Locality and gendered capital of working-class youth[1]

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Abstract

This article is based on a study of social and spatial transitions of about 20-year-old young people in four different sites in Finland. The data consist of 61 interviews, and in this article four case studies are presented. I analyse young people's social class and family background, as well as the cultural and social capitals (Bourdieu, 1986), which I assume to be mediated through gender and locality (Skeggs, 1998). Also I will inspect Coleman's argument (1988) that social capital and cultural (i.e. human) capital are strongly connected with each other. The data agree with many previous studies and indicate that working-class young people tend to choose similar types of occupation as their parents, many are likely to stay in the local community in future, and social capital is very important while achieving cultural capital and education. However, there are great differences in the ways working-class youth make use of their cultural and social capitals, so we must analyse carefully the emotional, social, local and material conditions of young women and men in order to understand their gendered life histories and educational choices.

Keywords

cultural capital, education, gender, locality, social capital, social class, transitions, young people

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 1990s the study of change became a dominant discourse in youth research in the Nordic countries. This implies that youth cultural practices were described through cultural ruptures and change, postmodern irony and reflexivity (cf. Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg, 1994; Siurala and Lähteenmaa, 1991). In addition, transitions of young people were argued to be individualized, reflective, self-expressive and full of cultural ruptures (cf. Giddens, 1991) and disconnections with place (see discussion in Jamieson, 2000; Paulgaard, 2002).

The claimed discontinuity with parental cultural practices has led to the idea that young people are left 'alone' when making important decisions in life, which leads to ambivalences and to an overheating of the psyche (Ziehe, 1991). Education and transition processes have also been assumed to have changed dramatically from one generation to the next. Often there are no clear pathways to be followed by young people – or by youth researchers (see the critical overview in Ewans and Furlong, 1997; Roberts, 1997).

To get a fuller picture of youth transitions I suggest that not only should cultural ruptures be looked for in young people's life stories but social continuities with reference to social class and locality also need to be explored in transition processes. In this article social and cultural continuities learned in both families and social relations in local communities are seen as highly important in the lives of young people today (cf. Jamieson, 2000; Paulgaard, 2002). I wish to emphasize that, even in a late modern and global world, individuals are surrounded by different social and cultural contexts – they live and learn *somewhere* with s*omebody*.

The present article draws from a qualitative study,[2] including 61 interviews concerning young people's social and spatial transitions in different localities in Finland. I will explore the kinds of social and cultural capital working-class young people use in their social or local transitions, for example while moving spatially, changing education, or in transition from school to work. I will argue that the multiple ways working-class youth use social and cultural capital are related to how young people are attached to their communities. The ways in which they are able to use the available resources links back to their personal and social histories within these communities, as well as to the economic situation and the odds of success in education and the local labour market. I assume the cultural and social capital of young people to be mediated through locality and also through gender – since local labour markets are often divided by gender and the ways young people make use of their capital and resources are also gendered (Kenway, 1998; Skeggs, 1997; Sireni, 2000; Thomson et al., 2003).

The first part of this article discusses concepts such as cultural, social and emotional capital, as well as local community. I then look at the data in a general manner, after which the interviews of four young people are scrutinized in case analyses of varying contexts in Finland. In the conclusion I return to the question of social and cultural capital and their relation to locality and gender.

GENDERED FORMS OF CAPITAL

In Britain, Scandinavia and Finland several studies show, despite the individualization of young people's transitions, that their class positions are still inherited and processed through the education system, that children follow the paths of their parent's educational choices and other cultural practices, and that social class and cultures continue to be very influential in young people's lives (Fauske, 1996; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Furlong et al., 1998; Gordon and Lahelma, 2002; Järvinen, 1999; Kivinen and Rinne, 1995; Skogen, 1998; Vanttaja, 2002).

One of the most influential studies in this area was conducted in Britain by Paul Willis in the early 1970s. The subjects of this ethnographic study were working-class schoolboys, who, as Willis (1977) claimed, were actually learning in school 'how to get a working class job' instead of achieving academically. Mairtin Mac An Ghaill (1994) also conducted an ethnographic study in the 'Parnell school' in Britain, where he included boys from different social classes. He found that social differences existed among the boys as to how they perceived education and work. But he also claimed that these differences were not very rigid, since there were diverse intra-class trajectories in the school. The working-class boys had several ways of coping with their current education and future jobs (Mac An Ghaill, 1994). In Finland, several studies have been done of Finnish working-class boys who have complex educational routes and who are mostly interested in vocational education, if any schooling at all (e.g. Kauppila et al., 1995; Komonen, 1999).

