

LSE ANTHROPOLOGY

2022/2023

SUMMER ETHNOGRAPHY PROJECTS



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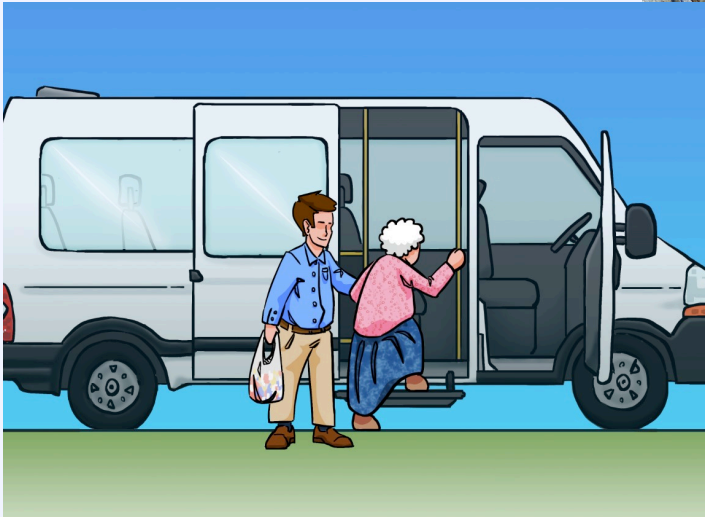
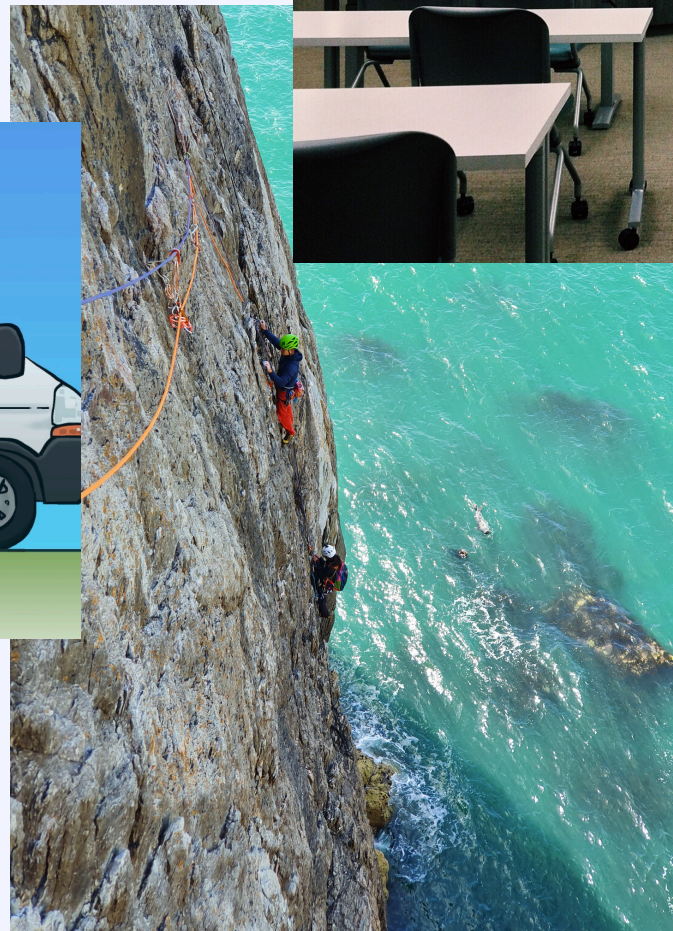


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MORE THAN A TO B: CREATING COMMUNITIES OF CARE THROUGH MOBILITY

An ethnographic account of a community transport charity:

I would like to introduce you to Alison. Alison is an elderly resident of the small village Farleyham. In her village, there is a convenience store, but no other shops. Her son lives in a city two hours drive away with his family. Her friends live scattered across the surrounding villages. Alison does not drive – she is now too elderly to feel confident on the roads, and as the years go on her walking distance shrinks. She wants to do her shopping at the shopping centre in Harlow, 30 minute drive from Farleyham. Here, there is a choice of supermarkets, as well as a bank, post office, and clothes and other shops to browse. However, there are no public buses running through Farleyham. Alison must find other transport.

While the above is a fictional person in a fictional Essex village, it is typical of the situation which I found many of my interlocutors to be in, as I undertook participant observation with Epping Forest Community Transport (EFCT), a charity providing mobility to elderly, disabled, or rurally isolated people in Essex. It has been acknowledged that we now live in a ‘world for cars’, caused by a ‘spatial fragmentation between home, workplace, shops, and services’ (Gray et al, 2006: 92), and this is clearer nowhere than rural communities. At the same time, public transport to these areas is being cut and stripped back, leading to an isolation of those who can not, or do not drive. This is often young, elderly, or disabled people. Community based responses, such as community transport charities, are providing much needed transport to counter the ‘poverty of access’ (ibid: 89) experienced by non-car users in a world of cars.

Flora
Cooknell

The project:

My research was motivated by two key questions:

Firstly, a question born of years of personal frustration – **how do you exist in the countryside if you don't drive?** While in London we are used to the continual flow of buses, growing up in rural Somerset, there was one hourly bus that came to my village, and went to one place. The unreliability and seeming capriciousness of this service led to many frustrating hours sat on pavements, waiting.

When considering my Summer Ethnographic Project, questions of rurality were at the forefront of my mind, and I decided to focus on issues of mobility, which highlight key areas of rural inaccessibility and poverty, backgrounded by a receding of the state, as bus services are cut with few replacements.

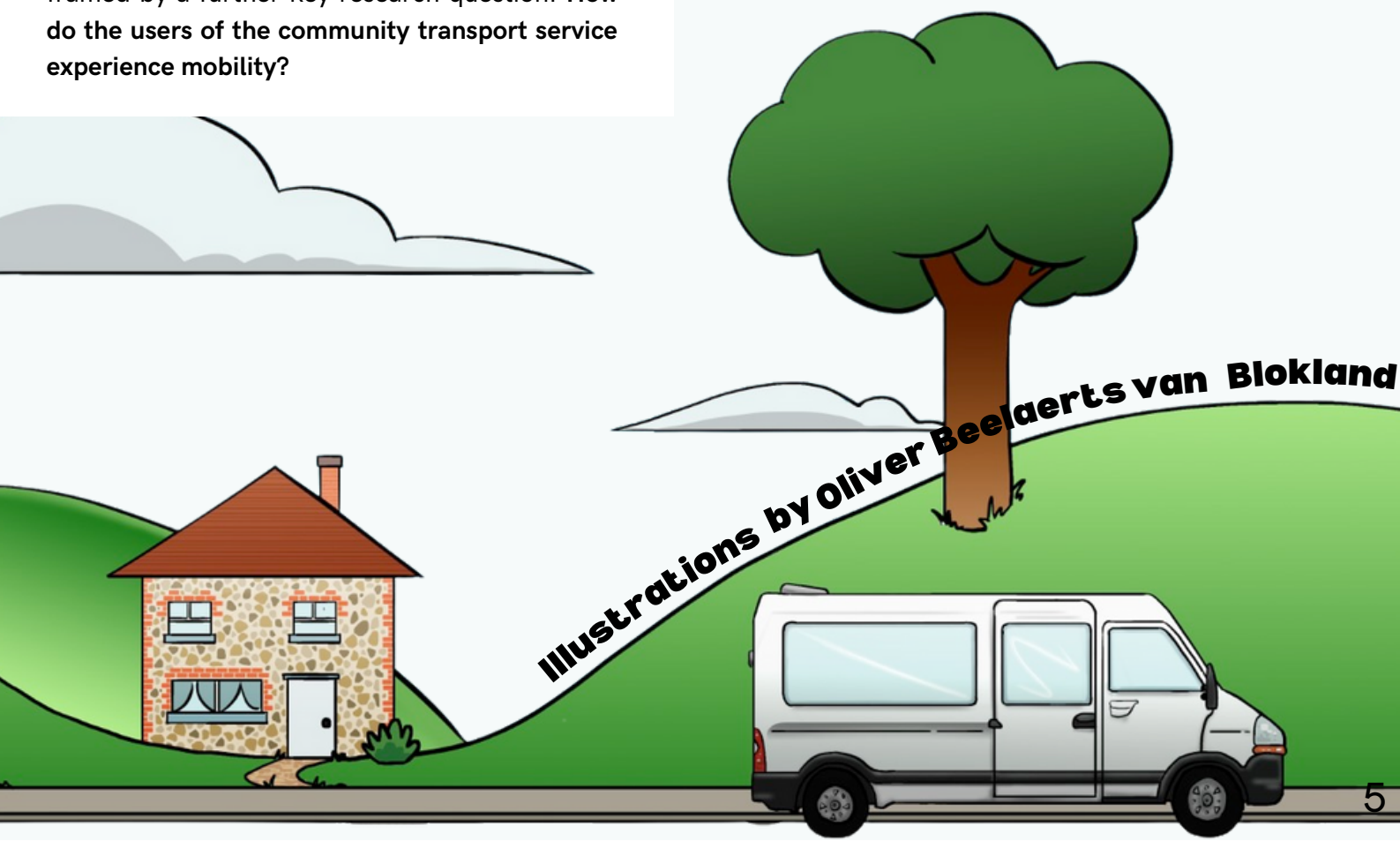
This led me to consider community transport, charities that are set up, as the name implies, to provide transport for communities.

