Interrogating Bengali Youth's Performance of Place Through Emplacement and Mobility

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Abstract

This article is concerned with how diaspora youth (in this case Bengali), living in East London Tower Hamlets, make place and perform and negotiate their youth diasporic identities through the use of public spaces. Using applied arts practice-as-research and by documenting the overall process of the project, a greater understanding of the participating youth's concept of belonging, territorialism and gendered spatiality is established and sets out a framework for further research. This article focuses on addressing complex issues arising out of the practice-as-research, including identifying young participants' relationship to cultural space (in particular gendered space), perceptions of territorialism through place making practices in public spaces, the temporary/transitional space and notions of belonging as part of an identity construction process.

Introduction

The practices of emplacement and mobility of young diaspora communities in London are significant indicators of how young people perform their diasporic identities through the act of "making place" (Myers 171). Hava Gordon's well-founded argument that "young people's use of space is integral to their development as political actors" (1) indicates why this paper is a useful contribution to understanding the performance of young diaspora communities' spatial engagement in public places. Gordon identifies the interplay of young people's privatisation of public spaces as a political move towards self-iden-

tification. The significance of this concept is exemplified in the practice-as-research (PaR) project discussed in this paper. The project in question is entitled *A Disgraceful Waste of Space* (*DWOS*), which took place in two particular locations in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets during the summer of 2009. *DWOS* was specifically aimed at exploring participating youth's movements within external public places of attachment, exploring how young people re-create and use urbanised public space. Using applied arts' PaR methodology, the project was concerned with investigating spatial performances of second and third generation Bengali diaspora youth living in East London. Various themes emerged from the PaR concerning urbanised youth utopianism, diaspora youth identities, territorialism and gendered space. At times these themes challenge existing theories around urban youth culture, critical thinking about place and space and the performance of place. Young people's use of space *does* appear to be integral to their development as political actors (*sic* Gordon, above), but not always in the way that some theorists might suggest. This paper focuses on the two particular *leitmotifs* (Mackey) that emerged from the *DWOS* project concerning territorialism and gendered spatiality. I use the term *leitmotif* to refer to recurring commonalities that transpired from the practice of this project. In other words, although initially there was no particular hypothesis to steer the project in any particular direction, the outcome of the practice generated various themes, of which territorialism and gendered spatiality were the two areas of commonality between the two participating groups.

Participation and Context of the PaR

DWOS was a two-week, site specific project that looked at how young people use public spaces and make place in the London

borough of Tower Hamlets; how they use their environment to create a safe place, a place they claim ownership of, a place they change or are changed by. This project was delivered in collaboration with 'A' Team Arts and Emergency Exit Arts (EEA), who provided street and visual arts artists Alex Evans and Andrew Sidall to facilitate the young people and put together an exhibition in the final week of all the work produced during the project. EEA's Associate Director Chloe Osborne also helped co-direct the project. In addition, The Ideas Foundation arranged for both groups of participants to attend London Metropolitan University's architecture department on the final day of the project and take part in a workshop in constructing a utopian place. The levels of engagement in this project are set out in Figure 1 below.

I deliberately decided to deliver this project with single gendered groups (a young men's group and a young women's group) in order to investigate how men and women differ in their use of public spaces. In this instance, I used gender as the defining cultural framework. This gendered use of public space was also a key concern for the LBTH youth services. Young women were not accessing as much youth provisions as the young men in the borough. Furthermore, there were numerous gang related conflict incidents in the borough, referred to as 'postcode wars'. Young men in particular were laying claim to specific areas of their neighbourhood, with violent and tragic results. Finding a male group to partake in this project was a challenge. Many of the existing groups we approached were not interested in participating for various reasons. Mogul Ahmed, a local music producer and rap artist who wished to enter into youth work, helped us with outreach for this project. We managed to engage with 8-10 young Bengali men who record music with Mogul and live

in his area. Their ages ranged from 13-19 and their base was the central bench in Innes Park, Bethnal Green. It was difficult to maintain the men's interest for more than a week, but they did return for the exhibition of the visual artwork they produced during their engagement in the final phase of the project.