A number of recent studies have concentrated on analysis of social class and social resources (Gordon and Lahelma, 2002; Thomson et al., 2003; Walkerdine et al., 2001; Walkerdine, 2003), some influenced by Pierre Bourdieu (cf. Allat and Bates, 1994; McLeod, 2000; Skeggs, 1997). In Britain, Thomson, Henderson and Holland (2003) write about social resources and social differences, and emphasize how they are lived through locally. They also suggest that an understanding of 'success' is very complex, and that it is lived and mediated through local and economic conditions. Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) have conducted research on working-class and middle-class families in Britain and argue that girls' relationships to education and success include feelings and anxieties that are experienced, generated and lived within the girls' social class. Their research focused on the girls' transitions within education and from school to work, and highlighted the emotional processes involved in the lives of the girls and their families, while taking their positions as working- and middle-class girls.

According to the Walkerdine et al. (2001) study, the educational paths of the middle-class girls were quite homogeneous – most moved from upper secondary school to higher education with economic, social and emotional support from their families (Allat and Bates, 1994). In contrast, the working-class girls had various (and more risky) educational and occupational routes that, quite often, ensured them a socially and emotionally secure position within the working-class community rather than upward mobility to higher education and better jobs (cf. O'Brien, 2003, and a study of Finnish boys by Komonen, 1999).

It is difficult to define in different Finnish local communities and social contexts what social class or 'one's class position' exactly is. However, some general distinctions can be found. Despite the fact that, since the 1970s, the Finnish welfare state has made an effort to increase equality in education by introducing the possibility of free schooling for all, there are still many cultural and social differences, which have

been traced through educational research. Many studies describe how children of academic and middle-class families (fathers) are much more likely to pursue a higher education than children from working-class backgrounds (Järvinen, 1998; Järvinen and Vanttaja, 2000;[3] Kauppila et al., 1995; Kivinen and Rinne, 1995; Metso, 2004; Vanttaja, 2002).

Beverley Skeggs (1997) has studied working-class young women using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of cultural and social capital.[4] According to Bourdieu, economic capital refers to wealth and financial assets, whereas cultural capital consists of embodied, body/mind dispositions and goods as well as education. Social capital refers to resources based on connections and group membership; symbolic capital is the form that the different types of capital take, once they are perceived and recognized as legitimate (Bourdieu, [1986]1997; Skeggs, 1997). Capital is learned in childhood through habitus. Bourdieu's notion of habitus refers to an unconscious way of making decisions – it is embodied, learned in the childhood family (although the learning continues) and taken as self-evident (Bourdieu, 1980). Bourdieu's notions have been criticized for stressing structure over agency. It has been said, for example, that his notions of capital and habitus cannot explain the changes within one's life history, or the varieties of children's lives in the same family (see McLeod, 2000; in a Finnish context Vanttaja, 2002).

According to Diane Reay (1998, 2000), however, Bourdieu's notions, such as habitus, actually try to overcome the dualism between agency and structure, and leave room for researching various practices and ways of using cultural and social capital. While examining mothers' involvement in their children's schooling, Reay introduces the term 'emotional capital' as a variant of social capital (originally used by Helga Nowotny, 1981, quoted in Reay, 1998: 82). In her research, Reay understands emotional capital as 'the emotional resources passed on from mother to child through processes of parental involvement' (Reay, 2000: 569). The possibilities of parents – in this study, the mothers – to support their children varied according to their socio-economic position, and the mothers' feelings and values regarding education also had a strong effect on their ability to get involved in their children's education.

In my research, emotional capital is equally understood as being part of social capital, highlighting the parental support and emotional work included in social capital. By social capital I refer to social networks, skills and recognition as well as the emotional support and responsibilities carried by adults or children within these networks. Furthermore, I understand social capital to have a major impact on the achievement of cultural capital – here I refer to John Coleman's argumentation that social capital (in the form of parental support) creates human capital (equals Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital) (Coleman, 1988).

Bourdieu's ideas have also been used to describe changes within the life courses of young people (Järvinen, 1998, 1999; McLeod, 2000; Vanttaja, 2002). I think that embodied habitus and learned cultural and social capital are still relevant concepts for describing young people's ways of processing their decisions concerning their transitions, but the notion of agency also needs to be clearly introduced. Here I refer to young people's sense of agency, namely the feeling that one either is in control or is more or less drifting and not in control of one's own life within the surrounding social structures and local practices (Gordon, 2005; Gordon, forthcoming; Järvinen, 1998; Roberts, 1997). Young people's choices and actions reproduce not only their class position, but

also many ambivalences, choices, fears and hopes that are expressed concerning these decisions and changes (Gordon and Lahelma, 2002; Gordon, forthcoming; Skeggs, 1997; Thomson et al., 2002).

I am particularly interested in Beverley Skeggs' argument that social class positions and different forms of capital are mediated through local social power relations and through gender.[5] She suggests that it is important for working-class girls to present themselves as respectable through subject positions (Skeggs, 1997). This gendered process of growing up respectably is based particularly on social class, and is locally produced (Skeggs, 1997; cf. Allat and Bates, 1994; McLeod, 2000; Walkerdine et al., 2001). By locality I refer to meanings given to and practices lived within a certain place (De Certeau, 1988),[6] as well as to young people's sense of being part of their local community (Jamieson, 2000), and to material and power relations (Jackson, 2001). I use the term 'local community' as a relational concept, defined by material social relations and symbolic meanings, and also by the local power relations of inclusion and exclusion (McDowell, 1999).[7] At times this sense of local community becomes part of one's self perception, and local social relations become part of one's social capital.

