Abstracts

This seminar will provide a forum for postgraduate / early-careers scholars to showcase and discuss their research on Diasporic and Transnational Youth identities, alongside more established and distinguished scholars working in the field. As the fifth and final seminar in the series the invited papers also set out to bring together the key issues that have emerged throughout the series so far.
Lost and found in translation: recognition, belonging and Diaspora

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Identity, Stuart Hall has said, is always under construction and the same may be said of diaspora and belonging; both are dynamic situations and processes – always on the move. For the displaced, the experience of loss and alienation is common but much depends upon the context of exit from the country of origin and the context of reception in the host country. In the dialectic of belonging and not belonging a new agency may be shaped which contests the limits of the available cultural resources and categories of identity and power. Diasporic communities (always heterogeneous), from outside the national belonging (always itself in flux) can have a role in negotiating new and complex identities which might be called postnational, transnational, or travelling belongings. Those who inhabit the transnational spaces and cyberspaces of diasporic communities maintain links with their land of origin and with other diasporised members both within, and beyond, the country of migration. These multi-locational attachments, enhanced by new technologies of communication as well as travel back and forth, help to constantly refine and revise the diasporic experience as always being in motion. This is the condition of belonging to ‘an intercontinental border zone, a place in which no centres remain’. Living diasporically has led to complex processes of belonging and, often, an active engagement in a series of dialogues simultaneously conducted at local, national and transnational levels. At the same time, however, the burdens of displacement must not be minimized and it has to be acknowledged that racism and impoverishment can also lead to excessive boundedness, isolation and local confinements.

This paper will seek to address elusive definitions of diaspora and belonging by focussing upon narratives by children and young adults who have been described as ‘translated people’, in order to examine the social and symbolic ties which sustain them, the pain of loss, and also the creative and enriching possibilities brought about by dislocation:

‘Diasporic cultural identity teaches us that cultures are not preserved by being protected from “mixing” but probably can only continue to exist as a product of such mixing.’ (Boyarin, Daniel and Boyarin, Jonathan, 1993. Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity. Critical Enquiry 19: 693-725).

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seekers in contemporary cinema. He is the Chair of the Trustees of the Nottingham Welcome Project for refugees granted asylum.
The role of young Muslims in political and civic activism in the democratic processes between co-optation and extremism in Yorkshire

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British public and policy concerns over Muslim youth have been progressively growing since the Rushdie riots in 1989 but these fears rose to the level of a national panic after the 9/11 and 7/7 suicide bombings. The ensuing rhetorical and policy responses by Western governments have sparked a wider political debate around issues of multiculturalism and the threat to social cohesion posed by too much alterity. The ‘backlash against diversity’ has implications for all minority communities living in the West but particularly concerns diasporic communities and transnational citizens. This paper reports on a pilot study which set out to explore the impact of post 9/11 media and state discourses and policy initiatives on Muslim citizenship in Britain. Focusing on political and civic activism by young British Muslims allowed this study to examine the consequences of the retreat from multiculturalism and an aggressive security agenda for the lived experience of youth in communities marked by the potential for harbouring terrorism.

This study confirms a growing body of academic research which points to the marginalisation and criminalisation of the Muslim community following 9/11, with a need for greater engagement with grassroots level activism to gain a different perspective on Muslim citizenship from the one emerging through the lens of extremism and radicalisation. An ethnographic case study approach focusing on West Yorkshire was employed, using observations and narrative inquiry as a means of eliciting the marginalised voices of participants and gaining a comprehensive view of their lived experience. This study reveals agency by young British Muslims in discursively challenging marginalising discourses that diminish their citizenship, as well as identity politics that resist structural constraints to participation from inside and outside their communities.
As a new concept, this paper proposes to define the meaning of “psychological citizenship”, simultaneously it highlights the challenges that young migrants, and those who are born in Italy but are considered foreigners, encounter. In order to understand how to situate the concept of psychological citizenship, the paper explores and argues the theme according to three hypothetical level of analysis: communitarian, national and transnational. The paper relies on qualitative document analysis of autobiographical transcripts of youth of the first and the second generation of migrants in Italy. These accounts were collected from internet websites of associations created by young “migrants” who are settled in Italy. According to the findings, these young migrants, who claim proper recognition, not only long for the right of citizenship to which they are not automatically entitled, but they also demand that the Italian society and its institutions acknowledge their multiple ethnic identities and ways of belonging. The investigation proposes that the term “psychological citizenship” defines two meanings: on the one hand, it is a sense of belonging to one or more communities which are perceived as significant by the individual; whereby, the sense of belonging is mediated – and not determined – by the degree of identification with the communities which are considered subjectively relevant. On the other hand, it suggests that there exists a system of psychological processes, based on relational aspects, which are involved and sustained the subject toward actions: for example, the recognition of the ethnic and cultural identities embodied either as a person or as a community. The research and the discussion on citizenship allow us to contextualise the Italian case where the right of citizenship is a legal prescription that is issued mainly on the principle of *ius sanguinis* and therefore, entangled with the matter of genetic inheritance. This paper suggests that it is important not to isolate the concept of citizenship in the studies regarding the phenomenon of migration, because it is supposed that migrants have several conceptions about the right of citizenship. One may argue that there are different ways of belonging which might not be bounded solely by the borders of the nation-state, or of genetic inheritances, but instead proposes alternatives to the dominant Italian discourses.
4 in 1: A Bulgarian national, a European citizen, a migrant and a student - The case of Bulgarian students in the UK