Katie Burwood, the Haileybury Youth Club's female youth worker, and the head of the Stepney Green area's youth provision, Gwen Jones, were keen to be involved in this project. At the time of this project, there were various consultation exercises being conducted with the young people who attend the Haileybury Youth Club on a regular basis. These talks were based around plans put in place by Tower Hamlets Council's Youth Services for the demolition of the old building the youth club was housed in and requirements the young people had for the new building being designed. How the young people use the space and whether provisions were equally available to both the male and female groups were taken into consideration.

The *DWOS* project consisted of young people engaging in practical arts-based activities that also generated informative dialogue between participants and practitioner, culminating in a short documentary that highlights the key points made by the young people on mobility, gendered space and emplacement.[1] These dialogues were an integral part of the PaR, as were the diverse visual artworks generated by the young people engaged in various arts-based activities throughout their involvement on the project.

1 The documentary is available to view on https://youtu.be/St_DpzckQiQ

The Project	**DISGRACEFUL WASTE OF SPACE 2009** A pilot project that uses applied drama to look at the ways in which young people (living in Tower Hamlets) perform and my place in public spaces – outside, in parks, street, etc. as well as in transition.	
The Researcher	**Dr Canan Salih** Working as a Youth Arts Officer for Tower Hamlets youth services under employer – 'A' Team Arts	
The Partners	**Emergency Exit Arts** EEA is an arts organization, based in Greenwich, specialising in creating spectacle, site-specific festivals and cultural celebrations in public spaces. EE a provided two visual artists and a participation officer (Chloe Osborne) to the project.	**Ideas Foundation** And organization aims to increase diversity in the creative industry through working with industry partners and young people, 13 to 19 years of age. They provided a film documentary on the project and arrange to visit to London Metropolitan University's architectural department on the last day of the project.
The Participants	**Innes Park Boys** Boys of Innes Park outreached by one of our volunteer youth workers, Mogol Miah. Studio engineer, Miah, had helped some of the boys record their rap/spoken word compositions. The boys agreed to take part in the project and chose Innes Park as the site they wished to work in.	**Haileybury Girls** The girls only summer project based at Haileybury Youth Club in Stepney, Tower Hamlets. Head youth worker, Katie Burwood, outreached the girls specifically for this project. Burwood and the youth club's manager wanted to research why the girls-only provisions are so low attended. All the girls were Bengali.
The Outcomes	**The Boy's Work** The boys produced plaques with their own individual designs on them - related to the use of public spaces and belonging. The also produced sign posts that were then erected onto a park lamppost for public display	**The Girl's Work** The girls produced a number of layered maps of their everyday routes and spaces, as well as fabric paintings with space related motifs.
	The Exhibition Next exhibition of the girls' work and the boys' plaques were presented at the Brady Arts Centre, Whitechapel. The Brady Centre is the base for 'A' Team Arts. Members of the public and the Mayor of Tower Hamlets attended the exhibition.	

Figure 1: An outline of the partners and contributors of DWOS. Author's own (2009).

The difference in practice between the young men and women were not based so much on their genders but on the artists who were working with each group and the space in which the groups engaged in the arts practice. Andrew Sidall and I worked with the young men outside in Innes Park, while the following week Alex Evans and I worked with the Haileybury young women in the youth club. Sidall's approach to the work was much more street art-based. He looked at where the young men placed themselves and the significance of the park space to their sense of identity before suggesting that they create plaques and signposts. These elements spoke to the transitional aspect of the park, whilst underlining each individual participant's personal character. Evans's approach to the artwork with the Haileybury young women was more about the question of safety and their use of public spaces outside of the youth club setting. The women, therefore, used mapping, fabric painting and stenciling to reflect on places they inhabit on a regular basis and how these places make them feel, whether it be safe or threatened. Both artists (and groups) then joined together at the end of the two weeks to prepare an exhibition of the work produced, which was then presented to the local mayor of Tower Hamlets.