On the one hand, studies show that middle-class young people move away in order to educate themselves, whereas working-class youth remain more easily in the local community, and that 'staying' or 'leaving' can be read as markers of success or failure (Skeggs, 1997; Soininen, 1998; Waara, 1996; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Lynn Jamieson (2000), on the other hand, has highlighted the different relationships of 'stayers' and 'leavers' to their home towns in Scottish borders. Most of the leavers, for instance, longed to return. The present article does not focus for example on young people's actual or planned movement (like leaving or staying), but rather on their relationship to the local community (Jamieson, 2000), and their feelings of exclusion from or inclusion in it (McDowell, 1999; cf. Henderson, 2005; Thomson and Taylor, 2005; Tuhkunen, 2002). I am interested in how their sense of community is linked to their social and cultural capital.

I intend to show how this cultural and social capital transfers individually in several Finnish working-class contexts, and how young people's relationship to locality has a major impact on this process. My interests here are to sensitize the analysis of social capital, and, through empirical data, seek how the localized, class based, feminine/masculine subjectivities of young people with working-class social capital are processed in different local communities, living conditions and situations (cf. Sireni, 2000).

DATA

The data consist of 61 interviews of young people approximately 20 years of age in four locations in Finland: Kymenlaakso, Kajaani, Salo and Helsinki. The Kymenlaakso area (including the towns of Kotka and Kouvola) is in south Finland, near the Baltic Sea, and has a strong paper manufacturing tradition. In 2003 the general unemployment rate[8] in the area was 14.8 per cent, and even higher for young people. However, the chances of getting into different levels of education are good since there are many types of colleges in the area. Kajaani is a town situated in north-east Finland and also has relatively high unemployment, at 16.7 per cent. Youth

unemployment is considered a serious problem here. Kajaani also produces paper, and is trying to attract the information technology industry. Kajaani has several educational institutes: a teachers' college, a technical college and some vocational schools. Salo, in the south-west, is a prosperous town with a good number of information technology industries – Nokia and its subcontractors are the main employers. The unemployment rate is about 9.5 per cent. Salo offers possibilities for education, and is situated near much larger Turku, which has a number of schools and academic institutions. Finally, I interviewed young people in Helsinki,[9] Finland's capital, which is also situated in the south. Helsinki has a multitude of choices in education and a relatively low rate of unemployment, 9.1 per cent, but higher living costs than other towns.

The data, from 15 interviews in four areas, were collected in order to explore local variations in young people's ways of dealing with their transitions, such as growing up, moving away from home and finding a place to live, choosing an education, and finding a job in their specific locations. I found the interviewees through local schools and social services; information disclosed in the interviews was emphasized to be voluntary, and interviews were conducted in the interviewees' spare time in places chosen by them – sometimes in homes or empty classrooms, mainly in semi-public places such as cafés, school lobbies or school cafeterias.

Education is highly valued in Finland – and also among young people, even though they seem to take it more for granted than earlier generations (Kauppila et al., 1995). It is very difficult to find work without vocational education and even more difficult for those individuals who have not finished comprehensive school (Komonen, 1999). Most of the young people selected for this research were studying at the time. Over a third of the interviewees, 26 out of 61, were studying in polytechnics or vocational schools, and were primarily from working-class or middle-class families with some vocational or professional education. Ten interviewees had an academic background, and most of these were either applying to or studying at the universities. Four young people had steady jobs, following vocational education. Twenty-one of the rest were between jobs or schools – they were planning further study or had just finished their education – and a few girls were pregnant and due to give birth soon. Some of these young people had a job through apprenticeship contracts, which would have been more popular if there had been more available places.

In the following section I will present life histories of four young working-class men and women, who have been chosen here to illuminate different future orientations and educational choices, and who demonstrate their ways of 'making it' as well as how they use their social and cultural capital in changing life situations. I will claim that each has a specific way of using her or his class-based resources, and that the capital used is more or less attached to local networks. In order to interpret the subjects' gendered and localized use of cultural and social capital, I have analysed each case through the following themes: the young people's attachment to the local community; the cultural, social and emotional continuities between the young people and their families and social networks; their responsibilities to other people and sense of agency in everyday life; and young people's current position and plans with regard to education and to the labour market. All of the names are pseudonyms, and the occupations and some place names have been changed to protect the identities of the interviewees.

LOCAL CAPITAL IN USE

Antero

Antero is an 18-year-old boy from a small town, Salo in southern Finland. I interviewed him in a vocational school where he was taking a course in information technology. Antero had finished comprehensive school and was planning to study further in order to find a proper job. He knew that without further education it would not be easy to find full-time employment, even in the area, where there was plenty of work. His grades had been average and he might have made it to sixth form, but, like many of the interviewees from vocational schools, was motivated to train for well-paid work as a skilled labourer. He realized, however, that it might be wise to educate himself even further.

