smaller group of students walked to some of the places most frequently identified by the larger group: the beach (identified by twenty of sixty-four as special), the gravel pit (eighteen of sixty-four), and a whaling captain's house. This final site was chosen to reflect a range of places identified by students which

were associated with subsistence activities: "the tundra," "shooting station," "our camp," and so forth—all of which were beyond the scope of a walk (eighteen of sixty-four students identified such places). As with our other two sites, many of the reasons were social ("I like to hear my auntie tell stories," "that's where we build bonfires"), some were about learning ("that's where my uncle taught me to hunt ducks"), some were about collective action as a community: butchering a whale, or celebrating a successful season with a feast and blanket toss and some were highly individualized ("I like to photograph the flowers," "I like the peace and quiet."

Each of the most frequently cited favorite place(s) was talked about by at least one Utqiagvik student because "it's quiet"; several others mentioned they liked specific places because "I can do what I want." Over the course of her years in Utqiagvik, Bodenhorn frequently heard that "going camping" (i.e., hunting) was a way to escape the pressures of Utqiagvik social life, which is replete with tensions between the freedom of individual agency and the need to respond to (often conflicting) others' needs. These tensions are acutely felt during adolescence (Nelson 1980). Perhaps we are hearing something similar in these young people's accounts. It is important to note that these children were not saying they wanted to go "walk about" on their own, but rather to have time-out moments in a social context. While there was also a sense among the East Anglian participants that being alone and getting away from others contributed to the specialness of a place, our material suggests this sense was not so prevalent among Oaxacan youth.

We also need to pay attention to the specificity of place itself. We see that Ixtlán children value highly the spaces that are designed as recreational: the park, the football field, the ecotourism cabins. In Barrow, the playground and the American football field are valued as sites for unsupervised play "where we can just play what we want" and "have time with our friends." Similar spaces were identified as special for the children in the East Anglian villages where domesticated outdoor places are visited many times during childhood. They are places for youngsters to visit with family in all three regions, but later they also become more generally social. In passing through these places on our walks, the children were keen to share stories of playing there when they were younger; their attachment is not simply because it is a fun place to play, but for its power to evoke memories. Here, then, we see nostalgia's potential in creating valued meaning. As such, these places demonstrate the entanglement of geography and time through memory as well as the role of embodiment in animating these places for these young people in that they are special, at least in part because of their affordances for play, an activity where the body is essential. So the immediacy of embodied experience, the capacity of place to evoke existing knowledge, and nostalgic memory all come into play here in creating these intimate child-place assemblages.

What is distinctive about Utqiagvik in this regard is that none of the three most commonly mentioned spaces (the beach, the gravel pit, and subsistence sites) are domesticated, considered "recreational," or specifically defined as "children's spaces." There are no restrictive public spaces—either which exclude young people or are reserved for them. And children engage with them as and when they please. The inculcation of such autonomy may well contribute to this difference in the ways in which children navigate their social spaces. This is not to say that "safety" (a specific anxiety in the United Kingdom for parents and teachers alike) is of no concern—children learn to keep an eye out for polar bears, for instance—but the dynamic is of learning to "expect

the unexpected" rather than to keep children out of the reach of danger (see Bodenhorn 1997; Briggs 1991).

Comments from some North Slope students—that they liked the playground because they "could do what they want" or that they liked the football field because that is where they "could hit"—may well reflect clashes of cultures. Freedom of movement both in and around North Slope school grounds is strictly controlled by adult authorities; at the same time, specific sports arenas are created in which aggression is rewarded. Thus, school rules simultaneously go against children's autonomous agency when it comes to movement while also providing an outlet to the general Iñupiaq rules against the expression of direct anger in any form (see, e.g., Bodenhorn ; Briggs 1970, 1999).

In Oaxaca, what is distinctive are the references to nonhuman spirits and the role that deceased relatives play in daily life. It brings the dead into the space of the living as agents with very real impacts on the day-to-day lived topography. It animates particular places with an otherworldly dimension. While these spirits can be seen as a temporal infringement on place, they are also an example of how, in these sites at least, place has a boundary-crossing dimension that is highly significant in these children's place narratives. Here we see quite clearly the multiple forms which relationality of place can assume for these children and the multiple forms of sociality animating Ixtleco childscapes. In the act of reading to her grandfather, we see the child's relation between emotional attachment, the space of the graveyard, and the act of doing something in that space for that person who only exists (but very substantially exists) in the embodied memory of friends and family. This relational complex of place and being is particularly illustrative of the way in which place is constructed and enlivened by these children in the moment on the spot. It could only exist in this way in this locality in this cultural context for this child in the act of reading at the moment that she describes the encounter to the ethnographer.

