Raby Rebecca and Lehmann Wolfgang. 2021. Early teen-work assemblages and embedded dependence in *Forms of Collective Engagement in Youth Transitions: A Global Perspective* edited by Valentina Cuzzocrea, Ben Good and Bjørn Schiermer 49-68. Lieden: Brill.

Abstract:

This chapter aims to trouble the common linkage often made between work, independence and adulthood by emphasizing how young workers are embedded in human and non-human collectivities of interwoven dependences. We focus on two 16-year-old participants from conventional interview and photo elicitation interview data with 32 Canadian young people discussing their first part-time jobs, to we recognize how our participants, and indeed all of us, are embedded 'in the midst of an open-ended swirl of extensions and supplementations' (Lee 2001, 115). These entangled dependences can activate privilege; they also bolster the illusion of individual independence and autonomy. The intent of this chapter is to work with ideas from Actor Network Theorist Nick Lee and from Deleuze and Guattari to reveal this illusion, for we are all enmeshed in dependency. We particularly focus on four components of teen-work assemblages: family; time, space and bodies; tools/machinery, practices and roles; and capitals/money.

Keywords: part-time work, children, teenagers, assemblages, dependence, independence, life course

Index keywords: work, part-time work, school, family, transport, bodies, children, childhood, teenagers, assemblages, teen-work assemblages, dependence, independence, life course, privilege, capitals, affects, materialitiy, supplementations, extensions, collectivities, agency, photo-elicitation, fast-food

Introduction

This chapter focuses on very early part-time work to trouble the standard links among work, independence and adulthood (e.g. see Pitti 2017). We focus on how the individual independence and autonomy that is so valued with western capitalist societies is an illusion that is produced through our entangled human and non-human dependences. Our analysis is supported by conventional interview and photo-elicitation interview data with 32 Canadian young people. In these interviews, participants discussed their first part-time jobs. We focus here on two 16-year-olds from this group. Our chapter emphasises, through these case studies, how the semblance of young worker independence is embedded in human and non-human collectivities as interwoven dependences. This approach is thus different from understanding collectivities either as groups of people who come together under a set of shared values, or as groups coalescing to achieve specific goals.

Indeed, this chapter's focus could be seen to undermine or shift such conventional understandings of collectivities.

We take our theoretical coordinates from Nick Lee's use of actor network theory in the study of childhood (2001) and from Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the assemblage. Using their vocabulary and frameworks, we thus illustrate how a sense of independence, in this case among young workers, is supported and valorised through workplace assemblages that entail many activated 'supplementations' and 'extensions' (Lee 2001). *Supplementations* are additions or supports that help human movement through the world; similarly, *extensions* are forces which extend us (Lee 2001). Agency, in this approach, is no longer understood as something inherent in us, but an appearance of independence that increases with our extensions and the individualising narratives that mask these extensions. Reflecting on our interview data, we recognise how our participants, and indeed all of us, are embedded in assemblages and thus located within 'an open-ended swirl of extensions and supplementations' (Lee 2001, 115). This position directly challenges assumptions of independence and points to what can be understood as human and non-human enmeshment.

Further, we note that capabilities arising from supplementations and extensions are more accessible to some young workers than others, showing that early work assemblages are also interwoven with inequality and privilege. But we must note that early work, while often reflecting and developing supplementations and extensions that enhance an impression of agency and independence, can

undermine longer term processes of building supplementations and extensions through extended schooling.

Before explaining our methodology and embarking on our exploratory analysis, we review and discuss the idea of school-to-work transitions. We then locate this chapter theoretically by explaining Deleuze and Guattari's dynamic notion of assemblage (1989), especially as utilised by Lee (2001), outlining further what Lee means by supplementations and extensions, and tying ideas to related theorising of becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 1989) and agency (Lee 2001).

Scholarship around school-to-work transitions

Often life course scholars focus on key transitions, such as graduating from school, starting a job, getting married, and having children. The related concept of turning points refers to 'substantial change in the direction of one's life' (Elder et al., 2003, 8). Many of these transitions have been linked to an overall shift into a 'standard biography' of adulthood (Blatterer 2007, 37), but employment has garnered particular attention as the 'stage of life for which childhood prepares, and from which old age departs (Blatterer 2007, 38). The movement towards work and associated ideas of adult independence is particularly important in scholarly research into the school-to-work transition (e.g. see Schoon and Silbereisen 2009).

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari (1987), such normative transitional markers can be considered 'arborescent' or 'molar' in that they are linked to convention, hierarchy, and containment. Their overarching association with stable adulthood, in contrast to a developing child, became dominant in the mid-twentieth

century, with the post-war rise in the idea of stable, long-term employment (primarily for men) and the associated establishment of the welfare state (Lee 2001). The link between adulthood, independence and work is thus specific to a time and place. It also has exclusionary effects, alternatively positioning women, people with disabilities, the unemployed, the elderly and children outside of an ideal image of adulthood.