Once I had settled upon community transport charity as the object of study, my project was framed by a further key research question: **How do the users of the community transport service experience mobility?**

Method:

I conducted participant observation with the charity over a period of a month, primarily by joining a different driver each day and sitting on their bus from the start til the end of the day. The irony was not lost on me that my project would have been much more difficult if I was unable to drive the 30 minute drive to the fieldsite. Alongside participant observation on the buses, I visited the charity office in Harlow for a day and recorded a semi-structured interview with one of the managers.

I observed the mix of services run by EFCT: there were the 'regular' bus routes, which were dictated by the council, and ran on a clear timetable all day. Then there were 'shopper buses', which are a DART (Demand Responsive Transport) service, where passengers request stops in advance. Finally there were 'dial-a-ride' services, which is an individualised service for passengers to use the bus as a taxi, to go shopping, go to a hospital appointment, social club or other commitment. The minibuses were also sometimes hired by groups, such as AgeUK, who used the bus and driver to pick up and take their members to activities.



As my research results will show, a new face could never be missed on the bus, leading to many questions about who I was and why I was there. I was often introduced to the passengers by the driver as a student doing a project who might want to 'ask some questions' of the passengers. This meant that I had to quickly devise a set of answerable questions for passengers, as a gateway to wider conversations, rather than a more holistic immersion in the rhythm of the bus. As it was set up for me to ask questions, people often treated it as if I was doing a survey, and would answer with short/one word factual answers, not responding well to questions aimed at more reflective answers. However, I found that after my initial questions, talking more generally and fitting into conversations was a lot easier. In some ways I was more successful at participant observation with the drivers, as my rhythm of the day was dictated by theirs, and I shared many lunches and laughs with them in wide ranging conversations.

My findings are grouped into three points:

- The transport offered by the bus was integral to maintaining my interlocutors sense of independence.
- This was not what my interlocutors valued most. Above practicality and independence, valuable community was created and sustained on the bus: the bus was not just for the community, it was the community.
- The drivers were often caught in an uncomfortable position between service and care, which they found difficult to navigate.

1) From A to B: mobility as required independence

During my conversations with passengers, I often opened with the question 'how important is the bus to you?'. In response, I most frequently got answers containing the words 'lifesaver' and 'lifeline', or 'I don't know what we'd do without it'. Many of my interlocutors were elderly, without access to, or desire to, drive a car.

However, their environments are increasingly built for cars – smaller villages have few resources, and public transport to larger towns is often sparse, unreliable, and being continually cut. I entered the field in a 'post' moment – a post public transport moment, where many interlocutors mourned the losses of buses that had previously been running and were able to recount shared histories of the area through the rise and fall of different public bus routes and services.

There was a feeling that their transport needs are overlooked due to presumed motor mobility. Andrew and Toby, two elderly men who lived a village apart but got the same DART shopper bus, discussed with me the feeling that isolation 'creeps up on you' – 'the buses in this area are so bad, but you don't notice it until you need them, when you get old, and can't drive anymore. Most people don't even think about it, especially the people working for the council, young people with cars, living in the town, who have never even been out here!'.

The feeling that the transport service was essential to, and facilitated daily life, was compounded by the fact that for some people, a trip on the bus was the only time they would, or could, leave their house from week to week. This was often framed in a desire to be able to manage this on their own terms to maintain 'independence'.

Our society is now spatially and socially structured in such a way as to require mobility – for food, hospital appointments, visits to the bank, to collect pensions from the post office, or to perform other daily tasks, particularly for those who do not feel comfortable using some services online. These requirements mean that there is an ideal that all people can move freely as and when they need, however 'not everyone can achieve the ideal freedom of movement' (Cidell, 2012: 235) and this inability to achieve it can lead to moments of friction. Furthermore, the ideal of independent mobility

is so important that it impacts the ways in which people conceive of themselves and others, as 'autonomy is an aspect of personhood' (Martin, 2007: 88). Many interlocutors valued the community transport bus as a way of maintaining 'independence' through mobility. Elderly and disabled people are two groups often framed in our society as 'dependents', which is often stigmatised, particularly in relation to use of resources and services (Ablon, 2002; Fraser, 1994; Hansen et al, 2014).

These interplays between dependence and independence were felt and enacted by my interlocutors. One day, I was sat next to Ethel, an elderly lady in a wheelchair, and the minibus was stationary at a large roundabout. Ethel was watching the cars keenly and asked if I drove. I replied yes, to which she sighed, saying she really missed driving her car, but "at least I can come on the bus, and keep some independence. Get to my groups and so on". Ethel, like almost all the other wheelchair users I saw on the bus, retained this independence through both talking about the places they were able to go, and physical actions, through clipping and unclipping their own straps to secure the wheelchair in place. The driver would help them onto the bus via the mechanical lift at the back, and either push them onto the bus or shadow them as they moved forward to the wheelchair position. There, passengers would start reaching for the straps and clips to keep their wheelchair in place, doing as much of this as they could.



Although wheelchair users had to have a certain level of straps for safety, the choice to be wear a seatbelt for other passengers was left up to them. One driver commented that 'most people don't wear seatbelts, (...) I only make sure the little kids wear them'. Throughout my time on the bus, almost nobody wore a seatbelt, despite the legal requirement that they are worn in minibuses. People wanted to get where they wanted, and to take responsibility for themselves as much as they could during the journey.

The bus was essential to existence for my interlocutors as it allowed them to access the services essential to their lives, and did this while giving them a sense of independence, which was sometimes lacking in other areas of their lives.

While this was the aspect I had been initially interested in, the physical disconnect experienced by rurally isolated and elderly non-drivers, it was not the one that ended up being the most interesting to me. I found that the bus was not just a personal service, but a social one, and can be thought of as a mobile community – a community created across miles and sustained through care, familiarity, and interactions that mimicked an everyday social presence.

2) Beyond A to B: Mobility as community

Familiar roads, familiar people

Popular ideas of transport frame it as a means to an end, a way of getting from one place to another, and it is often seen as something to be minimised and done in the most efficient way possible. However, 'contra much transport research the time spent traveling is not dead time that people always seek to minimise' (Sheller & Urry, 2006: 213); rather than cursing their commute, many of my interlocutors actively extended time on the bus beyond their 'practical' needs: it formed a positive social experience and was a mobile community they

they could be a part of. This desire for community was also more pronounced following the Covid-19 pandemic, and many passengers and drivers drew attention to how special it was to be able to get out and connect again. One elderly lady told me that she 'uses the bus to get out' because 'we need to get ourselves together after covid, break the habit of watching TV all day. It's a lonely life'.

The use of the bus to counter the 'lonely life' was clear to me from my first day, as the extent to which it facilitated and created a community was striking. In contrast to public buses, where people often do not know each other and may sit in silence, isolated yet together, aboard the minibus there was a deep and extended familiarity. This was facilitated by the fact that it was such a staple in people's routine meaning the same people went to the same places at the same time every week for many years.

Conversations between passengers would range from everyday chat about families, children, grandchildren, to medical issues or hospital visits, to political and social topics of the day, in particular the cost-of-living crisis, or local news. Most notable was the abundance of joking and laughter, demonstrating familiarity and comfortability with one another.

In a geographical and policy study of community transport, Gray et al found that 'for some rural dwellers it would appear that the vehicle providing access to local shops and services has become as important an arena for social interaction as the destination (...) itself' (Gray et al, 2006: 95). For many of my interlocutors, the vehicle was a greater arena for social interaction than the destination. The unique and long running nature of the charity (often providing the only transport to a place, being formed by demand, creating people centred routes) facilitates the familiarity and knowing of people central to community. Beyond joking, laughing and small talk, this community was also sustained and confirmed through actions.

Drivers: linking places, linking passengers

While I was in the field, my initial focus was on the passengers as the users of the service I wanted to study. However, through the course of my research it was clear to me that it was the drivers who were central to the community production I was witnessing. This was something understated by many of them, as they were just 'doing their job'. However, this job was a job that existed at an intersection of care, service, and charity.

At the start of one day, Bert told me explicitly

"I'm a driver: I don't help people that much, I'm not a carer or anything like that. I don't do stuff for free".