The types of questions that were asked of the young men during their engagement on the project mainly referred to why, how and when they used the park space, as well as what they think others' perceptions of their spatial practices may be. The young men were eloquent in expressing what the park meant to them at that point in their lives and a discussion evolved around how these expressions of meaning may be presented within the park space for others to see. The young men were encouraged by Sidall to produce plaques (see Figure. 2 below), where each plaque signified its designer's response to various questions

around spatial practices. Some plaques represented direct references to the area, using images of a built environment, apartment blocks and houses that seemed to represent participants' homes. There were also suggestions of economic significance, like using the term 'Fat Kat' (which refers to wealthy individuals who exploit the community for their own personal gain), and images of marijuana (of which the young men alluded to dealing with others).

Figure 2: Plaques created by the boys of Innes Park during *DWOS*. Author's own (August 2009).

The idea of signposts came from one of the young men (see Figure 3) who wanted to leave the signposts in the space as a clear message of what the park meant, as a significant transitional space (both literally and chronologically) in their lives. The construction of the signposts in Innes Park represented the start of 'avant-garde practices' as political steps towards a psycho-geographical approach to investigating how the young men on the project used the park. The very nature of the signposts implied mobility and movement, while their positioning indicated a pause, an aesthetic observation of art work and, more importantly for this enquiry, a reflection on the narrative of each signpost and what that narrative tells us about its relator.

Figure 3: Signpost created by the boys of Innes Park during *DWOS*. Author's own (August 2009).

Figures 4 and 5: Haileybury Girls Group, examples of layered cartographies created during *DWOS*. Author's own (August 2009).

The Haileybury young women group, on the other hand, were asked by Evans, to create drawings of maps that depicted particular sites they felt evoked feelings of safety, belonging, and security, as well as fear, threat and discomfort (see Figure 4). These maps consisted of double layers of card and tracing paper and were intended as a planning exercise that would lead to a performance of these places through walks to each site. A lack of time meant this transition into direct performance did not take place. Yet the creative palimpsest cartographies and small fabric paintings with space related motifs, created by the Haileybury young women, along with the plaques and signposts created and displayed by the young men in the park, were all important and informative parts of the PaR. Equally, the significant dialogue that took place during this engagement, between the young men, the women and the artists and researcher, were essential to the research. It was this engagement in dialogue and the outcomes of each group's creative task that raised the two main themes of territorialism and gendered spatial practices.

I had a number of concerns about *DWOS*. The project was intended as a pilot project with the initial intention of exploring ways of using applied drama practice as a research tool. The original intention was to adopt and adapt some practical approaches to walking, pausing and performing of mobility and place-making in public spaces. Some of the activities were derived from Wrights and Sights' *Mis-guides to Anywhere* (Hodge *et. al*), but most were my own devised ideas on walking, mapping and exploring routes through various places, familiar to the participating youth. Although it was extremely useful to collaborate with the artists employed by EEA, who had extensive experience in working with young people outside in public spaces the ways in which *DWOS'* methodology digressed away

from my original plans of cartographic performance activities into more visual and creative arts practices, and the fact that the participation of the Haileybury young women's club did not take place in an outside public space as originally intended but within the walls of the youth club, were problematic for me as an applied drama artist. The original idea of exploring, through applied drama practice, public sites that resonate with participants' identity did not happen. Furthermore, as an applied drama practitioner I felt the work was heavily visual arts-based rather than performance based. Yet, as a researcher, although the engagement with the Haileybury young women did not reach its expected fruition, and although the performance element of *DWOS* seemed somewhat lacking, the dialogue documented, as well as the creative outcomes of the two-week project, provided me with much to think about. The two key themes that emerged from the practice and informed the direction of the research were perceptions around territorialism and gendered spatiality. These themes emerged from the conversations we had with the young people during the project and were reflected in their responses to the sites they inhabit (Innes Park young men) and those they reflect on (Haileybury young women). The next section of the paper examines how issues around gendered space and territorialism were evoked through the PaR of *DWOS*. The question of whether territoriality is a gendered tendency or whether it exists within both genders, albeit in different forms, is tackled through an analysis of the young people's response to questions and the spaces they inhabit and discuss through the PaR.