However, over the last few decades, individualisation theorists have argued (and many have worried) that such normative transitions have been undermined by economic uncertainty, deterioration of stable careers, neoliberal retreat from the welfare state, decline of collective bonds, a shift away from rigid life paths linked to set class and gendered expectations, and the concomitant rise of individualised life paths and individualised risk (Beck 1992; Beck and Gernsheim 2002). In other words, this new 'do-it-yourself' biography is also a 'risk biography' (Beck and Gernsheim 2002, 4). Individualisation, alongside precarious economies, is thus seen to make transition from dependent youth to independent adulthood more difficult now, especially in securing work. Independent adulthood, especially as defined through a concrete transition to stable work, thus also seems more elusive (Mills 2004).

While individualisation approaches have highlighted the effects of important economic and political shifts, some scholars have challenged the consequent decline in recognition of social structure. For instance, they have noted ongoing normative, transitional stability for some and precarity for others, linked to enduring social inequality (e.g. Furlong 2009; Lehmann 2004; Mills 2004; Furlong and Cartmel

1997; Rudd 1997); or have refined their analysis of individualisation to consider inequalities in the form of 'individualised systems of social capital' (Raffo and Reeves 2000, 51). Others challenge the idea that young people are disconnected from community through recognising current patterns of collaborative individualisation (Cuzzocrea and Collins 2015), where young people are individualised but also embracing communitarian ideas and collaborative projects. In other words, while recognising that life paths have changed since the mid-twentieth century, views vary on the extent to which individualisation has included a collapse of established forms of shared, structural inequality and collective response.

Further, both individualisation approaches and their detractors remain rooted in the centrality of a transition to independent adulthood. There is a persistent focus on acquiring work as a pivotal step in the journey towards adult independence and autonomy, even though getting and keeping work are processes very much complicated by recent individualising processes, and embedded in structures of inequality and privilege. This assumption makes sense given the significance of earning a wage in capitalist societies and associated everyday beliefs about independence. However, these beliefs and assumptions problematically assert a modernist conceptualisation of autonomous adulthood. In this chapter, we draw on assemblage, supplementations and extensions, and an alternative conceptualisation of agency to tackle some of these core assumptions about adulthood, work and independence, and to complicate popular ideas about school-to-work transitions.

Dismantling beliefs in an independent, self-presence of adulthood

Assemblage

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of assemblage (1987), particularly as deployed by Lee (2001), helps us to think about the extensive embeddedness of young people in their early work as a form of collective enmeshment. This approach constitutes a challenge to conventional dichotomies between child and adult, school and work, and dependence and independence. Assemblages are ongoing, integrated collections and processes of human and non-human forces – from the natural world around us to built environments, machinery, textiles, etc. – that are productive, relational, shifting, and distinct from their parts (Müller 2015). No one part of an assemblage is transcendent and therefore no hierarchy exists between the parts (Fox and Alldred 2017). Each of these forces is 'contingent and ephemeral' (Fox and Alldred 2017, 17), until gaining shape through these relational networks. Assemblages, in turn, can bring about diverse, multiple affects (Spyrou 2018). Affects can be considered flows of energy, forces, or capacities that are produced through an assemblage (Fox and Alldred 2017). Among these capacities, assemblages can *deterritorialise* (break structures, norms, assumptions, and other rigidities apart) and *reterritorialise* (create new stabilities).

Assemblages foreground our shifting, interconnected relationality, not just in terms of human relationships and collectivities but our enmeshment in systems, beliefs and materialities. Through the lens of assemblage, everything is embedded and interconnected: there is no external, humanist position of human autonomy or independence, and relations between humans are just one part of the assemblage.

This approach is also different from materialism because while it is essential to recognize matter as a force, matter is not prioritized over other components of an assemblage, including things like language and beliefs. In this chapter, assemblages thus help us disrupt the idea of a hierarchy of forces, the notion of a singular, unilinear transition, and the centrality of the autonomous, independent adult worker. We challenge these ideas in relation to young people, but the analysis can be generalised to everyone.

Agency and becoming

'Agency' is an idea embedded in modernist understandings of adulthood as independent and autonomous. It names the ability for adults to interpret the world around them and then consciously shape it. Sociologists of childhood have in turn argued that children should also be considered social agents, based on their ability to think for themselves and to act in ways that shape their environments (James and Prout 1990). Such approaches to agency, which are contingent on an essentialist, independent, humanist understanding of the self (Fox and Alldred 2017; St. Pierre 2000). have been challenged through poststructuralist and posthumanist theorizing. In this chapter, we focus on Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'becoming' and Lee's thinking agency as an actor-network theorist. These two approaches are distinct from each other, but both offer tools for understanding materiality's significance in assemblages, and what is consequently produced through our enmeshment in assemblages.

Deleuze and Guattari use the idea of becoming instead of agency, as their understanding of assemblages does not recognise human actors. Rather, affects are

produced through the myriad of forces coming together within assemblages, and consequent changes are becomings. Similarly, drawing on actor network theory, Lee (2001, 1998) argues that agency is not an independent possession, but a dependence produced through assemblages or networks. Indeed, Lee sees agency as both thwarted and made possible through networks of human and non-human actors. Lee suggests that, ironically, the more people seem agentic and self-present, the more interwoven they are with supplementations and extensions, thus we can see how seemingly autonomous agency emerges through incompleteness, connection, and dependence. As Lee argues 'instead of asking whether children, like adults, possess agency or not, we can ask how agency is built or may be built for them by examining the extensions and supplementations that are available to them' (2001, 131).