He highlighted the service aspect of his job – keeping the service regular, and to the scheduled stops, barely losing a minute of time over the whole day. However, over the course of the day, I was able to enjoy the process that all anthropologists go through and move from isolated 'outsider' to cautious 'insider', able to discern the gap between what people say and what people do.

In the case of Bert, despite his insistence that this was a bus route, and it stuck to the schedule, he often stopped in places slightly different to those scheduled for his passenger's convenience, helped those who were more fragile with their shopping or getting on and off the bus, and joked around with everyone who got on.

One multi-generational group of passengers, comprised of a grandmother, daughter, and her child, Jason, told me that Jason absolutely loved trains, and Bert often stayed at the train station bus stop beyond the allotted time to wait for a train to go past, to Jason's delight.

As we finished one run, we pulled up outside a newsagents and Bert jumped out, returning a minute later with a pack of strawberry Fruitella which he explained were to be given to Jason.

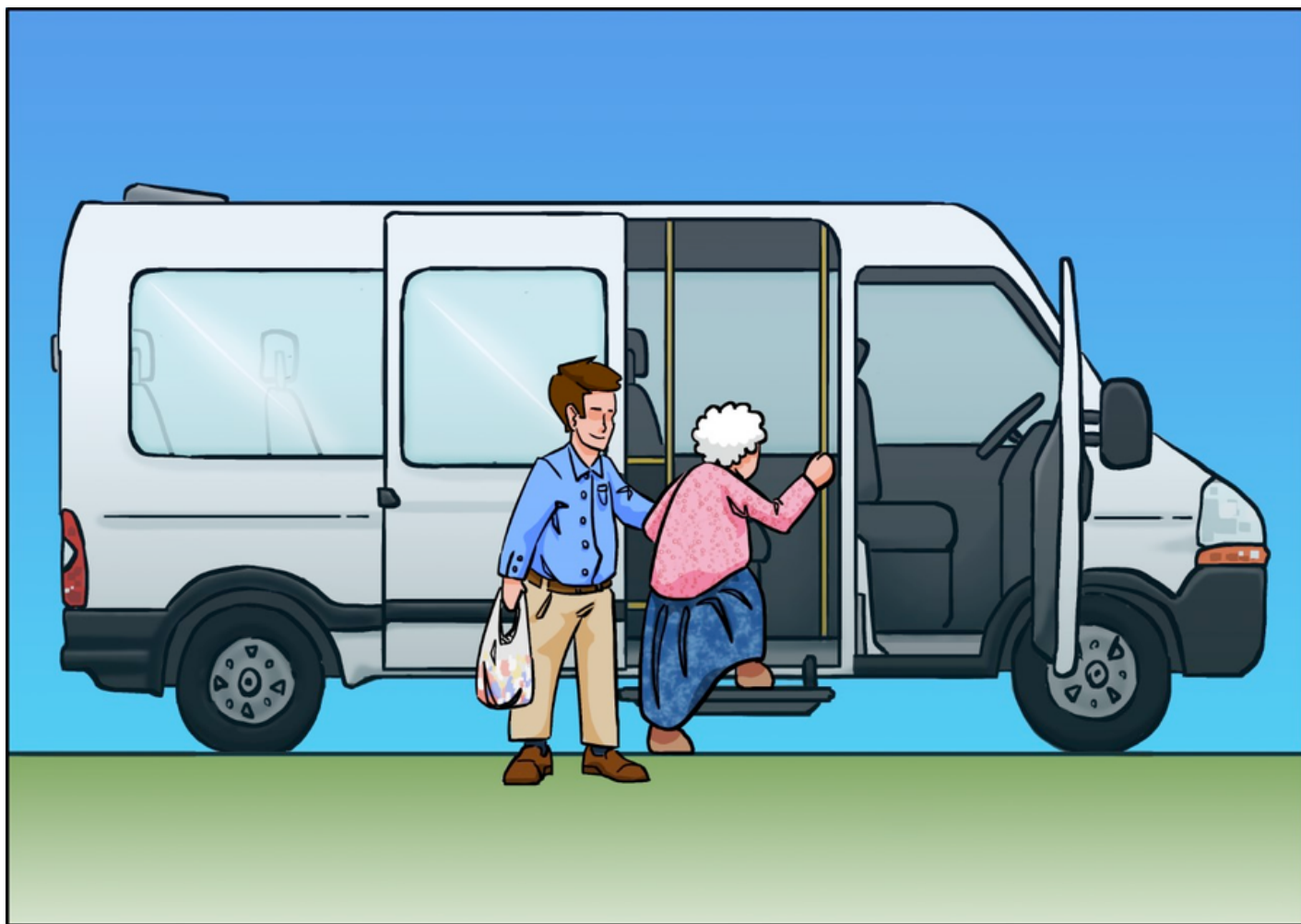
'It used to be magic stars, but now it's Fruitella. And make a note of this – it comes out of my own pocket!'.

Later in the day, we came into Harlow bus station, where the other commercial bus companies were also at stand. Bert remarked 'Bus drivers won't get up and help. That's the difference between us and them. If people struggle, they watch them struggle'. Despite his insistence that he was 'just a bus driver', there was, after all, a distinct difference between bus drivers employed by commercial companies and those at EFCT – a level of care.

Communities of care:

Tronto's theory of different types of care (Tronto, 1998) is a useful framework for considering the different ways in which caring was manifested at EFCT. Tronto proposed four levels of care: caring about, caring for, caregiving, and care receiving. The drivers cared about ('becoming aware of and paying attention to the need for caring' (Tronto, 1998: 16)) and cared for ('assume responsibility to meet a need that has been identified' (Ibid)) the passengers and showed it in several ways.

One morning we purposely arrived 5 minutes early to Andrew, and Ted, the driver I was with that day, stepped outside for a vape and a chat – asking him about his weekend, and whether he went to the local boules club. While this appeared to me as generic small talk, later Ted told me that he was checking in on Brian as recently he had been withdrawing from some community activities, which Ted finds is often a worrying sign of worsening conditions among already isolated elderly people. In a similar caring about/for way, the drivers also often checked if passengers had their keys and told me of occasions where they had had to call family members to locate keys, or to find spare ones if people had forgotten them. This caring about was vital, as Andrea, one of the managers, explained to me:



"If people don't have relatives close by, sometimes we are the only people that see them. We've discovered people who have had falls, and even people who have died, because they haven't turned up for their lift".

Drivers also had more physical and direct caregiving roles to the passengers, performing the 'actual material meeting of the caring need' (Tronto, 1998: 17), frequently carrying shopping for passengers, helping them up and down stairs, and driving slowly, carefully and very smoothly.

One trip, an elderly lady, Doreen, a member of a group of women none of whom were below 85 and who were affectionately, if slightly ominously, known as the 'maneaters', got on, and was clapped by the fellow passengers for walking (aided) up the step, rather than using the lift at the back. Once on the bus, she found herself unbalanced and uncomfortable, appearing slightly confused. Julie drove all the way to their activity centre at 15 miles an hour, avoiding pot holes and any sharp turns, and

verbally encouraging Doreen all the time that they would be there soon. Once arrived, she took around 10 minutes to help her off the bus, taking her arm and gently guiding her onto the lift.