Authority, Gendered Space and Territorialism

The separate, gendered nature of *DWOS* resulted in issues of authority, gendered space and territorialism, which provoked questions around controlled performative spatial engagement.

Who holds the authority in the space the young people engage in, for example? To what degree, if at all, is this power negotiable? What implications does this authority have on the young people's performative behaviour and relationships within the space? Considerations of these themes and questions form the structure of this paper.

Controlled performative spatial engagement was demonstrated in two specific ways from each gendered group. For example, in Innes Park, an articulation of subtle, performative negotiations took place between the youth and the different members of the public who use the park and the youth club. During our engagement with the young men of Innes Park, a daily time was set up for working with the them. This schedule, arranged by the men themselves, seemed non-negotiable. There were several reasons for this, some of which involved the young men's own personal commitments to family. The men would not be in the park any earlier than 2pm, at which time most of the users of the park were young mothers with children. Even the far end of the park, specifically used by drug and alcohol users and dealers (referred to as 'winos' by the young men), did not tend to become populated before 4pm onwards. It seems that the demographic network of the park was somehow negotiated in such a way that different social groups operated according to certain times of the day. What isn't certain is whether the young men's own commitments and preferences meant they did not lay claim to their 'turf' at an earlier time, or whether they actually acknowledged and conceded the other park consumers as an act of underlying democratic practice. This idea of democratic practice challenges notions of territorialism that arose during the work with this youth group and is discussed further on in this paper.

During the second week of the *DWOS* project, when

we engaged the young women of Haileybury Youth Centre in various arts based activities, a different performative spatial engagement emerged. The fact that the youth club is a place that was provided specifically for young people meant that it required a different set of negotiations between the users themselves and between the users and the providers (in this case Tower Hamlets youth and community services). The issue of gender differentiation, in the dialogue between the users, is a key factor in negotiating the use of space. In the last OFSTED inspection of Tower Hamlets Youth Service provision. OFSTED recommended the youth services 'increase the participation of all groups of young people (13-19 year olds), particularly girls and young women' (Office for Standars in Education 58). At the time, the demographic framework of the borough consisted of 30% Bengali Muslims (it is now above 40%). Whether it is because of restrictions in participation of youth provisions placed on Bengali women by their families, or whether because of the attitude towards women's work by youth work providers in the borough, in 2009 there was a deficiency in single sex youth provision for women. This was also identified in the 2009 Equality Impact Assessment carried out by the youth services, which stated: "it has been identified that there is a gap with regards to Young Women's work, Somali and Faith based work in the Community. Therefore courses have been created to promote the equality and opportunity for these groups." (Tower Hamlets Children's Services Community Resource Team 14). The assessment suggests that plans were in place to address the deficiency in women's provisions.

DWOS challenges these statistics of inequality. Reasons why young women of Tower Hamlets may or may not use provisions provided by the youth services emerged through

the exchange of dialogue and the evidence of visual arts generated during the PaR. Although, for me, *DWOS* was a pilot that offered an opportunity to try out various PaR methods, the reason for 'A' Team Arts, EEA and Ideas Store's support was because Tower Hamlets youth services funded the project as a means of identifying how and why young people use public (and provided) spaces in Tower Hamlets. During discussions with the young women whilst making the maps one of the participants stated that "boys get more". They discussed the reasons behind this inequality and expressed exasperation at the self-imposed restrictions the young men seemed to place on themselves, through territorial attitudes.