Antero:	After I finish here I will go into the army and then to university, technical college or something like that. I have thought I would like to study further in one school at least. It would be very useful. If I get a good job right away, one which would be very interesting, then I could quit studying. I will work for a while anyway. After I finish this school, there is a half-year period before I go into the army. I wish to find a good job then, and I could go on with it if it's a very good.
TT (Tarja Tolonen):	What would be a good job?
Antero:	In Salo there are some good IT enterprises, which assemble and sell machines. They all seem really interesting to me now. I would like to work there; it would be nice.

On the one hand, Antero's ambivalent attitude to school shows him to be a typical example of a working-class boy who wanted to use his knowledge and skills immediately (Komonen, 1999; Mac An Ghaill, 1994; Willis, 1978). On the other hand, his mind was open to further education. Antero's hesitant thoughts about the future could be seen as typical of his age; however, his educational paths and decision making can also be traced back to the cultural capital of his family. His mother had an academic education and she worked locally as a librarian, and his father was in construction work. I propose that he was able to combine and renew the different cultural capital learned in his family – he was able to use capital learned from his academic mother, but also the cultural and embodied capital learned from the father with manual skills. Antero wanted to combine the more theoretical knowledge of his professional training with his ability to make things with his hands.

Antero:	I am more interested in – even though I am studying programming – putting together the hardware, not just planning the software use. The installation is more interesting . . .
TT:	You mean like installing the programs, for example?
Antero:	Yeah, and then putting the machinery together and things like that. This interests me a lot more than the programming itself. I mean it is also useful to know and do some operations (with programs) as well.

His family seems to offer him a great deal of emotional, social and cultural capital. Antero mentions family, relatives and friends as very important reasons for not wanting to leave his home town. He felt very connected to the town and its people, and I interpret his home town social capital to be very high. He seemed to have a

good reputation within the local social networks and was considered to be respectable. For him, the cost of leaving would be quite high with a reduction of his social capital and loss of networks. At the moment, he was trying to stay in the area, but at the same time wanted to educate himself. The presence of the nearby college had had a great impact on his consideration of further education.

> Antero: They told me it is possible to get into . . . that in Salo there is this data study option. Because I thought I would not leave this area for my studies.

Many interviewees claimed that they had chosen a particular college, and subject of study, because of college location. They did not want to leave their home towns, social relations and the benefits of living at home (Gordon and Lahelma, 2003b; Tuhkunen, 2002). On the contrary, some of these young people were willing to change their plans for the future and produce such gendered subjectivities and dreams that would enable them to stay in their home town and benefit from what the local labour market had to offer (Kenway, 1998; Sireni, 2000; Walkerdine et al., 2001).

Antero's home town was within relatively easy reach of Salo, which is known as 'Nokia town' in Finland owing to the strong presence of the Nokia Corporation and other smaller high technology enterprises. There were sufficient opportunities locally in which to play out his masculinity, therefore he did not have to move to find a 'suitable' job for a man (see also discussion about areas in recession, where all the working-class jobs have disappeared, for example, in Walkerdine et al., 2001; see also Kenway, 1998). The relatively high rate of employment in this particular area allowed him the possibility of choosing where to live. Antero gives the impression of wanting to stay in the local community in the future:

> TT: Would you like to live here in the countryside later on?
> Antero: Oh yes, of course. Yes, I do like it here; it's a nice place. Nice friends and it's now nice to live at home. There are still things going on here, it's OK. I would not like to live in a bigger city. I like living where it is nice and quiet.

After finishing college and his army service, Antero was intending either to find a job in order to live in his home town or continue his studies. For Antero, then, there were several options. He had a significant amount of social and emotional capital, as well as cultural capital, at hand. I suggest that Antero's use of the cultural capital learned from his father supported his staying in the town, but that his cultural capital as a student and as a librarian's son also entitled and propelled him to leave for further study. His social capital had plenty of local value, which he would partly lose if he left. In this case, however, he might be able to gain cultural capital through education, which was exchangeable in other locales as well.

Kirsi

Kirsi was a 25-year-old woman living in a northern town with high youth unemployment. After comprehensive school she had obtained a degree from a vocational school and had worked as a hairdresser for several years in a local business. There she developed allergic reactions to some of the substances she used in her work. She was then unemployed for a few months, and had decided to start a new career the spring before I met her. At the time of the interview she was studying administration

in a polytechnic in Kajaani, a few hundred kilometres from her home town. Kirsi's complex educational path reminded me of those of the working-class girls described in the study of Walkerdine and collaborators (2001) (Vanttaja, 2002). Kirsi's parents had had very little education (primary school) and had lived in a small village doing many kinds of miscellaneous gender typical work – I would consider them working-class since they were not farmers.