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While the study of Eastern European migration to Britain has proliferated in recent years, migratory flows from Bulgaria and student mobility more specifically have escaped academic interest to a large extent. At the same time, the concept of European citizenship has gained prominence but the practical implications for its bearers remain largely understudied. Based on research with Bulgarian students pursuing higher education in the UK, this paper sets out to disentangle how the 4 different statuses of being a Bulgarian national, a European citizen, a migrant and a student complement and contradict each other in the context of the British host society, shaping the personal experiences and life patterns of the respondents. By conducting semi-structured interviews with Bulgarian students, the four statuses emerged as constantly negotiated relationships, rather than static categories, hugely influenced by personal histories and values. Their dynamic nature is further reinforced when placed in the specific British context, underpinned by traditionally strong eurosceptic sentiments and a shift towards a stricter immigration policy. Moreover, by employing an interdisciplinary approach, this paper calls for stretching the firm definitional boundaries set by migration theory and citizenship studies, which otherwise prove unable to grasp fully the experiences of Bulgarian students in the UK.
Social capital and the offspring of Greek Cypriots in London

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My study examines the notion of social capital in relation to British Greek Cypriot ethnicity. The question of what is the relation between social capital and ethnicity is addressed and applied as a basis for this research. Based on this consideration I study the ethnic characteristics of the offspring of Greek Cypriots in London such as language, tradition, religion, patterns of behaviour and beliefs, membership in Greek Cypriot organisations as well as their engagement with the wider society through education, employment, membership in British organisations and political participation in the British setting. The research draws on semi-structured interviews with 30 men and women of Greek Cypriot and mixed ethnic heritage and 18 leaders of Greek Cypriot organisations. Using grounded theory for data analysis, I examine the processes of preservation of the Greek Cypriot cultural heritage among the youths. A sense of ethnic identification through the use of Greek language, strong Greek Orthodox religious beliefs, adherence to family values, and involvement in ethnic organisations is evident through the testimonies of the thirty participants.

The study is a valuable endeavour as it is the first attempt to identify and explore issues of engagement of the British Greek Cypriots with the wider society such as political participation, their experiences in the British education system and their involvement in Greek Cypriot and British organisations. There is also a general paucity of research evidence as far as concerns some aspects of family life of the Greek Cypriot community, for example housework matters, suitable behaviour traits, caring for the elderly and transmissions of religious traditions and customs. The study marks a successful attempt to fill this dearth of knowledge.
Keeping connected: Refugee children’s use of technology to maintain cultural identity

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Refugee families who are dislocated from one part of the world to another often face social exclusion as well as isolation. Children from such families may be equally isolated but less is known about their responses to social exclusion, particularly how they use technology to maintain links with friends and family members within and across national spaces. This paper focuses on a group of refugee children and young people who are actively managing their social relations across different localities and national boundaries. Our interview based study with 15 refugee children and young people showed that they spent a considerable proportion of their pocket money on maintaining relationships with ‘home’ using (ICTs), and that was a means of maintaining a strong sense of grounded cultural identity. We suggest that this connectivity had demonstrable positive benefits but also the potential to create a nostalgic and romantic view of ‘home’ and a focus on the past rather than the future. We argue that those who support refugee families ought to consider financial outlay on ICT use as a necessity not a luxury, but that further and longitudinal research is needed to see past the immediate benefits to more long term consequences.
Albanian and Kosovian-origin Children in London: identities and educational experiences (provisional title)

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[Abstract to follow]
By discussing websites, nightlife and popular music scenes organised by ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese youth in Britain, this paper provides new perspectives on East and Southeast Asian youth in the UK. Seen as ‘model minorities’, these groups are largely invisible in debates over citizenship, multiculturalism and social exclusion. As existing research, focusing on the British Chinese, tends to suggest there is little evidence of ‘hybridised’ identities or youth cultures among them, they are also marginalised in debates on the complexities of youth cultures and identities. This paper, however, suggests that their experiences shed light on interrelations between social exclusion, the formation of new identities and cultures, and youth strategies of civil participation.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in 2010–11, this paper maps out a range of ‘British Chinese’ and ‘Oriental’ youth identities and cultures that are emerging across Britain’s cities. I show how young Chinese and Vietnamese in the new media, cultural and entertainment industries are facilitating diverse identity formations, social networks and cultural practices as they seek to carve out a sense of belonging in society. I discuss how participation in these scenes demonstrates that youth identities are fluid and multi-layered and may be ethnic, sub-ethnic, pan-ethnic and interracial and/or local, regional, national or transnational, as well as specific to migration histories, gender, age, class, disposable income, cultural interests and consumption practices. In particular, I highlight the emerging significance of pan-ethnic identifications – among not only Chinese and Vietnamese but also Filipino/as, Koreans, Thais, Japanese and other East and Southeast Asians in Britain – in fostering inclusion. Finally, I briefly discuss how I am currently developing this research into a European-wide collaborative project that provides a cross-national comparative analysis of the role of youth entrepreneurship in fostering East and Southeast Asian pan-ethnicity and inclusion across Europe.
This paper brings together the key over-arching empirical, theoretical and methodological issues that have emerged out of seminar series. We explore the values and meanings migrant and minority ethnic youths attach to their ethnicities, identities and family/community relationships that transcend the boundaries of the nation-state, cross cultural divides and spatial distances. We argue that intersected identities of race, class, gender, age/generation and sexuality shape how Diasporic and transnational networks are experienced by these young people. Further to this, we critically analyse the importance of identity and belongingness as crucial elements of these young people’s transnational experiences. Also the extent to which these issues inform public and policy debates concerned with understanding issues of youth inclusion, citizenship and social cohesion. We next explore this in our analysis some of the more negative consequences of transnationalism, collective belongingness and cultural identity, which is experienced by migrant youths. Finally, drawing out the main themes emerging out of the discussions had throughout the seminar series; we highlight the main research gaps in this arena and begin the process of developing future research agenda on diasporic and transnational youth identities.