Supplementations and extensions

Supplementations and extensions are clearly integral to Lee's understanding of agency as it is through these that he discusses specific capacities produced through assemblages. Theorists like Parsons and Piaget suggested that the child must be supplemented and extended through adult support, guidance and a stable environment, but Lee argues (with others, e.g. see Prout and James 1991) that such an approach separates adults and children into distinct categories, reinforces power over children, and homogenises children (2001). Instead Lee argues that we *all* require supplementations and extensions to establish our seeming independence and self-presence (the ability to know and speak for ourselves), both of which are particularly important within our current, individualised culture.

One way to think about this idea is in terms of how the complex and interdependent processes of food production (including solar energy, cultivation of soil, the work of earthworms, machinery, and other farm labour), transport (including shipping and road systems, vehicles, drivers, border processes), and marketing and health and safety processes, along with forms of education, income, loans, and banking systems, and so forth, give the impression that someone is independently buying a meal and thus bolstering the illusion of autonomy. Really the individual is embedded in a broad, interwoven assemblage of human and non-human networks. Lee similarly argues that as more supplementations and extensions are added to children's networks, the more independently agentic they may seem to be (and may feel). He uses the example of video-cameras and supportive social workers in child witnessing to 'help children to produce their testimony' (Lee 2001, 130) – these devices and people act as extensions to bolster child witnesses' self-presence. The seeming agency that the children thus present is produced through an assemblage, but as Lee also points out, these processes are staged such that this mediation is masked (Lee 1989).

Supplementations and extensions thus undermine the idea of the adult as wholly stable and complete and the child as an incomplete becoming, characterisations that have been used to elevate certain adults and to dismiss, manage, and support children: rather, we are all embedded in assemblages or networks that can differentially (and unequally) supplement and extend. As Lee explains, 'supplementation and mediation are constant features of human life' (2001, 113). This position does not mean that certain physical and psychological

differences between adults and children are irrelevant – these are integral parts of assemblages – but all of us are embedded in physical and psychological shifts. We are all embedded in different types and amounts of supplementations and extensions at different points in our lives, and these in turn produce different capacities.

In this chapter we explore how various supplementations and extensions in teen-work assemblages[1] can be seen as part of certain young people's assemblages in ways that appear to indicate independence and autonomy. Teen-work assemblages can include such heterogeneous components as beliefs (e.g. about childhood/adulthood, school/work, dependence/independence, and being/becoming); family support systems; buildings, geographic places and transport systems, including roadways and public transport; physical, growing bodies and their capacities; workplace tools/machinery; workplace hierarchies, regulations, uniforms, practices, and relationships; and resources, capitals and money. We can think about the components of specific teen-work assemblages, and ask how supplementations and extensions may be activated within them, how they may differ between children and adults, and how some are more or less visible and prioritised. We can also ask what resources support certain children's supplementations and extensions, and what capacities they produce, including the capacity to reveal or to mask our collective enmeshment.

---

[1] We use the term 'teen-work assemblages' to refer to our participants' location within certain kinds of workplace assemblages. We use the term 'teen' to reference the age range of our participants, who were in their teenage years and thus still in secondary school, and also to captured the varied forms of part-time work that the participants were involved in.

Methodology

The data in this chapter arise from a pilot study involving qualitative, open-ended interviews we conducted in 2016 with 32 Canadian young people from two provinces about their very first part-time jobs. Our youngest participant was 11 and our oldest was 17, but most were 14-16; they came from a range of class backgrounds and most of them were white. Participants were located through word-of-mouth and advertising, and we were open to talking about any kind of job, including things like babysitting and snow-shovelling. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded conventionally for themes. Those involved in an interview were then invited to participate in a second component, in which they brought work-related photographs (but not photos from a formal workplace) to a follow-up interview. Twelve participants did the follow-up portion. This photo-elicitation component (e.g. see Böök & Mykkänen 2014; Cappello 2005) was particularly significant to our understanding of their human and non-human assemblages, and drew our attention to supplementations and extensions.

Another concept that is useful to draw on here is new materialist scholar Karen Barad's understanding of 'agential cuts' (2003). Assemblages are post-human in that they are about our constant interconnection with everything around us, illustrating how nature and culture are thoroughly enmeshed, and always in motion. We cannot, therefore, stand apart from what it is that we are studying; as researchers, we are thoroughly embedded in these shifting assemblages, affecting and affected by them. Barad thus argues that when we try to contain and seemingly

freeze an ontological entanglement to discuss and analyse it, we are implicated in what is being produced, and thus performing 'agential cuts.'

In this chapter, through such agential cuts, we concentrate our focus on two white, middle class, 16-year-old participants from Southern Ontario who were part of our larger sample: Zach and Michelle. Both were from the same small city, had done several part-time jobs, and had experience working in fast food. Both also had separated parents. Although these were not unusual participants, we were drawn to focus on them because they both participated in the photo-elicitation component and included workplace images they had found on the internet. Their transcripts provided particularly rich description that intrigued us in the complexity of relations they illustrated. Also, like most of our participants, Zach and Michelle moved in and out of paid work,[2] but in notably different ways from each other. In what follows we will talk about each of their narratives as outlining a distinct, shifting teen-work assemblage, seemingly frozen in our analysis (Spyrou 2018). We will focus on four components of Zach and Michelle's teen-work assemblages that illustrate supplementations and extensions that shatter perceptions of independence and autonomy. First, however, we provide a brief description of Zach and Michelle's work lives.