Kirsi was very much attached to the local community she lived in. She emphasized the emotional and economic support she had from living in her home town and talked about the emotional importance of her boyfriend, parents, relatives and friends (cf. Gordon and Lahelma, 2003b; Tuhkunen, 2002). Her strong emotional and social capital, particularly, turned out to be important when she had had a crisis concerning her job, health and unemployment.

> Kirsi: Well yeah, it is [support] from my parents and this person I share my life with, and friends and these sorts of people. I really do have lots of people around me, who kick me in the backside if I get stuck in some situation. 'Try once more, try this . . .' This kind of thing. It is my parents . . . they have been positive about my schooling and they have been really supportive and have given me economic support as well.
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> Kirsi: Then I had the crisis in my work. I really lost my nerves totally in this process . . . After that, I really enjoyed doing what I wanted; during the summer I did some gardening, did some work helping the carpenter in our house . . . then I started to see the doctors because of my allergies, and I had to find a new type of work . . .
> TT: You said earlier you kind of fell into a hole or something?
> Kirsi: Oh yes, I fell into a deep pit, really. I just had to climb out from there. Many people offered me a ladder to help. I really got support from many different people, so-called ladders, to the bottom of the hole, then they said just put them all together now and climb up from there!

Kirsi's social and emotional capital consists of her childhood family and friends, as well as her boyfriend. She, too, was attached to her local community and planned to stay in the vicinity with her present boyfriend. He had a permanent job in a local village, and she was looking forward to having work nearby as well, which was not easy in an area with a high rate of unemployment. Kirsi had made a very conscious resolution to try to stay in the area, and her present career and educational choices were made according to this decision.

> TT: How did you find your way here, into this college?
> Kirsi: It was really last spring, when everything began. When I became allergic, my doctor suggested that I go back to school. I compared this town with some other places nearby and decided that this is it, and I have been satisfied with it.
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> TT: So, where would you like to find work after this? Or what is the kind of place you could imagine?
> Kirsi: It is still open. Banking would be interesting, to work in a bank or to work in administration in some company. It is still a long way ahead, I have not given much thought to it yet. Maybe it will be close to my home town, near it anyway.
> TT: Then you want to stay in this region?
> Kirsi: Yes, it may even be possible to find a job.
> TT: You mean here, in this region?
> Kirsi: Yes.

Kirsi felt very optimistic about the future. She was also actively taking steps to build her future and her sense of agency was very high. Her aim was to stay in the area, to live a 'traditional family life' as well as secure a nice job.

TT: When you are about 30 years old, what would you like to do? And where?
Kirsi: Of course I would like to have a nice job. Kids would be there already; it would be like a safe and traditional family life, and work.
TT: How far could you commute daily to work?
Kirsi: Let's say, maybe about 50–100 km would be okay with public transportation.

Locality seemed to have played an important part in all Kirsi's decisions about the future. After her experience with unemployment, Kirsi regained her sense of agency with the support of her local social networks. In her story, she was the one being supported and she did not at the time have a heavy burden of responsibility for taking care of others. Kirsi was more educated than her parents, and not without their emotional, social and economic support. She was a working-class girl with high local emotional and social capital, which she was also turning into higher cultural capital through her ongoing education. At the time of the interview Kirsi can be described as being an 'attached stayer' (see Jamieson, 2000), who wanted to ensure her future in her home town by educating herself.

GENDERED RESPECTABILITY OF WORKING-CLASS

Heidi

Another girl from northern Finland,[10] Heidi, was 20 at the time of the interview. Heidi had interrupted her studies early in the sixth form. She had previously been successful in school, but the everyday life of her family had made it impossible for her to continue her education. Heidi was from a dissolved family – both parents had disappeared dramatically from her life when she and her siblings were very young. She mentioned that her parents drank quite heavily and had been involved in some illegal businesses (she did not specify what sort). Heidi had two sisters and one brother. They had been removed from their home by social workers and placed in foster homes, several in the long run. Heidi had taken over responsibility for the family after her parents and sister had given up. This seemed to be a common feature of the dissolved families in my data – if the parents were not present in a family, often the oldest sister had taken over the caring for the other siblings, even at a young age.

TT: You said earlier, that you kept the house standing, so to speak? . . . I mean you said you took care of your family and sister [who had been ill].
Heidi: Oh yes, and before that she [the sister] would care for us.
TT: Okay.
Heidi: I mean, when Mom and them were away, she would cook for us. But then she would leave in her way . . . so that we would never see her.
TT: How old was she then, and how old were you?
Heidi: She would have been 15. I would have been eight, and my brother 10 and the youngest sister five . . .
TT: Yeah.
Heidi: It was like I would take care of my sisters and my brother, so that nothing would happen to them.

TT: You were afraid of that?
Heidi: I had to be there all the time. If I wasn't, it would be my fault if something
        happened to them. It was like that later with my bigger sister, I was accused of
        that . . . or I would blame myself when she would leave the hospital. That it
        would be my fault, of course. I could not visit her often enough . . . I was
        relieved when she was in the hospital [and not on the street] since I knew that
        they [the nurses] would take good care of her.