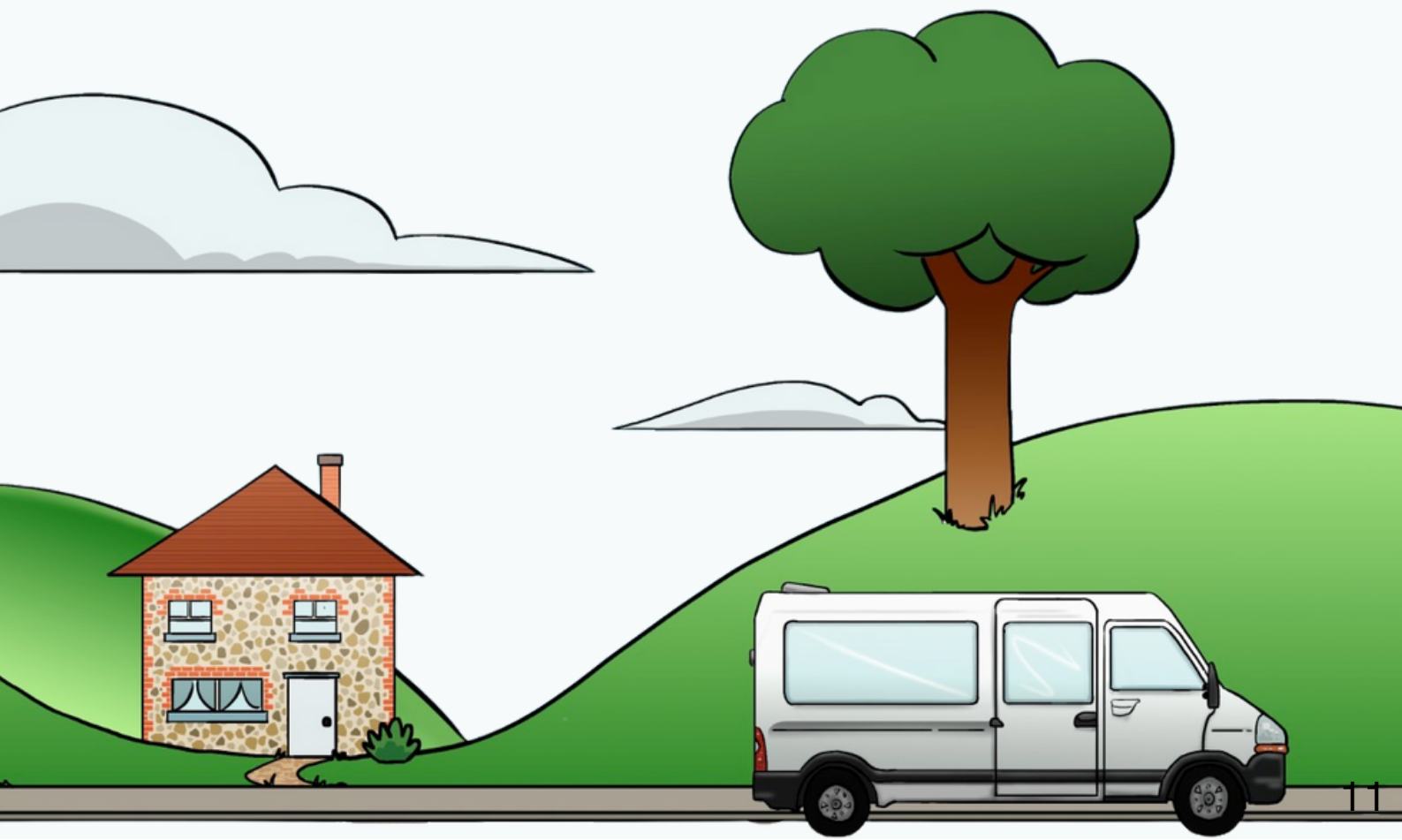
The line between service and care is often thought of as distinct, however at Epping Forest Community Transport I saw a local service to which care was integral. Drivers sometimes expressed discomfort at the emotional labour required in the job ('you want to do everything you can for these people, but there's only so much you can do as a driver'), however, this blurring of 'service' and 'care' allowed passengers to feel independent and in control, while still being part of a community. Many of the passengers valued their independence, and the service allowed them to enjoy this, to differing degrees. One elderly blind lady who often used the paid for Dial-a-Ride told me she valued EFCT as it allowed her to feel she was not relying on anyone – she paid for a reliable service, which allowed her to be independent. The drivers understood that part

of their job was to provide a reliable and professional service, that would give passengers confidence to act independently – they knew the bus would come, and be reliable, unlike other public buses, and so were confident to plan their day around it. However, this was more than just a reliable bus service. It was a community built on caring for each other, which the drivers sensitively did, knowing when to shadow with a hand, when to offer an arm, when to carry shopping, or when to do none of these things. Though for most users, the service was free, there was a precedent of gifting relations between passengers and drivers, which at times appeared to be an acknowledgement of, and thanks for, the extra care taken by drivers.

One hot lunchtime I sat in the passenger seat with driver Eli, as we waited to pick up a route from Epping and take them all back home. It is so hot that my legs are sticking to the seat, and winding the windows down just makes it hotter. In the wing mirror, I see Andrew walking slowly up the street to rejoin the bus. As Andrew gets on, he comes to the front and presses into our palms a choc ice from a packet he has just bought, and offers one to Toby, the other person on the bus.

Acts of gifting such as this are not unusual: one driver tells me 'this is a community bus, so its

always got that added community. Often people will bring a little something to give us, coffee, strawberries, biscuits or whatever'. This association of gifting with community is something that has been widely researched in anthropological literature. Gifting relations are presumed reciprocal, and due to this, seen as a way to sustain and maintain social ties. Although the drivers rarely (Bert's Fruitella for Jason being an exception) brought gifts for the passengers, the passengers did often bring small gifts for the drivers. Although this is therefore not reciprocal gift giving, I believe that it was a way of passengers asserting that they were using a service, rather than receiving 'charity' and therefore thanking the drivers for the extra care taken in their jobs. While researching in a care home in Czechoslovakia, Rosie Read found that the relatives of residents often brought gifts for the nurses and carers, which Read interpreted as both a thanks for extra care taken, but also as a way of ensuring that this care continued (Read, 2007). Therefore, gifts can be used as a recognition, but also as an assurance, of caring through work. Although for the passengers of EFCT it was more of a thanks and an indication of community, than a veiled insistence of good care, I believe it did also allow a two way relationship between driver and passenger, beyond one of just charity, service, or care.



Anthropological perspectives:

My research fits in to a recent 'mobility turn' (Sheller & Urry, 2006) across anthropology and wider social sciences, highlighting and exploring the ways that mobility facilitates social networks, inclusions, exclusions, relationships, and, conversely the 'immobility': conceived of variously as blockages, liminality and disrupted networks. These research focuses on mobility are 'an important and growing area of study precisely because of the banality an everyday-ness has led to its neglect thus far' (Cidell, 2012: 234). I would like to insert my research with EFCT firmly into the category of 'everyday-ness' - following anthropological principles, I wanted to get inside the banality, to see how it fits into the 'everyday lives' of those who use it.

Alongside mobility, through the course of my research, I often found myself turning to scholarship on themes of dependency, service, and care, to shape my understandings of my fieldnotes. Literatures on care and service highlight that care is often naturalised and placed in opposition to work - because care is supposedly a natural function, you cannot be truly

caring if you are being paid for it. However, throughout my fieldwork I found instances of both everyday and extraordinary care taken by paid drivers in the course of their jobs, but it was this assumed opposition that caused them sometimes to struggle with their place as 'just a driver', or the very strong care they felt for and acted upon toward the passengers.

I believe that it was this blurring of 'service' and 'care' that allowed passengers to feel independent and in control, while still being part of a community. The drivers understood that part of their job was to provide a reliable and professional service, that would give passengers confidence to act independently - they knew the bus would come, and be reliable, unlike other public buses, and so were confident to plan their day around it.

But this was more than just a reliable bus service. It was a community built on caring for each other, which the drivers sensitively did, knowing when to shadow with a hand, when to offer an arm, when to carry shopping, or when to do none of these things.



Conclusions:

I found that Epping Forest Community Transport creates a care and social network integral to the social, physical and mental well-being of a widespread group of elderly, disabled, and isolated people across Essex. For many users, the community transport service shaped the rhythm of days, weeks and life meaning that the charity was involved in community far beyond transport: maintaining care, friendships, and connections beyond the space of the minibus. It was not just transport for the community, but a community of transport.

Just as academia has previously neglected transport and mobility due to its 'banality and everyday-ness', so does council funding and appreciation. The greatest struggle the charity faces is constant cuts to their funding and the difficulties of trying to keep the service running. The few moments of tension and discomfort I experienced in the field were all centred around lack of funds, for example the drivers being increasingly overworked. It has therefore been gratifying that I feel my project has, in small ways, been able to help the charity in this field.

One area that was highlighted to me was the need for more users of the service, but the difficulty of paying for advertising beyond the website. I decided to collaborate with an illustrator, Oliver Beelaerts van Blokland, to produce the images that accompany this text, which the charity can use in forthcoming flyers and advertising.

It is vital that the council and other funding bodies recognise the part that EFCT plays beyond transport, and the danger that 'an increasingly mobile and car-dependant society undermines not only the local provision of services and public transport, but also the social networks that bind communities together' (Gray et al, 2006: 92). In the words of countless passengers, it is a lifeline.

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“BELAYTIONSHIP” IN ROCK CLIMBING COMMUNITY: TRUST & RISK-TAKING IN EXTREME SPORTS

Firstly, I think some of you might not be familiar with the word ‘belaytionship’. ‘Belaytionship’ is the relationship centred around outdoors and adventure, usually used to describe the relationship between rock climbers who provide protections to each other on a long-term base, especially in rope climbing where one climber belays the other. Please note that, in a belaytionship, the role of belayer and climber are interchangeable.

In the picture at the top, you can see two types of providing protection: the top one is in rope climbing, where a rope connecting the belayer and the climber to prevent falling to the ground. The bottom one was taken on a trip with my interlocutors, the somewhat ritual looking thing they are doing is ‘spotting’ me, making sure that if I fall, I land on the mats rather than uneven sharp rocks below.