Zach had a job delivering newspapers door-to-door for a short time when he was 12 and more recently worked in a fast-food restaurant for six months. At the

---

[2] As we had advertised for young people to talk about their first jobs we had expected participants to each talk about a singular first job, but it quickly became clear that many had done informal work, such as babysitting, in the past but had not at first counted that as work, or had already changed jobs. Further, many participants were working in more than one job at the same time.

time of the interviews he had just stopped working because the hours were having negative consequences on his schoolwork. He was also passionate about computer programming: most of his earnings went towards computer parts, and he was hoping to go to university to study computer science. Michelle was more heavily invested in paid work than Zach. When she was about eight or nine, she helped her older brother with his paper route, and then got her own when she was ten. She also worked occasionally as a babysitter. Most of our interviews were spent talking about her recent work at a fast-food restaurant, a job she had quit just two months before our interview to take a new job at a pharmacy. Through school, she also had an unpaid co-op placement working with children. Michelle had just got her driver's licence and was very focused on earning money to buy a car to more efficiently get to and from work. She was hoping to eventually enrol in a college-level funeral services programme.

Overall, both Zach and Michelle, like other young people we interviewed, break down any idea of a singular, work-based, school-to-work, teen-to-adult transition. Like many of our other participants, they moved back and forth into and out of part-time work, and between different kinds of work, pulled and pushed by the various supplementations, extensions, but also challenges of their teen-work assemblages. The uneven school-to-work trajectories outlined by Zach and Michelle are not at all unique to them. Many young people in Canada work, sometimes very long hours, before completing their high school education. Further, uneven trajectories continue as numerous young people move in and out of work while acquiring post-secondary certification, and many people return to post-secondary

schooling across their working lives, especially with the erosion of singular, secure careers (Schoon and Silbereisen 2009; Blatterer 2007).

Through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Zach and Michelle's shifting teen-work assemblages can be seen to deterritorialise any kind of rigid dichotomies of school-to-work transitions, and binaries of child/adult, school/work and dependence/independence. It is interesting to note, however, that while their experiences dismantle a rigid school-to-work transition, they nonetheless emphasised an ideal trajectory from things like newspaper delivery and babysitting into fast food and then hoping to move into retail (this was indeed Michelle's trajectory). This pattern can thus also be seen as reterritorialising, or creating new, linear, hierarchies.

Teen-work assemblages and associated extensions

We now look at forms of supplementations/extensions produced through Michelle and Zach's teen-work assemblages, assemblages that included, among myriad components: family and peers; workplace settings, tools/machinery, processes and co-workers; workplace timetables and transport systems; bodies; discursive frameworks of becoming adult; beliefs about competitive individualism; school processes including testing and timetables; and capitals. We only focus on some of these components here, outlined in four subsections: family; time, space and bodies; tools/machinery, practices and roles; and capitals/money. First, however, we note our participants' reproduction and disruption of the association between work and independence.

Many of our participants embraced work as bringing positive feelings of responsibility and autonomy, reflecting their immersion in ideas that equate work with independence and movement towards adulthood and western, neoliberal beliefs that position individuals as unfettered by dependences or collectivities. For example, as Michelle explained when talking about why she works:

> I can't speak for everyone but I think, like for me I just, I think I just wanna like grow up as fast as I can, like [...] some people are like 'oh, stay as young as you possibly can' (right)[3] but like, like I just want to have like, I don't know, I just want to be responsible (hmmm), I just want to be like, able to pay for things myself, like be able to go wherever I want (right) whenever I want, like be able to be just like on my own time just like, I don't know, just have like your sense of freedom but like be responsible and just be able to, like do everything on your own like I just want to be like stable and just, I don't know.

In this excerpt Michelle associates work with growing up, responsibility, independence, autonomy, freedom and stability. Yet alongside this kind of framing of early work, as we describe below, there are numerous ways that Michelle's teen-work assemblage is a collection of supplementations and extensions that in turn produce these feelings and possibilities (Lee 2001). Michelle's narrative of contributing to her expenses and thus gaining independence in itself can also be considered a discursive extension, enmeshed with the materialities around her, that

---

[3] Words in brackets indicate comments by the interviewer.

facilitated Michelle's involvement in work. This was a pattern we saw across several interviews.

Arguably, one of Zach's comments exposed the relevance of familial extensions. Zach suggested that his work was not really about adulthood because he was driven to and from his workplace so 'it felt like a summer camp […] cuz, like I didn't have to drive myself, I'm not living on my own, I'm not paying my own bills and stuff, it's just like, it's almost like something I just do instead of being at home, you know?' Zach's comments locate his body in specific spaces – notably his family home and going to camp, reference resources and transport, and include the passage of time as part of his teen-work assemblage to indicate a child-like dependence. Rather than assuming these forces to be interweaving interdependence and work life, however, Zach's views reproduce a dominant equation of adulthood, work and independence that is unobtainable for him as long as he requires parental assistance.