DWOS suggested three main areas for consideration in the main PaR activity with the participants, youth territorialism, gendered spatiality and spatial authority. These are not autonomous but interlinked through complex correlations of class, gender and ethnic cultural agencies that affect the mobility, perceptions and expectation of Tower Hamlets youth. The territorial attitude of the young men in Innes Park relies on perceptions of power and authority of spatial consumption that can arguably be construed as gender or non-gender based. The young women of Haileybury youth club may not experience this territorialism for various reasons that are discussed later on in this paper, but the challenges they face with the use of space at the youth club could arguably be as a result of gendered spatial performativity that forms a part of their social construction and, interestingly, appears to be reflected in the youth service provisions.

Gendered Practice of Space

During the *DWOS* project, working separately with the two

groups of Innes Park (young men), and Haileybury Youth Club (young women) inevitably required an interrogation into the difference in spatial practices and perceptions of each gendered group through dialogue with and observations of the young participants. What emerged was an interesting paradox in how the young people in the project managed and negotiated their emplacement and mobility within the borough.

As all the young women in *DWOS* ended up being young Bengali Muslim, it could be assumed that their encounters with spatial restrictions were dictated by religious, cultural or social conventions. It has been suggested in some writing, for example, that such restrictions on the mobility of Bengali young women are as a result of religiously informed cultural expectations and practices that may dictate gendered space (Ullah, Alexander, Firoz & Rashid). Yet in the *DWOS* project, although both groups were from the same religion, religion was not mentioned as an identifying factor in their mobility practices and the way in which they used public spaces. Through conversations with the young women, it became apparent that most of the restrictions in mobility in and around the borough were not so much dictated by their religion and cultural background, but by a fear of violence (although it is not necessarily clear by whom). Ansar Ahmed Ullah refers to the ghettoization and restrictions in mobility of East End Begalis deriving from threats of racial violence in the early 1980s:

> racial tensions between Bengali and established white British communities caused a rise in racial violence. This caused Bengali immigrants to mould themselves as a community in an unfamiliar and hostile environment. The fear of violence in other areas meant an influx of new immigrants to this already populated area of the

> east end. Research indicates, to avoid racial harassment groups tend to find solidarity within their own communities. (3)

The young women of Haileybury Youth Club (and even the Innes Park young men) did not see racial violence as a threat to their mobility at the time of the project. Although the Innes Park young men experienced tensions in mobility as a result of territorialism, the women's freedom from such violence presented them as, what Nishat Awan calls, "quasi-subjects, able to mediate between here and there, not just 'belonging' to one place or another" (268). The performance of the quasi-subject is achieved through various negotiations of cultural influences and different places visited, inhabited and passed through.

Ethnic cultural identities, like those of the participants of the Haileybury Youth Club, lends itself well to negotiations by a youth culture that can adapt the concept of mobility to mean more than "movement in physical space" (Stald 145). As the Haileybury young women exemplify, "mobility is about being ready for change, ready to go in new directions" (Stald 145.). The confidence and presence of these Bengali women, in public spaces, exemplifies a shift in, at least, ethic cultural practices (if not social or youth cultural practices) from previous generations.

Gill Valentine suggests "public space is not just 'there,' but is something that is actively produced through repeated performances" (216). This framework of repeated performance is a concept applied to gender studies, first proposed by Judith Butler in 1996 as a claim that, "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory framework that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33). Valentine suggests that the production of space, like that of gender, is also a perfor-

mative act that, through repetition, becomes normalised. An example of the normalisation of gendered space could be to suggest that the home is the female domain whilst the streets are "boys' places" (Valentine 205-220). When asked about the restrictions on their mobility by their families and cultural agencies, most of the young women of Haileybury Youth Club contested this claim, stating that their parents trusted and allowed them to move freely within their everyday routes. However, during the exercise of naming public places where they felt unsafe, many of the young women wrote "outside", "in an alleyway", or "outside by myself at night." This implied a sense of restriction that challenges their sense of safety.