During my interviews with climbers, it is commonly agreed that a) almost all climbers, especially those focusing on rope, and outdoor climbing, want to have a long-term belay partner, for the sake of safety and better performance; b) it is extremely hard to find a nice belay partner. As one of my interlocutors, Casey, said: “You can find a relationship easily, but it is harder than a camel to go through the eye of a needle to find a belaytionship.” The reason behind it is that to build a good belaytionship, it required great trust and tacit agreement between two people.

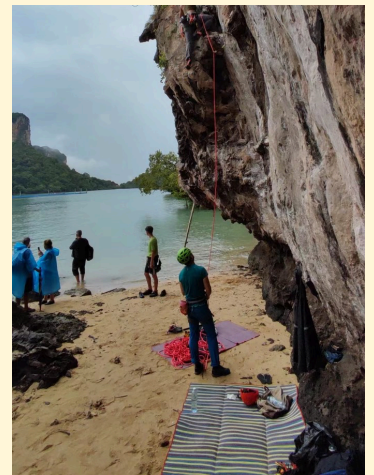
.This links to my research interest. I am actually a climber myself, I’ve been climbing for almost 3 years.

One thing I observed is that climbers tend to form strong relation with one another quite quickly. I say strong in the sense that, you need to put your life into another person’s hand, literally.

“I trust you with my life”. Everyone knows this phrase. What’s interesting is that, in rock climbing, this phrase is more than just suggesting close and trusting relationship, it is more than a metaphorical term saying this is my good mate i trust them a lot. It is actually describing a fact. This kind of very extreme trust is not common in our daily life, but so usual in climbing setting that people take it for granted and don’t really think about it. Hence this leads to my research questions I set out to find more about.

Three of my research questions are:

1. Why and how do climbers trust each other? What factors have impact on people’s choice and concept of trust?
2. What does belaytionship mean to climbers? What does it do?
3. How has belaytionship shaped the climbing community?





To learn more about them, I used the following methodologies:

Fieldwork, auto-ethnography and in-depth semi-structured interviews.

I started my fieldwork in May and wrapped up in late September. My field sites are mainly in London climbing gyms, especially the Reach climbing centre and City Bouldering; for outdoor climbing crags, I went to Portland most often, followed by Llanberis in North Wales.

The field sites were not quite fixed. I met my interlocutors mainly in London indoor climbing gyms, and I just follow them around whenever and wherever they go climbing. It was quite easy for me to get access to the field site and make contact with interlocutors, as I was already a regular climber at those gyms, though I wasn't regularly climbing with people, but we sort of recognise each other in the gym or on instagram.

For the interview, I talked to 14 climbers, some just started half a year ago, some have been climbing for over 8 years, and some also does high altitude mountaineering. The interviews are semi-structured, questions are focusing on their view of belaytionship, and particularly how does risk and accidents shapes their thoughts on belay partners.

The reason I chose to do auto-ethnography as part of my field work is that belaytionship, though different from romantic relationship, is still an intimate close relation between two people. And it is hard to grasp the feeling of the participants in the relation, and also hard to third wheel people the few months. And this is why I attempted to build up a belaytionship myself, and luckily, it was successful.

My findings

My findings can be divided up to two main parts: the constructing of trust and how has trust shaped the community.

My argument is that the role of risk is often undermined in thinking about building a trust relationship. We normally think of taking risk as a result of trust, like because I trust someone, thus I would be willing to take the risk. But I think it is actually a necessity to establish strong trust.





One key observation I made in my fieldwork and interview is that an important sign of the formation of belaytionship is the first unexpected fall. Act like a rite of passage. Here I want to show you this clip. It was taken when I went on a trip with my two interlocutors to Thailand. It was every unexpected big fall. Hard to tell from the video but I fell roughly 5, 6 meters. At the time, it wasn't my usual belayer belaying me, it was the climbing guide. It was my first unexpected fall with him. To be honest, I wasn't too sure about his belaying style, coz I don't really know him, he was high on weed half of the time and he belays very loosely, just in general not too reliable by the looking. But after he caught this fall very nicely. In the following few days, I was way braver to try harder routes, even if I knew it's quite likely that I might fall.

Taking the risk of having unexpected falls, it is voluntarily putting oneself at a position exposing to danger, taking risk both physically, as there is always uncertainty, one might fall and die, and moreover, one is risking the relationship as well. During my fieldwork, I have witnessed one serious accident due to misconduct of the belayer and the climber, the climber fell on to a ledge and broke his knee very very badly. I was lucky enough that one of their friends who was climbing right next to them and saw the whole thing, joined us to boulder for the day coz he was too traumatised by the bloody scene. He said after seeing what happen there, he will never do any rope climbing with any of those two people because what they were doing just stupid, ruthless and not responsible at all.

"Maybe they will improve in the future, but that's it, I don't want to risk my life testing that. It's just stupid."

I have talked to many interlocutors about their experience with experiencing, witnessing or hearing about climbing accidents as well. Many stated that, after checking their belayer's technique to be ok, they would put faith in their belayer and be willing to go for harder routes that has the potential of them falling. However, most claim that they have refused or would refuse to continue climbing together with their belay partner after accident due to belayer being careless or serious misconduct. BUT, if this 'task' is completed, stronger bond is formed, after going through some sort of 'danger' or risky things, they would be more reliant on their partner.

Another interesting thing my interlocutors talked about is their choice between belayed by a belayer they personally had experience with, or being belayed by a stranger belayer who has a belay certificate or a climbing guide. Other than 2 people said that they don't really have a preference, all other said that they would trust the former.

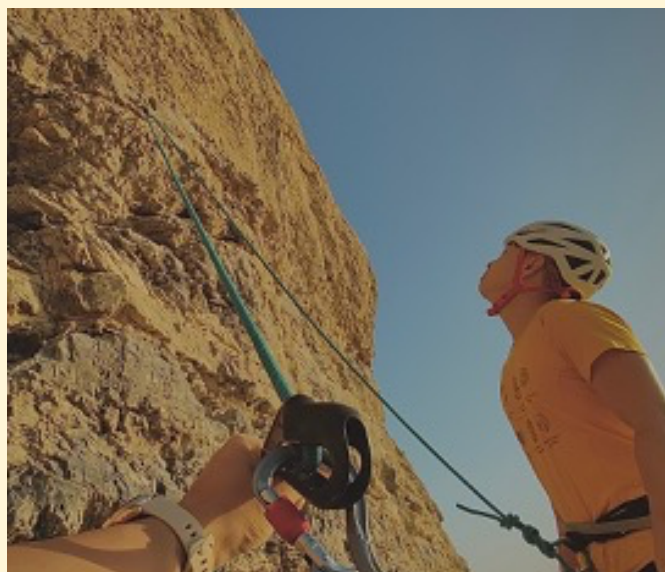
In theories on trust, there is a distinction between trust and confidence; confidence is based on specific knowledge, reason and facts; while trust is based on more than that, it can be understood as trust is confidence plus faith. I argue that gambling or risk taking is the thing that fills the gap of faith to some extent. Also, similar to the distinction of trust and confidence, universalistic trust or general trust, compared to particularistic trust which is a person-specific trust, is weaker, as seen in the example of choice over belayer, as the risks taken has bridge the gap of faith.



For the second part of my findings, I initially thought of it because I noticed that many climbers take pride in climbing community being extra friendly and supportive. And in the fieldwork, I noticed that belayers always do what is in best interest of their climber, even if it's uncomfortable position for the belayer. For example, in this clip, the belayer has to hang in the middle of nowhere for over an hour, keeps looking up and down to make sure the climber is given the best and comfortable belay. Try looking up for 5 minutes, it might not be comfy already, but very often belayer need to do that for ages. They also make the effort to learn the climber's moves, habits, make predictions to provide best protection. But do note that, the role of belayer and climber are not fixed, hence this support is rather self-less but definitely not altruistic. People act like this themselves with expectations that they would be treated like this too.

While the 'friendly' community reassure people they can take risk safety, and their trust won't be wasted; the trust in belaytianship also actively shapes the community.

As I mention in the beginning, belaytianship is something most climbers desire. I'm not saying that all climbers are peaceful and loving and lovely and free from evil like a bunch of angels, but generally speaking with the universal desire for a trusting relationship in the community, a very loving atmosphere is built where people would go up and ask people to provide life protection for them, voluntarily help out by spotting climbers that are potentially in danger, or point out risky issues, or giving advice and encourage to complete strangers. While the 'friendly' community reassure people they can take risk safety, and their trust won't be wasted; the trust in belaytianship also actively shapes the community.



It is almost like the protestant church's promotion of universal brotherhood among all Christians, people have belief and treat strangers as siblings. The assumption of universal trustworthiness, the belief in 'climbing community is friendly' becomes a morality that people stick to and try to realise by acting accordingly, which eventually construct the community to be like that. And the nice atmosphere in the community reaffirms the belief.