Family and friends

Among our larger pool of participants, processes of getting, keeping and even leaving their first jobs were interwoven with advice, engagement and material support from parents (especially mothers), grandparents, siblings, and friends. This was also the case for Zach and Michelle. It is this kind of interdependence that Zach connects to childhood, as many others likely would as well. The prominent role of family members in teen-work assemblages can be considered an obvious, familiar, and conventionally understood form of collective enmeshment, pointing to young people's dependences when they first start working and undermining participants'

narratives that 'early work' = independence. These collective supports also point to the advantages that some young people have when they first begin work, as certain families are more likely to have the time and resources to provide such supplementations and extensions.

In our first interview, Zach described how his mom helped him get his first newspaper delivery job, and then to navigate that job:

I honestly think my mom did it (right), or not did it but she like called them, like 'my sons want a paper route' and then this person actually came to our house for like, this like pseudo-interview type thing (oh) [...] and then [pause] she like, she asked me like two questions and then she's like 'okay, you have a paper route' and walked away. [...] Honestly, my mom like, I was young so my mom... maybe if there was, like they needed, like a social insurance number or something (right) my mom probably handled all that, like paperwork (right) and stuff so yeah, but as far as I was concerned they asked me like three questions (and you got the job), and they're like 'okay' yeah.

From this excerpt we see that Zach's mom was very involved in coordinating his first job. She also advised him about safety issues when delivering his papers, like telling him to avoid one back alley, and she organised his pay to go directly into his bank account. Michelle's mom similarly helped her manage her money, which Michelle spoke about positively:

so I take [my pay] out in cash and then I just give it to my mom (and she puts it in the bank) and then, yeah, she writes, well we have a bank book, so she

writes it in the bank book and then she goes (ah) and she'll put it into her like, that account, so they made like a 'Michelle's car fund' kind of thing. In these examples about managing their earnings, Zach and Michelle are reliant on their mothers, but also payment, banking and accounting systems that have affects and enable capacities. These are the kinds of enmeshments that produce the capacity for seemingly independent future purchases, which will be discussed in the next few sections.

Many participants, embedded in the rigidity of timetables, the challenges of workplaces being geographically distant from their homes, inadequate transit systems, and being too young to get a driver's licence, found it difficult to get to work or to attend to their schooling. When Zach was working at Burgers Plus several years after having had his paper route, he relied on his parents to take him to work and to pick him up, for instance. He also consulted his mom about leaving his job at Burgers Plus when his employers required him to be out too late on school nights. Michelle's parents were also able to participate in meeting timetable and geographic demands to support her work. Her mom paid for her bus pass and driving lessons, and her step-dad was helping her find a car to buy. Michelle brought a photo-copied image of a Chrysler Jeep Liberty to her photo-elicitation interview to facilitate an extended discussion about her need for a car to work more effectively and her aspirations for this particular 'dream' car.

More broadly then, Zach and Michelle are embedded in assemblages of enmeshed components that include family relationships and guidance, discourses of domesticity, money management, and transport strategies. So far in this discussion,

while adult workers may also rely on such familial and friend networks, these parts

of a teen-work assemblage might seem most relevant to young people because they

reinforce binaries of child/parent and dependence/independence, requiring the

supplementations and extensions of parents and other family members. These

supplementations and extensions (e.g. parental intervention and guidance, a

parent's car) enable Zach and Michelle to have jobs that bring pay, status and

feelings of capability, and to imagine purchasing a vehicle. These familial extensions

can, therefore, be considered dependences – and therefore links to human

collectivities – that in turn facilitate the guise of independence (as per Lee 2001).

They are also dependencies that not all young people have access to. As we argue in

this chapter, however, all workers are embedded in such dependences, not only

young workers in their earliest part-time jobs. The ubiquity of such dependences,

and the force of non-human materialities in work assemblages become more

evident in the remaining subsections.

Time, space, and bodies

The above focus on family and friends concentrates primarily on human

interdependences, although we also briefly touched on various inter-twining

materialities, components of teen-work (and other work) assemblages that we now

discuss more deeply. Managing workplace timetables, locations, and activities is not

just about relationships with a supporting cast of parents, grandparents, siblings or

friends.

As we touched on above, navigation of time and space was integral to the

teen-work assemblages that we studied. Bodies were also part of these assemblages.

Workplace timetables can be both rigid and unpredictable; and they tend to be created to meet the needs of the workplace rather than the worker. Getting their bodies to and from work is about time and space, and navigating between work and school. Time governs work shifts, and produces both bored bodies and frenetically working bodies, as time regulates both workers' productivity and expectations of them in different workspaces. Time is also integral to whether a young person is seen as old enough to work. In this section, we specifically focus on young workers' bodily enmeshment in time and space as they get to work and learn to do their jobs.

In the previous section we talked about family members driving young workers to and from far-flung workplaces. These journeys across time and space do not just involve drivers, but vehicles that are made, sold, purchased, maintained, fuelled with gasoline, and driven over specific roadways that are eroded by weather, maintained and policed. In this way we can see numerous vehicle-related components and dependences producing young people as workers. Michelle's longing for a Jeep was about longing for the efficiency, independence and status she thought it would bring, especially due to challenges she faced with public transport.