Later the children were taken into custody by the social workers, but Heidi could not tolerate the various foster homes. She had to move quite often from one to another, which meant change both in her physical and social surroundings. Heidi indicated that she did not feel she belonged to any specific locality. She also expressed that she did not have a sense of social community (see McDowell, 1999). She felt she had been excluded from some localities, and she made references to the reputation of her family, as well as her own actions in one of the local communities in which she had lived. Her social networks were reduced to her siblings and one really good friend; the other children had become 'significant others' in many ways in her life (cf. Pösö, 2004). She also claimed that she had difficulties making deeper social contacts (new friends, future partners), as she could simply no longer trust anyone except for a few. Heidi's social capital was quite low and her social networks, as mentioned above, consisted mainly of her brothers and sisters, for whom she had earlier been responsible.

Heidi: At the moment, it's with the rest of the bunch [siblings] where I feel that I am
        home, wherever we are . . . not feeling responsible anymore . . .

Although at the time of the interview her brother and sisters were important to her, Heidi was seemingly relieved not to be responsible for them. She looked back at a time when her life was very different. In the past she was not able to do anything with her own life because of her responsibilities.

TT: How did you live your own life then?
Heidi: I didn't have a life of my own back then. I lost four or five years where I did
        nothing with my life. I mean, I did go to school, but I only spent my time there.
        I didn't do any schoolwork. My whole time at comprehensive school went by
        just like that.

Before her circumstances changed, Heidi did not have very much of a sense of agency in her life. I propose that the most dramatic feature in Heidi's life was that she had tried to live respectably in a very bad situation and cared for others, but did not have anyone caring for her. She had practically no emotional or social support from family, and she had not learned the skills of networking. Neither did the social and emotional capital available to her support her in gaining cultural capital through education. It was not only a difficult life situation for her, but her subject position was strongly framed by social class and gender – by caring for others she lived and reacted as a good working-class girl was supposed to when still living at home (see Allat and Bates, 1994; Skeggs, 1997; Tolonen, 2001; Walkerdine et al., 2001).

By the time of the interview, she had gained control of her life; she was living by herself and had left an unsatisfactory relationship. She had taken up sports quite seriously (like many other girls in similar situations) and felt she had control over her body again. She wanted more education, and was planning to pursue that in the near

future. She had a strong desire to regain her cultural capital, by embodiment and by education.

   She had taken a dramatic turn in her life and I suggest that, with her new sense of agency, Heidi was able to restore and use the social and cultural capital she had (see Thomson et al., 2002). It is important to note that Heidi's social capital included her siblings and friends, and some local authorities. In her new situation she was also willing to use some of her social connections, such as teachers, social workers and voluntary support personnel, for economic and emotional support, as well as practical knowledge about how to enter her chosen sixth form school. The welfare state, through local authorities, thus seemed to play an important role in her life and, therefore, I claim that these authorities were part of her cultural and social capital (Gillies et al., 2001; Reay, 1998). Through this kind of help she was able to reconnect to school and work, though less so to local informal social networks, which she still felt somewhat excluded from (McDowell, 1999; Jamieson, 2000).

Teemu

Teemu is a 17-year-old boy from a small town in southern Finland. In this area the unemployment rate was relatively low and there were several schools, so educational opportunities were quite good. Teemu told me he had entered several comprehensive schools but could not make it through any – he had been expelled from all of them owing to his inappropriate behaviour. He had been drifting in and out of several kinds of life situations, had worked and had been involved in illegal activity. At the time of the interview he was entering a special educational course designed for unemployed young people because, without a diploma from comprehensive school, he could not enter vocational school and would have trouble employing himself (cf. Komonen, 1999). He had found himself a trainee job doing a variety of tasks in a small garage. Cars seemed to provide Teemu with an important sense of agency and individuality, as well as freedom from the rules of the adult world.

   TT: Cars are somehow very close to your heart?
   Teemu: They are really close.
   TT: Well, you still do not have your driver's licence?
   Teemu: No, I don't have it.
   TT: Can you drive a car then?
   Teemu: Oh yes, I mean I had a car, and I was driving about 1600 km a week with it.
   TT: They never asked for your driver's licence?
   Teemu: Well no. I mean, they have tried to stop me, but never succeeded. I mean you
            can escape with a car, if you know how to drive.

Teemu talked about himself as a lonesome hero who knew how to drive a car. To him, the local community appeared as a landscape that could be seen from a car window. The knowledge and skills important in his story all referred to cars, not to other people or local networks. However, he did have some friends and a girlfriend, and seemed to be quite satisfied with his somewhat narrow social network.