For reflections, I greatly enjoyed the project, not only it gave very legit reason to climb a lot, but it is also great fun to think about the belaytianship many climbers pursuit for long time from anthological perspective. I am planning on continue my research for my dissertation. In SEP, I focused mainly on how trust is built in SEP, looking to discover discuss more on the role of trust in shaping the community.

Ariana Xiao

HOW DO TEACHERS IN MIXED STATE COMPREHENSIVE SIXTH FORMS SHAPE HIGHER EDUCATION ASPIRATION AMONG PUPILS?

Seren Watson Hughes



In this project I had hoped to document the ways in which mixed state comprehensive sixth forms generate an environment and an academic culture which is conducive of aspirational habitus. What are the linguistic choices teachers make? How does the physical environment shape aspiration? Are prestigious universities conscious of the structural factors preventing these pupils from successfully applying to university? Are certain subjects prioritised over others? Is the encouragement of aspiration gendered? Although I went to a state comprehensive school and come from a working-class background, university felt like a natural path for me and my brother to take because our mother is a teacher and so the discourse around the importance of education was always present in my family. However, this is untrue for a lot of young people and subsequently, I was interested in documenting how mixed state comprehensive sixth forms encourage their pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to apply to higher education, against the backdrop of a disproportionate lack of state educated pupils in prestigious British universities. I chose to study sixth forms in Greater London. This was because state schools in the region host great racial and economic diversity and I was curious to observe the conceptual work being undertaken by young people of a variety of backgrounds.

Negotiating access for this project was inevitably going to be difficult and so, despite approaching five sixth forms in late July and conducting interviews with the head of my old sixth form as well as two others, there was only one institution in south-west London where I was able to conduct comprehensive enough participant observation. As this project was dependent on the timings of the academic year, I conducted this fieldwork in the last week of the summer term in July, an off-timetable week consisting of higher education-oriented events, and the first three weeks of

the autumn term in September. In addition to participant observation, I frequently spoke one-to-one with the head of the sixth form, who I will refer to as Ms B, as well as a focus group of students. Ms B was a key interlocutor of mine in this experience and whilst she offered invaluable access and insight into the practices of her institution, I was aware, on occasion, of her over-using words like 'culture' and 'socialisation' in our discussions in a way which sometimes felt so unnatural that it made me question the authenticity of what she was saying: had she done a quick search for anthropology on the internet and subsequently told me what she thought I wanted to hear?

Nonetheless, the first point I found to be particularly interesting in my fieldwork was that the physical environment of the sixth form building contributed to an academic culture which was conducive of the gestation of aspiration. Upon entering the sixth form building, which is separate from the main school, every visitor is greeted by a wall plastered with the faces of the sixth form's alumni with their university and course listed below their image and with the words 'University Successes' written above. Consequently, every time the students entered the building, they were being exposed to the idea that young people like them, who studied their subjects and had the same teachers as them, can go to university. Additionally, in the cafeteria, which served more broadly as a common room during free periods and was therefore heavily populated at all times of the school day, there was a massive map of the UK entitled 'University Destination and Aspiration' with a regionalised breakdown of universities. This map was an omnipresent feature in the backdrop of the student's daily interactions in the cafeteria and therefore contributed to a kind of aspirational habitus, predisposing the students to the idea that higher education was achievable.

Moreover, on a linguistic level, I observed how the teachers frequently used phrases such as “when you go to university” or “the future university courses you apply to” when talking to the students in their tutor groups and assemblies. Indeed, Ms B believed university to be the default destination of many of her pupils. Whilst this is admirable in that it naturalises higher education aspiration in young people who may not have considered taking such a future pathway or may come

from families where higher education is atypical, it may have the detrimental effect of pushing students into selecting this route without fully exploring other options, such as apprenticeships, which they may perhaps be more suited to. In fact, Ms B had spoken of how the school is ranked and funded based on the numbers of students it is able to get into university, suggesting that there is a financial incentive behind encouraging students to apply to university and thus indicating a political economy of ‘creating aspiration’.

A further point I perceive to be notable is best expressed through reference to a conversation I had with Adam, an Oxford University Outreach Officer, following a talk he had delivered at the sixth form during the off-timetable university-focussed week the school held at the end of the academic year. In my discussions with Adam, who worked exclusively with co-ed comprehensive state schools, he said that “When I came to the UK from Ireland to study, I was shocked at the disparity between people from different backgrounds. I wanted to help ameliorate this disparity.” Whilst there is a palpable air of saviourism in his comment, Adam held

the belief that the Oxbridge application process is inclusive of those of all backgrounds and that the disparity between state and privately educated student university admissions occurred at an earlier stage: in the gestation of hopes and aspirations at secondary school. Here, Adam articulated the notion that the more students from less represented backgrounds “seize opportunities” like higher education, the sooner this disparity will disappear. Personally, I felt Adam’s reasoning to be reflective of a kind of self-help individualism which neglects to consider the multitude of structural factors behind why certain demographics do not apply to university or are unsuccessful in those applications they do make. Of course, aspiration is important. If I felt otherwise, I would not have chosen such a research question. However, crucially, aspiration can only get applicants so far if they lack the same access to resources, whether that be access to a computer to complete a Zoom interview or a library to write an entrance essay, than their privately educated counterparts.

Certainly, this idea that the application process is truly gender-, class-, and colourblind was blatantly untrue in the eyes of Ms B, who said, in one of our discussions, that despite more students at the school from BAME backgrounds applying to Oxbridge than students of any other demographic, the only students from their institution who had ever been accepted by either Oxford or Cambridge, although only one student had ever been accepted by the latter, were still male, white and middle class. Whilst I appreciate that this is anecdotal of the particular institution where

I conducted my fieldwork, this suggests that, in contrast to what the outreach officer had proposed, there are some unresolved structural issues in the Oxbridge application process which are failing certain social groups.

A final point of note is that the impact of a school's ability to socialise academic inclination was nowhere clearer than in the subjects which students went on to study at university: STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). There were five different types of maths which students from this school could study: A level maths 1, A level maths 2, A level accelerated maths, A level further maths, AS maths, and AS further maths. Yet, it was impossible for a student to study both English literature and English language, or indeed either discipline with any artistic subject. Moreover, in a last-minute staffing shortage, the school was forced to cut philosophy from its curriculum, slashing the humanities subjects offered. Consequently, only in exceptional circumstances were students not studying at least one STEM related subject. When I queried this with Ms B, she said that the EBACC or English Baccalaureate, a government scheme perceived to facilitate further study, has had a big impact on the funding of 'non-academic' subjects. Although the well documented artistic crisis in state schools is incredibly unjust and simply sad, the extent to which sixth forms influence the aspirations of their pupils is evident in this situation as the school's choice to put a curricular emphasis on STEM subjects influenced even those humanitarian-oriented students into science degrees.

By way of a concluding remark, when I asked Ms B if she felt her students were disadvantaged in comparison to their privately educated contemporaries she laughed in my face. For Ms B, in addition to what I had observed with regards to the crisis in arts subjects and other financial issues, state comprehensive sixth forms cannot offer established links with top universities; they cannot offer co-curricular and super-curricular opportunities because of teaching demands on staff; they cannot provide their students aspiring for medicine, dentistry or law with costly admissions 'training' programmes. Yet despite this, the sixth form where I conducted my fieldwork is successfully socialising higher education aspiration in its pupils, with 95% of their 2021/22 cohort going on to achieve a place at university and many of whom the first in their family to do so. Through linguistic choices, environment and extra-curricular talks, to name just a few methods, teachers generate an aspirational habitus which predisposes their pupils to the idea of applying to university. For these young people university is a natural, perhaps even default, destination regardless of their background.

IN A POST COVID WORLD, ARE INTERNET CAFES INCUBATORS FOR HYBRID DIGITAL- SOCIAL RELATIONS WHICH REDUCE FEELINGS OF INDIVIDUAL LONELINESS?



I hypothesise that in the post covid world, individuals seek to participate in heavily digital forms of entertainment and communication but do so whilst surrounded by other people.

Even if there was no interaction with these other individuals, the act of being in the presence of others and in an accepted social environment, provides an anchoring human element to these digital relations which reduced feelings of loneliness.

Project aims:

- Has the covid pandemic made people more aware of loneliness from exclusively digital interactions?
- Do people therefore need to feel connected to others even in solitary activities to reduce this feeling?
- Does this mean there is an element of in-person social interactions that cannot be replicated digitally?
- Have hybrid digital-social relations accelerated into prominence accordingly?



Field-Site Location. Why an internet café?

Internet cafes are optimal field sites to observe how gaming can remain an individual focused activity yet keep a social element at play.

My individual experience as a gamer for 15 years granted me a level of awareness of how the activity of gaming is often a solitary one. Even in multiplayer games, tasks are normally divided up or individuals are granted the agency to pursue their own objectives autonomously.