The ways in which localities are animated by their capacity to provide food was a feature of walks in all of the regions where we worked. It was striking that while foraging did not appear to have a significant impact on dietary needs in the United Kingdom, it certainly featured in children's memories of place, to varying degrees. In a fen village in East Anglia, children told us that "this is the place where we go to pick blackberries"; "good places for *akpik* (berry) picking" were also identified in Utqiagvik as valued sites of family activity, and in Ixtlán, curative plants, as well as edibles such as mushrooms are staples for many households. It is worth noting here that "subsistence" in Alaskan English in no way refers to the bare means to survive. Throughout the state, it is used to talk about the hunting and gathering activities which are profoundly associated with Alaska Native interspecies sociality. Being able to share in subsistence, for many people, is what it means to be Iñupiaq "Inupiaq food is social food," according to Fannie Akpik (Bodenhorn, 2000a); "it is what holds us together," according to whaling captain Patrick Attungana (1986).

Hunting also featured in East Anglian childhood memories. On one particular walk in the fenlands, we were joined by a parent who told us about hunting activity that took place there and invited the children who he knew to be involved to talk about it. However, these children were reluctant to join in the conversation and did not seem to associate positively with it as the children in Utqiagvik did.

Bodenhorn (1988, 1990, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2013) and Kishigami (2004), among others have been tracking the continuing centrality of hunting and gathering on the North

Slope of Alaska since the 1980s. As we have mentioned, the School Board has mandated the inclusion of Iñupiaq knowledge and practices in North Slope curricula. Takano et al. (2009) discuss the impact of these curricular interventions on young people's valuation of "their" places. Our data show the complex ways that subsistence continues to help animate places for children today. Indeed, when Bodenhorn asked the students of one class what they anticipated as the major challenge facing Utqiagvik in future, the responses from both Iñupiaq and non-Iñupiaq students focused on "food"; and that quickly became a discussion of shifts in the availability of local hunted species. It was the most engaged discussion she had over the course of a week—bringing in students who remained otherwise silent. What emerged during our group discussion of what makes Utqiagvik unique is the hyper-importance of whaling as a unifying activity. If the forest as communal patrimony is key to Ixtleco senses of collective self, it is whaling that provides that same feeling of collective pride in the Alaskan Arctic.

We think this invites quite a complex conversation about value which emerges through the conjunction of space, action, and relationality; a question which has been explored in the UK context focused on angling (Djohari et al. 2018). The value of fishing or hunting may be economic, but it cannot be reduced to economics, and Djohari et al. (2018) invoke phenomenological accounts of ways-of-being-in-the-world as a means of better understanding the relational knowledge of place that develops from knowing and coming to value a place through doing, as hunting would involve. This, we submit, has implications for learning processes more generally, particularly with reference to the push/pull relationship between "powerful universal knowledge" and locally specific knowledge.

Our conversations with students in Utqiagvik, as well as their interactions on walks, revealed their receptivity to local bearers of local knowledge of many kinds: relatives, whaling captains, local classroom aides, and young Iñupiaq scientists. On our arctic walk, we were accompanied by Qaiyaan Harcharak, a young Iñupiaq man who has been trained in natural sciences, works for the North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management, remains an active subsistence hunter, and is deeply knowledgeable about the region's history. He embodies the authoritative combination of multiple knowledge forms—from European precontact history learned in books to childhood memories of finding skulls of Spanish flu victims on the tundra to understanding the dangers of permafrost melt on ice cellars in the present. His effect on the young Iñupiaq students was electric. When asked what had particularly interested him during the walk, one young man replied, "Everything."

We have seen that sociality often animates locality—filling it with meaning for these youngsters in different ways and to differing degrees of intensity across our field sites. However, our material suggests that we should also recognize the importance of places where children feel safe to explore and investigate out of the range of adults. This is particularly true for the children we worked with in Alaska, where they were free to roam and play more or less anywhere. As we noted for Ixtlán as well, it seems that children often have their own cartography that may or may not be shared with adults from the same localities. In terms of the argument of this paper—that rural children have a deep knowledge of and strong attachment to their locality and that this is defined and created in many ways, some of which compare across cultures and some of which do not—this notion of a child cartography matters.