> Deidre Heddon states:
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> Space is also gendered as it is raced, and the vast majority of women will have felt out of place at some time, with 'public space' having been historically constructed as masculine, with so-called 'private space', typically domestic space, perceived as the domain of the feminine (Duncan, 1996) […] The continued fear that women experience in all sorts of so-called public places suggests that place, then as now, still does not belong equally to all. (122-144)

Yet Heddon's claim is challenged by the Innes Park gang's mentality that also evokes a fear of violence, in this case brought on by a territorialism that directs them towards *self-imposed* restrictions around where they can and cannot go in the borough. In other words, the so-called power of the male-biased inhabitation of public spaces bestowed upon the Innes Park young men that is supposed to signify a lack of freedom for the young women is curtailed through their territorial attitudes. The Haileybury

young women did feel, however, that they had more freedom to move about in public places, as they did not engage in the territorial practices adopted by the young men. It seems logical therefore to suggest that perhaps the young women in the project empower themselves through their disdain and rejection of territorial attitudes that would at any other time restrict their mobility around the borough and beyond, whilst at the same time dealing with an inequality of public spatial engagement because of a fear of violence.

It seems that a fear of violence, therefore, may be considered a key form of restriction on spatial use for both groups of young people in *DWOS*, but for different reasons. Karin Grundstrom defines public space as "often used to describe those spaces of cities such as streets, parks, squares and public buildings that are open to the public and accessible for everyone" (1). Yet comments made by the young participants of the *DWOS* project suggest that this assumed access to public space is denied to the young women of Haileybury Youth Club and the Innes Park young men as a result of the threat of harm that may be owing to their respective genders. According to the Haileybury young women, certain public spaces are considered a threat because of perceived violence associated with them being young women (a specific alleyway or late at night, for example). On the other hand, although the Innes Park group do not necessarily divulge similar fears of threat directly associated with their gender in these spaces, they do suggest feeling threatened in certain public spaces as a result of territorial practices.

Although territorial practices were not evident in the Haileybury group in particular, this does not mean it does not occur within groups of young women at all (Batchelor 125-134). Equally, threats of violence associated with spaces perceived as

unsafe are not restricted to women only. The suggested specificity of gendered restrictions in the *DWOS* project, however, exemplify a form of controlled performative spatial engagement in that perceived threats of violence, associated with specific genders, seemed to control where and how the participating young people of the *DWOS* project engaged in public spaces. The political performance of spatial practices by the Innes Park young men, however, demonstrated how sites like Innes Park are made 'meaningful places' through perceptions of territory and relational spatiality. In other words, as one of the participants states in the *DWOS* documentary "this park has a strong mark in my heart […] the centre of the park is the centre of our life". Perceptions of territorialism and relational spatiality came from a sense of meaning the park had for these young men and the relationships they share within the parameters of the park that evoke this meaning. Yi-Fu Tuan) proposes that "space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning" (136). Marcel Mauss (1950) defines place as "culture localized in time and space". He suggests: "locations in which individuals with distinct identities form human relationships that in turn accrete, creating the sediments of history" (Mauss in Varnelis and Friedberg 2008: 41).

According to the dialogue exemplified in the *DWOS* documentation, the park seemed to serve as a *place* that declared and affirmed the young men's existence and, even though they were aware of the other park users, their sense of territorial control did not seem threatened by these users. Instead, there seemed to be unspoken negotiations taking place to share that site. In other words, although the young men were clearly engaged in territorial tensions that affected their mobility across the borough, their territorial inclinations were not as assertive

when it came to laying claim to the park and sharing the space with other public users. Perhaps this was because other users appeared to be of different social groups. Yet, what if the other occupants of the park were of the same age or ethnicity as the young men? Would their sense of territory perhaps provoke more antagonism and if so, why? A research report on urban youth territorialism compiled by the University of Glasgow and funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2008 states:

> Interviewees in Tower Hamlets described how minority ethnic gangs formed in the face of racist attacks in the 1970s and 1980s. Protection was the main focus of these groups at this stage. As time passed, the ethnic make-up of the area changed and the minority expanded. Thereafter, racial friction subsided, only to be replaced by territorial conflict within ethnic groups. The sentiment of protection was wrapped up with an acute sense of place attachment and could quickly lead to revenge activity if one group thought that another had caused offence. (Kintrea, *et. al* 28)

This "place attachment" is an interesting reason for youth territorialism. The signposts erected by the young men in the centre of the park exemplified, not so much ownership of the park, as much as what the park means to them: a crossroads, a place to stop in transit from home, college and other places and "hang-out", a platform for them to declare their existence, reaffirm their identities and perhaps maintain a level of power against other agencies they may perceive as threatening the construction of their identity.

Conclusion

DWOS began as a pilot project into how applied drama could be

used as a research tool for exploring place-making practices of diaspora youth in public spaces around London. Its digression from the intended applied drama PaR, into applied arts practice was at first problematic for me as an applied drama practitioner and novice researcher. Concerned with what challenges engaging young people in applied drama practice within public sites, may bring to this form of research, *DWOS* was supposed to be a way of tackling these challenges within a funded and supported project. The visual arts practice of engaging the second-generation Bengali participants on the project, although effective in creating dialogues around the themes of public safety, gendered use of public spaces and the meanings attached to certain sites, was not how I envisioned the project to progress. I imagined more performance-based articulations of personal cartographies that would steer spectators into specific sites around Tower Hamlets. This concern aside, *DWOS* was undeniably supported by the various collaborators involved in the project and the quality of youth work practice, as well as the aesthetics of creative work that was generated by the participants, was of high quality. In fact, what began with the purpose of investigating everyday, performative articulations of diasporic identities soon generated some interesting issues around gendered spatial practices that included notions of territorialism and controlled authority. When discussing the gendered use of space, in the section titled 'Authority of Gendered Space and Territorialism', I draw on the writing of Heddon, whose preoccupation with auto-topography as a means of articulating auto-biographical, gendered and spatially led narratives of the self are key in framing the two different views of belonging by the two groups in *DWOS*. Furthermore, Valentine's proposition of young people's use of public (adult) spaces as a means of making private place

helped explain the choices the young people made in what they considered places in which they felt a sense of belonging or threat in the context of the PaR.

This project exemplified the structure of PaR in that, without the practice (whether it be applied drama or applied arts) the key themes, or *leitmotifs*, may not have subsequently emerged for critical discussions. In that respect, *DWOS* was successful in introducing PaR methodologies as a means of investigating the place making practices of Bengali diaspora youth. The works produced by the young people were therefore PaR in that they produced interesting, viable research material to think and write about. It could be argued that the *DWOS* project was, first and foremost, an endeavour of performative research rather than performance. Therefore my reference to Butler was significant to both the performative practices of the young men and women, as well as their gendered response to territorialism.

The concept of young Bengali women's performance of public spaces, young men's territorial attitudes and the challenges of gender-based provisions available for young people by Tower Hamlets' youth services were all explored and at times challenged, through various articulations that included creative examples of work and ongoing dialogue between the artists and young people that engaged in the project. There were opportunities to explore the idea of spatial ownership in more depth, gauging various viewpoints of the young Bengali men, as well as enquiring into how young women consider and use public spaces, with particular consideration given to notions of safety, fear of violence and the social and cultural, if not ethnical, impositions of these threats. References to Ullah and Awan are key in distinguishing the changes in mobilisation and gen-

dered practices of young Bengali men and women from migrating generations. For example, Awan's "quasi-subjects" is an apt classification of the Haileybury young women group's response to notions of territorialism and gendered use of space, as they challenge perceptions of ethnic restrictions based on gender, as proposed by Ullah's observations of first generation Bengali's in East London.

As a pilot project, *DWOS* may not have researched using strictly performance-based practices, but it was successful in identifying a possible form of PaR in the field of youth spatial practices, both engaging young people through the arts and generating interesting dialogue around key themes of territorialism, gendered spatial practices and controlled authority of public spaces.

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