Nevertheless, it is a common phenomenon to game in the presence of other people, either through being present in the same space or through maintaining a phone/video call and this is often understood as way of enhancing the gaming experience and rendering it more enjoyable.

The concept of a café as an accepted social environment has important implications for how the activities of its customers are understood socially

That is, an internet café not only provides a more centralised hub where the activity of gaming and hybrid digital-social relations could be observed, but the wider societal connotations of cafes as areas of social activity, even for individuals occupied on their own interests, thereby provided a legitimating social environment for all the gamers within as by infusing any activities undertaken there with a social element.

This leads to the reasoning for choosing Sidequest specifically as a field-site. Sidequest's status as gaming café right in the heart of Soho (and thereby central London) made it accessible to a large footfall of people, allowing for the greatest ability to form an effective sample size.

As shown by this picture, the high-quality gaming equipment of this café makes it more incentivizing for people to visit, as it provides a certain desirable ambiance associated with high-level gaming as represented through esports competitions and social media.

Methodology

To describe the methodology of this project, I visited my field-site throughout the summer, focusing primarily on the afternoon and evenings periods of July and September.

Each visit would begin with me taking a survey of the entire café by walking through it and noting down any immediate observations such as the activity level in the café, whether any groups were present and the games that were being engaged in. After about 5-10 minutes of observation, I would then approach anyone who was in a gaming match intermission (between games) and introduce myself and my project.

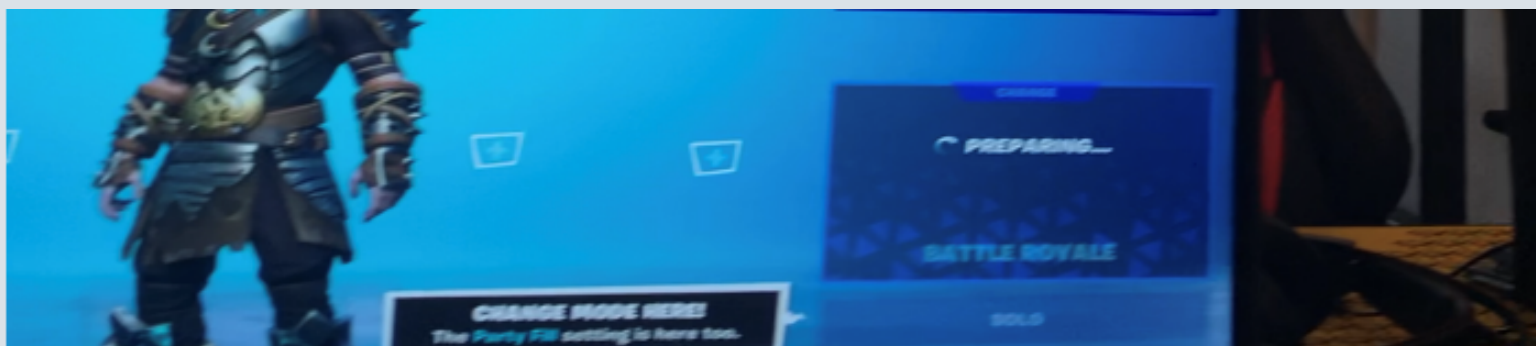
While having to wait until an intermission to conduct an interview may seem to be a methodological limitation, this was remedied by the increased ability to observe how immersed the gamers were in their online worlds.

Information canvassing took place through a specifically designed interview questionnaire, variable for customers and staff in relation to their different experiences and roles within the café.

The interview process itself consisted of asking the gamers about the frequency of their visits to the café, whether they normally engaged in social activity through in-person social relations or a digital format.

I also asked whether they noticed a difference between these two mediums and whether the covid pandemic had affected their perspectives here.

I also asked the staff members of the café whether there was any variation in the demographics of customers or activity level in comparison to pre-pandemic figures and for their opinion on the existence of hybrid digital-social relations.



Formality struggle- research ethics requirements vs risk of distressing interlocutors

One crucial observation I made was that the more formality I applied to my work e.g. longer consent procedures, the more anxious and less willing to speak to me the interlocutors were. I remember one particular individual who mentioned 3 times during the interview that he wanted an informal chat, two of these remarks happening when I began reading him my consent form for oral consent.

As the visits to the field-site continued, I had to reduce the length and formality of my consent forms to the minimum requirements.

Insights from interviews

Alternative activities within the café

A surprising number of interlocutors came to the café for alternative purposes, such as to work on the PCs, sit down for a meal or even game on their own devices rather than the café's equipment.

Yet this did not represent a lack of engagement at all, upon interview they noted that they preferred the environment of the café to carry out these activities as it allowed them to feel comforted by the presence of others to reduce anxiety or to allow them to feel like they had gone and done something with their day that they wouldn't necessarily get from gaming at home alone.

Level of involvement with in-person social vs digital relations

The frequency of visits to the café tended to be a few times a week for most of the people that I interviewed, often taking place in the evening although a few afternoon visits occurred as well.

This correlated well with the results that for most of the gamers they engaged in digital relations rather than in-person ones as their primary source of social activity and thus the café represented the nexus of many of the gamers' social lives.

Muted impact of Covid Pandemic upon the café's customers lifestyles

Interestingly enough, most of my interlocutors noted that their outlook on and engagement with digital-social relations was broadly similar to their pre-pandemic lives.



Muted impact of Covid Pandemic upon the café's customers lifestyles

Interestingly enough, most of my interlocutors noted that their outlook on and engagement with digital-social relations was broadly similar to their pre-pandemic lives.

The café staff also noted that the café had not had a large increase in activity in comparison to pre-pandemic levels.

Whilst the Covid pandemic had increased their awareness of the differences between in-person and digital socialization such as the absence of body language in the latter or to paraphrase one interlocutor the reduced toxicity of people in real life, there was no larger consensus for one medium over the other.

Interlocutors perspective on hybrid digital-social relations

There was also a recognition of the existence of hybrid digital-social relations by both the customers and the staff, but it was more so when I brought them to the interlocutors' attention than something they independently recognised.

Observation of Gaming Communication

The gamers who shared existing social bonds and consciously chose to game while seated together in the same physical space nevertheless communicated significantly less and showed lower levels of social activity than in comparison to individuals seated alone in the café, who instead communicated with others online.



The only concordance was that when a certain event happened in the game, e.g. successfully defeating an opponent or having their in-game avatar negatively affected, both parties (though still noticeably more in the independent, online communication scenarios) reacted vocally and emotionally, showing their feelings about the outcome.

The gamers who could only hear their companions' voices through the games were able to unconsciously integrate it into the fabric of their virtual worlds and retain their immersion. Meanwhile, those who had their companions physically present could not simultaneously converse with them whilst retaining their focus on the virtual world.

Music choice

The music choice of the café was particularly upbeat, with songs such as Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely" being played or energetic, popular soundtracks from the games offered such as "Legends Never Die" from League of Legends.

The music within the café is a calibrated choice to induce certain psychological effects.

Upon asking the staff, I was told that while it was largely a variety of upbeat music e.g. 80s/90s, this was variable as there was definitely a business-related aspect of adjusting the soundscape based upon the crowd and the time of day.

Connection was noted between frequency of specifically Chinese music played in the café and the observation that the primary demographic amongst the customers of the café is Chinese.

When reflecting further upon this music choice, I recalled my observation from previous visits that specifically Chinese music was often played.

Initially I thought this was because the Sidequest cafés are a Chinese-owned chain originally called WANYOO before being changed in 2022 to have greater appeal to westerners.

But I had also observed that the primary customer base of the café were Chinese-speaking individuals and I realised that the music choice was calibrated within the café to simulate the environment of a Chinese gaming café.

The fact the cafe offered primarily food and drink from the Chinese cuisine with a menu in English and Chinese only reinforced this further.

Research Conclusions

While the results positively suggest the existence of hybrid digital-social relations, despite permeating throughout the café, those subject to it had limited awareness of their existence.

The café acted as a medium of sociality without social pressure because of its gaming-centric nature.

The hybrid digital-social relations carried less stigma as everyone's attention was on the games or on the topic of games in a conversation, reducing the need for strong conversational skills and the accompanying worries for those who struggle with such situations (as noted by my causing of anxiety with the interlocutors by the formality of my consent procedures which broke this norm)

Research indicates validity of social anchoring and insufficient digital relations hypotheses.

My initial hypothesis is not only supported but expanded in scope, activities including and beyond gaming enacted by individuals in the presence of others noticeably result in a lesser degree of feelings of loneliness

and isolation because of this anchoring to a wider sense of sociality and thus suggesting there is a missing element in exclusively digital relations.

The ramifications for the gamers of the café's status as an accepted social space

Nevertheless, a significant number of customers had been carrying out digital relations from before the Covid Pandemic, which therefore did not noticeably increase the need for this feeling of social connection as I had theorised.