Villages in East Anglia, the North Slope of Alaska, and the Sierra Juárez are all made up of a combination of private domesticated spaces, spaces under the control of public institutions,

and areas held in common. In all three regions, schools are among the most disciplined spaces in town: access is controlled, time is regimented, and movement within the school is monitored. Utqiagvik and Ixtlán have curfews for young people. Houses are decidedly private spaces in all three regions, but not necessarily in the same way. In Ixtlán, most houses are demarcated by a gate, and visitors will not enter the territory until invited. Utqiagvik houses are marked neither by fences nor by gates, and it is not unusual to find children playing outside with scant regard for whose yard they are playing in. One would never enter a house unannounced, but the practice is to knock and open the door to see who is inside. Movement in town is unrestricted, and boundaries between "town" and "not town" are likewise unmarked so that access to the gravel pit and the beach is entirely open. Unlike East Anglia, there are no public places that are explicitly "off limits" to anyone, and unlike the Sierra, there are no places where adults agree children "should not" be found. Pleasure in the sociality of kinned relations was heavily emphasized by both Utqiagvik and Ixtlán students; the explicit valuing of unmonitored space in Utqiagvik is thus doubly interesting.

Regarding our work as a whole, some children were keen to talk about the far-off places they go on holiday, but their special places were most often close to home. Some of these were indoors, but the majority of their favorite spots were outdoors. While many students like to spend time in their own back gardens, they also enjoyed sites that were further afield: local playgrounds, sports fields, woods, or rivers. Usually these places were visited with family and friends, although children also talk about playing alone in dens and in quiet corners of their own gardens, suggesting how localities are animated and become places through relational engagements with others with/in and with them.

Conclusion

We noted at the outset research that documents the extent to which children's lives in many contexts have become more restricted, with a resulting diminution of environmental knowledge. In previous work, Irvine et al. (2016) and Irvine and Lee (2018) draw on material gathered from primary school children in East Anglia to challenge the comprehensiveness of these perceptions, showing that these pupils inhabit a social universe that extends into the outdoors.

The present paper has expanded those findings through a comparative framework. By engaging in an in-depth exploration of how children's special places come to be filled with meaning, we have explored the connections, rather than the disconnections with the outside, that characterize young people's worlds today.

Our methodological assumptions were that the processes through which meaning grows are simultaneously experiential, cognitive, affective, communicative, and, above all, dynamic. As we walked with students to the sites they had chosen to show us, we noticed how interactions with others and with particular places themselves seemed to "wake up" students to further observations and often in-depth exploratory discussion. Our awareness of that dynamism led us to our foundational question: what animates place for children?

In examining our material across East Anglia, Oaxaca, and Alaska, we were both looking for commonalities and trying to understand the impact of regional and cultural variation. Kitchen tables, bedrooms, and dens certainly appeared as safe, attractive spaces in student narratives across all regions. Nevertheless, in all of the schools where we worked, the predominance of places identified as special by these young people was outside. In all schools, we saw as well as heard about the sheer joy of unfettered movement—running, jumping, digging, leaping. And in all cases, we heard and saw the importance of relationalities for the ways in which these youngsters

processed meaning for themselves. As we have shown throughout this paper, what that means deserves unpacking. By relationality, we mean not only social relations between the children and the important humans in their worlds, but relations with other-than-human beings: animals in particular on the North Slope of Alaska; spirits, both good and bad, in the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca; and trees in the East Anglian villages. These relations end up constituting the children themselves and their identities; in post-humanist terms, their identities emerge through the intra-actions between child and others, including nonhuman others. We see that places can take on importance for their association with particular relationships—past and present as well as past-into-the-present (this is where my uncle taught me to drive a four-wheeler, I like to go to the cemetery to read to my grandfather). This is not necessarily restricted to human sociality. When the Ixtlán students talked about the association of the playground with spirits, this was experienced as a form of relationality strongly felt even when not asked for. Place mediates the social relations; the sociality is key and the place takes on importance because of that mediation.