Some participants also drew on bus systems, which can be considered more obviously collective supports or dependences than private cars. For instance, to deal with getting to and from work, Michelle had tried to arrange carpooling with a friend, and she also talked at great length about navigating bus routes, which acted as supplementations and extensions. One of the images she brought to her photo-elicitation interview was a map of the local bus system. As we poured over it together and she explained her typical afternoon schedule, Michelle's description

evoked the intertwined components of school and work timetables, the clock on her cell phone, the geography of her school-work day, the lay-out of her city, and the bus schedule. As Michelle explained:

> And so I had to, so I got home at 3 o'clock and then I have to get on the bus at 3:36, but I have to walk to the bus stop (mhmm) so I had to leave my house at like 3:10. So I got like 10 minutes to rush around and get all my stuff together and then I get to my shift for 5 o'clock [and] sometimes I didn't get off until like 11 (when her mom would pick her up).

Michelle also reminded us that she must respond to the demands of her body by finding some food in this short space of time between school and work. Bodies are thus another force in this assemblage, including the specificity of Michelle's teen body that, through numerous other interconnected assemblages, is sufficiently grown, able-bodied and healthy to allow her to physically get to work by taking the bus, and the cultural context of her age which allows her to be seen as able to both take the bus alone and legitimately work for pay. The interwoven human and non-human components of Michelle's teen-work assemblage outlined in this subsection are the kinds of networks of dependences that we see in all work assemblages. These networks can also activate privilege, e.g. when we consider when and where roadways and public transportation systems are maintained and accessible, and which teenage bodies are considered employable.

Our second example that ties into time, space and bodies, is about safety and training. Like other research on early work, our interviews pointed to the importance of training (e.g. Breslin, Koehoorn, and Cole 2009; Tucker and Tucker

2015) and indicated incidences where there was a lack of training (often as workers were shifted from various tools/machinery and routines to other ones – especially in fast food). Training takes time and prepares young workers' bodies for different workspaces; it is also related to time because it is an investment in long-term capacities. Training can thus be considered a supplementation in that it can extend the competence of workers, and shape possibilities for future employment, although it can also be linked to managerial surveillance and control.

While many participants spoke about getting training on the job, there were also various examples of insufficient training. Michelle, for instance, described being transferred to a work-station at The Burger Place that she was not trained for, and consequences in terms of her service times:

> Like one time I had to stay and cover someone's shift, so I was there until like, one in the morning I'd say, and she was like 'okay so Michelle, you can go on sandwiches' and I was like 'uhhh, I don't know how to do sandwiches' she's like 'well you have to go on it.' […] then they're yelling at me because the service times are high. I'm like well what'd you expect? You put someone who doesn't know how to do anything on sandwiches but they don't have any time to teach anyone.

Michelle also talked about how later, when she worked at the drugstore, they sent her many documents about safety. She and her friend went through them together, identifying all the things that were not done right at The Burger Place. Zach similarly talked with concern about having to take over a station during a busy shift, even though he had not been trained on that station. In these examples, we can see how

training, including safety training, is a less obvious extension and supplement that can enable a worker's security, confidence and competence, that this information can be shifted from one teen-work assemblage to another, and how peer-relations can also be extensions. In these examples we can see how information and time are part of workplace assemblages, producing forms of becoming, including becoming competent. These components again point to our collective enmeshment in human and non-human relations, from educators, trainers and managers, to clocks, pamphlets, and machinery.

Workplace tools/machinery, practices and roles

Workplace tools/machinery, practices, roles and related interactions with co-workers determined and structured participants' work, produced their identity as workers, measured out their time, and illustrated their roles and capacities in relation to others. Many of these components of their teen-work assemblage acted as supplementations/extensions. The young people we talked with were integrated into the workplace tools/machinery, routines, and hierarchies which together produced the workplace, managed their working bodies, and again facilitated their guise of independence.

For our photo-elicitation interview with Zach, he brought an internet image of a fry station on his cell phone, and explained how it worked:

Yeah, so what you'd do is you'd like, put the baskets under this thing [gestures towards the picture] and like, pre-, it would like press the pedal and then fries would fall into it and you'd like, put them in this thing and press a button (so it's already premeasured) yeah […] and then you press a

button and then it goes for three minutes and then it goes back to this one or

(does a little bell go off or anything telling you it's time to…?). Yeah, it, it

beeps.

Zach and the machine are interwoven together in their production of food: the machine and Zach are responsive to each other, becoming together, and delimiting each others' possibilities. In this example, Zach can thus be seen as embedded in a human-non-human assemblage. Zach also talked about both the opportunities to sometimes eat the fries, and some of the risks involved in the fry machine, describing a time when another worker was burnt by hot oil.

Michelle also explained the movement, attention, and alienation that were effects of her fast-paced, demanding teen-work assemblage of workplace tools and systems:

You have to, like you're constantly busy, like, I was, I was on grill and I was

doing two different kinds of meat. I was doing three different chickens, I was

doing fries, I was doing potatoes, like, all at once, everyone's screaming at

you, buttons are beeping. Like you're trying to get the service time as low as

you possibly can or else the managers going to be mad at you.