The importance of the café as presenting an environment representative of a normative understanding of sociality allowed it to legitimate and transform individual's actions into social ones by having them occur within the café's premises and thereby expand the traditional scope as to what actions can be understood as social in nature.

The most notable and definitive conclusion of this research is that loneliness can be conceptualised in an entirely new dimension. These hybrid relations not only provide the ability to connect oneself socially to others but to particular cultures and countries, evoking the discussion of homesickness as an alternative yet very present type of loneliness felt by certain interlocutors and potentially mitigated in effect by the cafe.

While there was a noticeable difference between in-person vs digital social relations and a wish for an element of the former to be present as noted by the choice to game in the café, this need was secondary to the enjoyment and immersion of the game itself, which was prioritised as shown by the groups who struggled to integrate voices of those physically present into the games, whilst having more success doing so with unattached voices through the headsets.

Hassan Kazmi

MATTER OUT OF PLACE: MOTHERS, DANGER AND DIRT IN COPENHAGEN

It was March, 8 degrees celsius outside, when two-month-old Hugo took his first nap on my parents' patio. Dressed in a winter suit and wrapped in warm blankets, he was sleeping peacefully in the pram. After adamantly questioning the safety of this situation, the only thing left for my parents – his grandparents – was to watch him through the glass door, jumping at every small movement of the baby, ready to bring him in. But it wasn't only a practical concern – of whether he would freeze to death – it was a moral one, a matter of incongruence between the Polish and Danish definitions of motherhood and danger.

My sister had married a Dane and was raising a child in Copenhagen, a city lauded for its child-friendly design and reliable social welfare. What struck me over the following years of visiting and living in Copenhagen – where I later met my boyfriend – was the seeming ease of parenthood, the parents' relaxed attitude toward caretaking and emphasis on filling life with small pleasures. My family, including me, had to get used to the sight of infants sleeping in prams outside of restaurants and coffee shops while their parents unworriedly socialised inside.

We got used to tiny bathrooms and a more relaxed hygiene regime. But these changed material conditions were accompanied by a more profound change we have undergone – one rooted in the conception of child personhood and subjectivity.

I was wondering how the concepts of danger and safety, purity and contamination, inform the mothering style and the understandings of child subjectivity across cultures.



Methods

I interviewed 12 Danish and 6 Polish middle-class women who have given birth in the last 5 years and are raising their child/children in Copenhagen. This research also draws from my experience as an aunt to two 4-year-olds, Hugo and Laura, who have been growing up in Warsaw, Copenhagen and London, where I spent countless hours on swings, slides and trampolines.

I used the concepts of purity and danger to compare the definition of a 'good mother' in Copenhagen and Poland, and explored how they relate to the understandings of child subjectivity.

Resilience, experience and self-expression

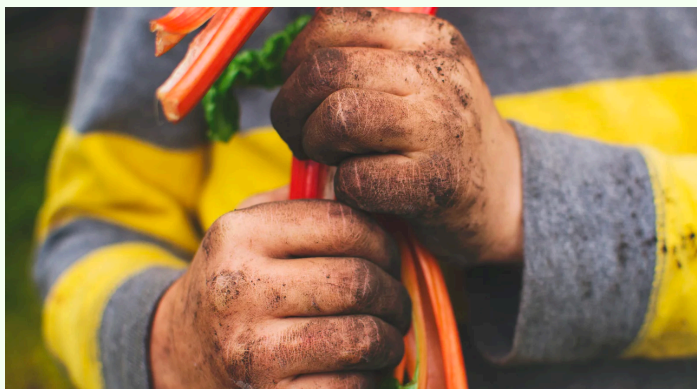
To the question 'How would you describe a good mother?,' all Danish mothers invariably answered – one that is attuned to the needs of the child, responsive and interested in the child's personality. The practice of good mothering consists of spending time with the child, supporting it in crafting their identity, and exposing it to a range of situations while maintaining pragmatic boundaries. Becoming a good mother is therefore a practice of resonance – trying out different solutions, remaining open and in tune with the child.

Such a construction of motherhood is tied to a strong subject position of children. Rather than seeing them as voiceless creatures, children are treated as agentic, strong and singular individuals whose ideas, needs and wants matter. They are seen as both becomings and beings.

An important imagery is one of exposure, related to the Scandinavian notions of strength and vitality. To help her child develop and express themselves, the mother needs to expose them to various, potentially dangerous, factors, so that they can build resilience. Dirt, germs or mess are seen as full of potential, opportunities for development, and signs of creativity and self-expression.

This understanding of children's subjectivity is manifested in parents' trust in children's survival abilities and confidence in their immunity. Parents embody a hands-off approach on the playground, relaxed hygiene standards and a trustful attitude toward strangers.

Yesterday, my little 10-month-old started eating dirt and stones and I just thought, don't do that... But then again, she has to experience something on her own, right?



Harm management, authority and order

This differs from the traditional Polish conceptualisation of child subjectivity. Rather than acknowledging children as social beings in their own right, they are primarily seen as becomings. There is a saying that translates to 'Children and fish do not have a voice,' only that it rhymes better in Polish, and perhaps that's why it doesn't sound as cruel.

This hierarchical, authoritative family structure is based on strong discipline with an emphasis on teaching children how to behave in various social contexts, rather than on helping them express themselves.

Children are thought to be fragile, easily polluted or quickly ill when exposed to germs or bad weather. In the playground, parents vigilantly watch their children and shout 'watch out!' whenever they attempt something too dangerous. This striving toward sterility and safety foregrounds children as ignorant, unable to decide for themselves, and in need of an authority to guide them.

At the same time, they are considered as potentially greatly influential on the lives of other people as disruptors of order. The child is the embodiment of danger, seen as innately disorderly and explosive, hence parts of its identity or self (such as difficult emotions, creativity and spontaneity) need to be silenced or disciplined to cultivate obedience and develop respect for authority. The value of being orderly and compliant is cultivated through enforcing a set of unquestionable rules.

[In Poland] there are all those rules... you can't jump on the couch because you can't jump on the couch. You can't eat with your hands because it'll get messy. You're not going out until you tidy up your room. And it doesn't make any sense. If her room is messy, she's gonna be the one feeling bad in it.

In the Polish context, harm management is an important part of mothering. The dangers are both material – stains, slips and trips, accidents – and symbolic – transgressions of the normative order, challenges to authority and encroachments on a stranger's space. The role of the mother is to ensure the child is safe and orderly – in other words, protected from external actors – and that the child doesn't constitute a threat to safety or order themselves.

Polish mothers in Copenhagen: un-perceiving danger & diminishing authority

Polish mothers in Copenhagen, entering a context in which danger is seen as an opportunity, undergo a process of unlearning and unseeing. This involves an adoption of a less authoritative mothering style. As they balance allowing their children more freedom and imposing necessary rules, they think deeply about how messiness impacts a child's empathy and consideration abilities. One woman compared the behaviour of her daughter, who grew up in Copenhagen, and her niece, who lives in Warsaw:

My sister's family and mine recently went to the countryside together. My daughter was such a bushgirl! She was running barefoot, her clothes were muddy, leaves in her hair... And my sister's daughter was just standing there and asking [for permission] for absolutely everything! Can I go there, too? Can I try that as well? And when she got a bit dirty, she got so worried and said, Mum I got dirty, I need to change my shirt. There was a colossal difference [between the two of them]. And I don't know which one of us [mothers] is doing more harm [to her child].

Polish mothers in Copenhagen reconstruct their ideas of hygiene and safety. But as much as they embrace the Danish style of mothering – departing from dogma and embracing ‘messiness’ – they do retain a degree of sensitivity to hygiene and order. There are limits to the creative potential of dirt, and when crossed, it becomes a matter of civility and self-representation.



I used to bring a hand sanitiser to the playground and wash her hands before she had some food. But no other parent was doing it, so I stopped. And she didn't start feeling any worse. But I sometimes think that they [the Danes] are a bit uncivilised... Many don't wash their hands, they never take off their shoes when entering the house, and once a handyman, trying to fix a window in my daughter's room, got into her bed in his shoes! Of course, I shoved it into the washing machine as soon as he left.

Conclusion

The concepts of purity and danger are central to understanding cultural conceptions of children's subjectivity. In Copenhagen, children are seen as meaningful agents whose identity, curiosity and explosiveness needs to be channelled and challenged by various, potentially dangerous, factors. In Poland, children are seen as incomplete social actors, potently disruptive and explosive, who need to be taught to navigate the norms through observing safety and hygiene standards.

For Polish mothers in Copenhagen, shifting from a context in which good motherhood is manifested in **harm management** to one where mothering is a practice of attunement and personalisation, **discipline, order and safety** remain important themes. Although they get used to leaving the baby prams outside, they retain a degree of sensitivity to dirt, authority and danger, and the phrase *vasker hænder* (wash your hands) regularly resounds in their houses.



Julia Kuniewicz