Alternatively, we can see how sociality mediates the relation with place, but it is the place itself that becomes key. As we noted on our Ixtlán walks, knowledge about place may be learned through shared social activity in place. We noted that this sort of place-knowledge was often sparked by "being there," but expanded through shared conversation. This "snowball effect" of knowledge sharing and knowledge exploration was one of the most dynamic aspects to our walks. We note, too, different sorts of memory work being put into play: remembering where the good berry-picking places are leads to an activation of that knowledge in the present. Building a bonfire on the beach because that is where you used to come with your family is based on a different sort of nostalgia. Both sorts of memory, we emphasize, can play an important role in the generation of a personal sense of responsibility toward place. Places may be important as sites for storytelling—or they may be the subject of the stories themselves. And they may provide a sort of celebratory landscape which contributes to a sense of collective: the mountaintop where carnival is celebrated before the beginning of Lent in Ixtlán; the traditional Nalukataq beach site where the generosity of whales is celebrated through feast, dance, and blanket toss; and the site of the village fete—or perhaps the football pitch—in East Anglia.

In our introduction, we noted that all three regions where we worked are economically dependent on outdoor activities and we asked whether that importance seemed to play a role in placemaking. This was most evident in Barrow, where participation in subsistence activities was highly valued, both in relation to kinship networks and as contributing to a valued sense of Iñupiaq identity. In Ixtlán, students expressed pride in "their" forest as part of their communal identity; that pride seemed to derive from the place itself more than aspirational engagement with forestry, agriculture, or hunting. Although Ixtleco children were too young to take part, the single collective place-based activity that required committed labor and intimate topographical knowledge was firefighting, an explicit responsibility of all adult members of the communal organization. For many adults, this was felt to be an important factor in building up a sense of community. Becoming familiar with the mountainous terrain was thus key to becoming a full-fledged member of the community, but this was not yet part of children's conversations. As was more fully explored in Irvine and Lee (2018), the evident enjoyment East Anglian students felt for their special places seemed less directly connected to the economic activities of their families.

With our focus on the social/relational, we needed to be reminded by students that many of them had intense—nonsocial—relations with place itself. This was most evident in North Slope students' inclusion of their aesthetic appreciation of their surroundings.

Some of the most striking differences between our participating villages become evident in the ways children can navigate their dwelling places—a function not only of the social organization of property, but of local ideas of propriety, and giving a sense of that child cartography we described previously.

Our goals were thus two-pronged: how, through multiple modes of knowledge communication, can we come to an understanding of what animates place for children? Our approach to this question was largely informed by the anthropology of place. This in turn led us to ask what implications that material has for our understanding of effective education. Our conclusions likewise have anthropological as well as pedagogical implications. Keith Basso, as noted, called for an "ethnography of lived topography" in which "places and their sensings" could come into view. The work of Basso, Feld, Cruikshank, and Ingold already mentioned does exactly that. The contribution of the present work lies in our focus on the multiple ways in which children become aware of their lived topography through the process by which what we call a "child cartography" comes into being. Our focus is not on narrative, or affect, or walking, but on the intersectionality of all of these modes of apprehending the world. Here a childscape emerges that is a cartograph drawn from and by memory and embodied, relational, and affective ongoing engagement: a process of child cartography. In this way, we feel the present work contributes not only to the ethnography of place, but also the ethnography of childhood.

The implications for how education may be imagined that emerge from this are significant. The reactions of students on the walks, in classroom discussions, and with follow-up activities were engaged and intellectually lively, and showed immense curiosity about the world. From this, we are convinced that recognizing children's own knowledge not only makes issues "relevant," but bolsters children's confidence in their ability to think. It is important to recognize the numbers of ways such knowledge may be articulated. On another note, in a number of schools in the United Kingdom, "family" is being incorporated into the classroom. This, we think, can be expanded. The animating quality of relationality/spatiality that our walks revealed showed how broad a net that "kinshipping" can be: extended family, young adults, and community leaders all held the attention of our students in productive ways. This is not an either/or situation. Students were quite explicit that they enjoyed the combination of classroom and outside activities. The challenge is not so much how to find extra classroom expertise, but how to recognize and incorporate it into classroom education.

In sum, we have argued that what animates place for children includes relationalities (human and nonhuman), the intersection between embodied action and communication, material engagement with spaces, and the powerful dynamic that conjoins memory, knowledge, and present experience. We further suggest that these points matter for education, not only within and beyond the classroom walls in schools and other educational establishments, but also in the corridors and offices where policy is designed and enacted.

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