   In Teemu's story there were only a few traces of social, emotional and cultural capital. His social capital seemed to be rather fragile. Teemu was living with his mother. His parents were divorced and his mother had remarried some time ago. My impression was that he felt left alone and not part of his 'new' family – he never

mentioned his stepfather in the interview. He also said he had plans to move out as soon as he turned 18. Occupationally he was following his mother's steps through the cultural capital learned at home. His mother was working as a cashier in a shop, and she, like Teemu, did not have any vocational education. Teemu had no relationship with his father and they had not been in contact for years – his occupation was unknown to Teemu. His grandfather was very important to him and had provided him the model of 'a car man'. The activities associated with cars produced an important familial male bonding between Teemu and his grandfather. Some studies show that any family member – an aunt, siblings, grandparents – can play a vital role in passing on cultural capital (Vanttaja, 2002). Teemu's gendered cultural capital can be seen through this connection with his grandfather.

> TT: Well, tell me how your interest in cars began?
> Teemu: As long as I can remember . . . in my grandpa's place, there was, even before I learned how to walk . . . a kind of a car where I could play. An old Audi.
> TT: I see.
> Teemu: Then it was switched for a Honda, and then I got a very old BMW for a confirmation present. Later I thought that I would like to have a car at home as well. So I just bought a car. And I drove with that car as well. Then I bought another car because it was very cheap.

Teemu's interest in cars was not only a positive resource in his life but it had also led him into trouble with the law: he had been caught driving too fast, under-aged and inebriated. At the time of the interview he was under surveillance by the police. Actually, Teemu wanted to convince me that he had made a decision to change after one night being caught by the police:

> TT: You mean you have decided to change the direction of your life?
> Teemu: Well, yeah, almost all the illegal business, it's been left out since the beginning of 2002.
> TT: Why exactly then? You can be that specific about the timing?
> TT: Well first I didn't like it when, I drove my first car off the road in January. And then another time, when the police were chasing me, a month after the first thing, I just thought I didn't want to bother with this anymore. And then I spent a half-day in jail. That taught me a great deal and I thought to myself that I wanted no more of this.

The process of being held by the police seemed to prompt Teemu to make some kind of decision in his life and take responsibility for his actions, as well as towards finding a sense of agency (cf. Thomson et al., 2002). He wanted to have a regular job at the garage, instead of a future in jail. With Teemu, then, I would say that he had found himself a suitable way of being a working-class young man through his car activities and that he had social and cultural support in this process. But, at times, this young man was left alone, so the intervention by the police seemed to happen at a very critical moment.

While some of the young women without family support, like Heidi, assumed too much responsibility, some young men in the same social situation acted in quite a different way. Even when they might have had a high sense of agency, they seemed to have no control over their lives, and they did not take care of others in the family. Cars provided Teemu with an appropriate working-class masculine identity, which, in this case had not been respectable or responsible, but in the future might be, if he

continued working and abiding by the law (cf. Vaaranen and Wieloch, 2002). Even though Teemu did not have a strong sense of local community his identity was very local (see Jamieson, 2000). Teemu did not even consider leaving town, but his coming and going by car was constant. The car seemed to transfer Teemu from the world of school to that of work, from youth to adulthood, and acted as an overall mediator between him and both his family and society.

DISCUSSION – HOW SOCIAL CAPITAL TURNS INTO CULTURAL CAPITAL

This article explores the various cultural and social continuities young people possess in relation to their family and local communities, and how social capital turns into cultural capital (Coleman, 1988). The young people I examined made use of several kinds of personal competencies – social support and cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, [1986]1997) – while processing their social and spatial transitions. They also expressed either their connectedness with their family or separation from their family in several ways (Gordon and Lahelma, 2002, 2003b). Sometimes they seemed to reject their family support and influence, and distance themselves from others by using metaphors and phrases of individualization. They also expressed clear connections with family members, for example 'I am like my mom' and 'My grandfather has always helped me'. The study also revealed young people with a strong longing for support from either their parents or other adults when it was not available. I claim that, even when family connections, support and influence are not always highlighted by the young people, social and cultural capital are part of their habitus, and it is lived through their choices even when not verbally expressed. Bourdieu states that one is not always aware of using one's habitus or cultural and social capital; rather the choices involved seem to be made naturally (Bourdieu, 1980, [1986]1997, [1986]1998). Educational choices, for instance, which sometimes appear as separated, are very often connected to the education of the families and their social class (Järvinen and Vanttaja, 2000; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Some studies also show that it is more often middle-class young people who leave for further education, whereas young people with working-class backgrounds are more likely to stay in their home towns (Jamieson, 2000). Furthermore, almost all the working-class youths in this study planned to stay, even though their life histories and attachment to locality were quite dissimilar.

   Although all the young people discussed in this article were from a more or less working-class background, their life stories differed in the way social and cultural capital was used, and the way respectability and sense of agency were expressed. I suggest that their relationship to locality turned out to be a very important source of the young persons' social capital. In this research, the subjects' social and cultural capital was located in different Finnish social contexts and communities, offering different education and employment opportunities. The home town was shown to have various meanings for the young women and men. Some felt very attached to their communities, and this relationship seemed to strengthen their social and emotional capital. Others felt that they or their families had, to some extent, been excluded from the local community and that they were not a part of the local power relations (McDowell, 1999). The young people's sense of their community and the

relation to their families and personal life histories proved central to how they were able to use their social and cultural capital.