In this example from Michelle, we can see how some workplace tools/machines can be considered as extensions (such as a grill, a fryer, or headphones), as they produce competence, but these tools/machinery also participate in managerial surveillance, control, and workers' subjection. They are thus components of an assemblage that together produce certain power relations.

In contrast to the intense, fast-paced demands of the fast-food teen-work assemblage, Michelle's drugstore teen-work assemblage produced a different, more relaxed kind of pace that allowed for and was enhanced by relationships with customers: 'So I like how it's like, I can take my time and all the customers, the little old ladies coming in, they're like 'oh don't worry about it sweetie, take your time' [interviewer laughs] and all I have to do is ring out their prescription, right? (Right).' As we saw in the previous section, time, space and bodies are also integral components of workplace tools/machinery, practices and roles, producing certain workplace affects.

Through such workplace assemblages, we are part of the machine and the machine is part of us, as we see in Deleuze and Guattari's example of the horse, stirrup and rider, operating together (1987). In the above example, we can think of the tools/machinery of the teen-work assemblage as molar and subjecting, but also as components within the assemblage, producing relational, collective extensions that provide the feeling and suggestion of independence, as well as competence.

Capitals/money:

In the first example of family as human components of a teen-work assemblage, family resources play a role. Economic capital, social capital and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1983, 2001; see also Raffo and Reese 2000 on social capital) are parts of teen-work assemblages. We are not using capital here as things that certain bodies possess, but instead we draw on Fox and Alldred (2017) to see these capitals as components of specific teen-work assemblages that create capacities that also produce inequalities. Economic capital can include vehicles parents drive to take

children to work, parental time to drive children to work, and the economic

resources that allow teen-work to be optional. Social capital is produced through

human relationships including collective groups or associations. In this sense,

assemblages that include parental connections to employers might be considered

components of teen-work assemblages that create capacities. Cultural capital

manifests through material components of the assemblage that have significance to

those within a group, including bodily comportment that resonates with an

employer in the context of an interview and presentation of self that employers

prefer in a workplace (e.g. see Besen-Cassino on class, race and brand-name

products in retail work, 2014)

Among some participants, jobs in turn produced the financial resources to

build friendships (e.g. Zach who took his friend to the movies), to facilitate working

(e.g. Michelle saving for a car to get to work), to contribute to personal and family

needs (e.g. Michelle buying her own shoes and Zach investing in multiple computer

parts, which he illustrated through images that he brought to the photo-elicitation

interview), to save for further education, and to represent adulthood (e.g. Michelle

saying that earning money represents responsibility and independence).

Through looking at such resources, we can also recognise differences

between the teen-work assemblages that Michelle and Zach presented, leading to

specific affects, capacities, and pathways: Michelle embraced multiple forms of work

and associated hopes for adult independence, and she sought to expand her teen-

work assemblage (and thus dependences) to include private transport and more

lucrative work. In buying a car, Michelle will reduce her reliance on certain

supplementations (her parents and public transport) and will deepen her agency through her enmeshment in a new set of assemblages with different supplementations and dependences as she will be needing more money, buying gas, getting the car serviced, relying on roadways, etc. Zach, in contrast, noted his extensions as dependences linked to childhood and had withdrawn from his teen-work assemblage to focus on school, with the anticipation of going into computer science (which can be seen as a longer-term supplementation).

While the concept of the assemblage challenges the notion of top-down, overarching social structure, or that certain people have resources and privileges that are meaningful outside of assemblages, we are arguing here that capitals, resources and consequent privileges and inequalities are integrated components of assemblages and their affects. In our analysis, we have illustrated how resources are relevant to the availability of many extensions and supplements that support seeming independence, particularly in terms of parental support, transport and advice, but also through things like the maintenance of safe machinery in workplaces. Such resources do not always need to be private and exclusive, however, as we see with the significant relevance of quality public transit in teen-work assemblages and if we consider the importance of enhanced safety training through public education. It is also necessary to point out the irony that early work can undermine longer-term school-work assemblages by preventing young people from incorporating certain kinds of extensions that produce the capacity become more secure, upwardly mobile workers, e.g. through school, extracurricular engagements.

Conclusion: Dependent agency

We have outlined various examples of how Michelle, Zach, and other young workers are embedded in teen-work assemblages, and how their semblance of burgeoning independence, so valued in the west, is produced through these assemblages. This production is especially clear if we think about aspects of those assemblages as supplementations and extensions. We have argued that young workers are embedded in shifting teen-work assemblages that undermine the idea of a neat school-to-work transition that represents a clear shift into adult independence and autonomy. Rather than seeing agency as a possession linked to adult-like traits such as self-presence and autonomy, here agency is produced through assemblage (Lee 2001), recognising that humans are not separate, detached actors but are embedded in networks – or collectivities – of dependence that in turn can make us seem independent. Not all cultural traditions attempt to mask this dependence, but this is the case within much western thinking and practice.

A shift from school to work is frequently understood as a key transition in life course scholarship, with this transition considered a pivotal step towards adult independence. Individualisation theorists have contended that social changes away from predictable life paths have complicated school-to-work transitions, creating both more opportunity and more individualised risk, although others point to the ongoing relevance of enduring social inequality or highlight young people's persistent investments in collectivities. However, across these different orientations to life course scholarship, and echoed in popular beliefs, employment is persistently

linked to independent adulthood. While there is logic to this argument, given the importance of an income, in this chapter we have challenged this conceptualisation of autonomous adulthood.

Our embedded interconnections are difficult to recognise in our individualised social context, and this was the case for many of our participants who framed work, as others do, as movement towards independent, autonomous adulthood (Raby et al. 2018). Following Lee (2001), as more extensions and supplementations were evident in participants' networks, participants were apparently seen by themselves and others as increasingly agentic, self-present and autonomous. There was a limit to this pattern, however. For instance, if parents are overly present as extensions this can undermine the impression of independence – as happened when Zach was getting driven to work. Part of the work of extensions in fostering agency and independence, as Lee points out, is that they cannot be obvious. Finally, certain components of teen-work assemblages can activate privilege.

References

Barad Karen. 2003. Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28(3): 801-831.

Beck Ulrich. 1992. *Risk Society*. London: Sage.

Beck Ulrich and Beck-Gernsheim Elisabeth. 2002. Losing the traditional: Individualization and 'precarious freedoms' in *Individualization: Institutionalized individualism and its social and political consequences* edited by Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim 1-18. London: Sage.

Besen-Cassino Yasmin. 2014. *Consuming work: Youth labor in America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Blatterer Harry. 2007. *Coming of age in times of uncertainty*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Böök Marjla Leena and Mykkänen Johanna. 2014. Photo-narrative processes with children and young people. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies 5*(4.1):611-628.

Bourdieu Pierre. 1983, 2001. The Forms of Capital. In *The sociology of economic life* (Second edition) edited by Mark Granovetter and Richard Swedberg 96–111. Cambridge MA: Westview Press.

Breslin F. Curtis, Koehoorn Mieke, and Cole Donald. (2008). Employment patterns and work injury experience among Canadian 12-14 year-olds. *Canadian Journal of Public Health 99*:201-205.

Cappello Marva. 2005. Photo interviews: Eliciting data through conversation with children. *Field Methods 17*(2):170-182.

Cuzzocrea Valentina and Rebecca Collins. 2015. Collaborative Individualization? Peer-to-peer action in youth transitions. *Young* 23(2):136-153.

Deleuze Gilles and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis.

Elder Glen H Jr, Johnson Monica Kirkpatrick and Robert Crosnoe. 2003. The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory. In *Handbook of the life course* edited by Jeylan T. Mortimer and Michael J. Shanahan 3-19. Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers: New York.

Fox Nick and Alldred Pam. 2017. *Sociology and the new materialism: Theory, research, action*. London: Sage.

Furlong Andy. 2009. Revisiting transitional metaphors: reproducing social inequalities under the conditions of late modernity. *Journal of Education and Work* 22(5):343-353.

Furlong Andy and Cartmel Frank. 1997. *Young people and social change: Individualization and risk in late modernity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

James Allison and Prout Allan. 1990. *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood.* London: Falmer Press.

Lee Nick. 2001. *Childhood and society: Growing up in an age of uncertainty*. Open University Press: Maidenhead.

_____. 1998. Towards an Immature Sociology. *The Sociological Review* 46(3):458-
482.

Lehmann Wolfgang. 2004. 'For Some Reason I Get a Little Scared': Structure, agency,
and risk in school-work transitions. *Journal of Youth Studies* 7(4):379-396.

Mills Melinda. 2004. Demand for Flexibility or Generation of Insecurity? The
individualization of risk, irregular work shifts and Canadian youth. *Journal of
Youth Studies* 7(2):115-139.

Müller Marin. 2015 Assemblages and Actor-networks: Rethinking Socio-material
Power, Politics and Space. *Geography Compass* 9(1):27-41.

Pitti Ilaria. 2017. What Does Being an Adult Mean? Comparing young people's and
adults' representations of adulthood. *Journal of Youth Studies* 20(9):1225-
1241.

Prout Alan and James Allison. 1991. A New paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood?
Provenance, Promise and Problems. In *Constructing and reconstructing
childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of children* edited by
Allison James and Alan Prout 7-34. London: Falmer Press.

Raby Rebecca, Lehmann Wolfgang, Helleiner Jane and Easterbrook Rachel. 2018. 'I'll
be more prepared than most people': Young people talking about their first jobs/
Childhood 25(2):237-252.

Raffo Carlo and Reeves Michelle. 2000. Youth Transitions and Social Exclusion:
Developments in social capital theory. *Journal of Youth Studies* 3(2):147-166.

Rudd Peter. 1997. From Socialization to Postmodernity: A review of theoretical perspectives on the school-to-work transition. *Journal of Education and Work* 10(3): 257-279.

Spyrou, Spyros. 2018. *Disclosing childhoods: Research and knowledge production for a critical childhood studies*. Palgrave Macmillan.

St.Pierre Elizabeth Adams. 2000. Poststructural feminism in education: An overview. *Qualitative Studies in Education* 13(5):477-515.

Tucker Sean and Turner Nick. (2015). 'Sometimes it Hurts When Supervisors Don't Listen': The antecedents and consequences of safety voice among young workers. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 20(1):72-81.