There were cases where connections to family, local culture and community were very strong. Some interviewees found the local way of life and educational opportunities very satisfactory. Here, the local culture and community seemed to provide a sufficient network for acting out and using their social capital, and often this supported their cultural capital (Coleman, 1988). The sense of agency and control over one's life was quite high among the young people in these situations. Their main worry was being able to find either a job or a school close enough to their home town. They recognized, however, the possibility of leaving the local community for further education, thus to strengthen their cultural capital outside the community.

In some young people's lives the family situation was not very supportive. Furthermore, these youths did not have a good sense of closeness to the community around them (Jamieson, 2000) and some felt very lonely and distant from everyone apart from their siblings. At times, the welfare state, rather than family or local community, seems to have been the context where these young women and men were acting and, for example, getting their support from police or social workers. Many, but not all, had interrupted their education, and social workers were providing assistance to get them back into school. With the lives they had chosen, very often they were not progressing in class status. On the contrary, some were struggling just to reach the same position their parents had been at the same age – working-class with a decent job. Moving up the social ladder in this kind of situation demanded self-discipline and a strong sense of agency, as well as emotional and social support and good local networks and the skills to use them (Coleman, 1988; Walkerdine et al., 2001).

Beverley Skeggs states that gender and class (and race) are not forms of capital as such, but that they provide the relations in which capital comes to be organized and valued (Skeggs, 1997). In my analysis, the social and cultural capital was lived in different ways owing to life situations, but also according to gender. The young people's stories analysed in this article differ from each other in the way social and cultural capital was used, and in how respectability and sense of agency were expressed. Being respectable was very different for young women compared to men. The capital was, therefore, mediated through gender, in addition to the local culture (McLeod, 2000; Thomson et al., 2003; Walkerdine et al., 2001). I have found that being respectable is gender specific, and exploring this data showed that the processes of becoming respectable included gendered ways of relating to community, to education and work, to law and discipline, to the control of one's body – for instance drinking or using narcotics or sport as self-disciplinary action – to family life and social networks, and to the care of others in the family.

I have looked particularly at young people from working-class backgrounds, which seemed to promote powerful and gendered subject positions for these young women and men. I also claim that these young people used very different combinations of social, emotional, cultural and economic capital. It appears that social capital had a positive effect in promoting cultural capital, and especially education, as Coleman (1988) states. However, the data also indicate that we must analyse carefully the emotional, social, local and material conditions of young women and men in order to understand their life histories and educational choices.

Notes

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3 For example, the study by Järvinen and Vanttaja (2000) states 'that the social background of young people has a major impact on their schooling. The parents of the high achievers included a proportion of well-paid senior employees with tertiary degrees that was above the national average. In contrast, the parents of the drop-outs had less education and lower incomes and their status on the labour market was less secure than the national average'.

4 In this article the term social capital refers to work by Pierre Bourdieu and Beverley Skeggs, and not to Robert Putnam's work, which refers primarily to the 'macro level' of society and organizations and institutions (Siisiäinen, 2003: 204). In addition, Putnam's way of understanding family and gender relations is not relevant to this study (Edwards et al., 2003).

5 Skeggs states that 'The social relations of capital into which we are born and move have been constructed historically through struggles over assets and space. Gender, class and race are not capital as such, rather they provide the relations in which capital come to be organized and valued. Masculinity and Whiteness, for instance, are valued (and normalized) forms of cultural capital' (Skeggs, 1997: 9), and 'The discourses of femininity and masculinity become embodied and can be used as cultural resources. This is not to say that gendered relations are purely cultural' (Skeggs, 1997: 8; cf. Bourdieu's notion of embodiment as part of cultural capital [1986]1997: 47–50.)

6 Michel de Certeau (1988) makes a distinction between a place and a space. A place becomes a space though practice, or 'In short, space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers' (de Certeau, 1988: 117).

7 Linda McDowell uses the term community 'to refer to a fluid network of social relations that may be but are not necessarily tied to territory. Thus a community is a relational rather than a categorical concept, defined both by material social relations and by symbolic meanings. Communities are area context dependent, contingent, and defined by power relations, their boundaries are created by mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion' (McDowell, 1999: 100).

8 All the unemployment rates in this page are given by the Ministry of Labour in Finland for 2003.

9 The interviews in Helsinki consist of 16 interviews, which are follow up interviews connecting to earlier ethnographic research (Gordon et al., 2000; Gordon and Lahelma, 2003a, 2003b; Tolonen, 2001).

10 Some revealing, although covered, details are told about Heidi's life and, therefore, I will not specify the local communities where she lived. I will, however, analyse her relationship to the local community.

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