

# H-Net Reviews

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Yuya Kiuchi, Francisco A. Villarruel, eds. *The Young Are Making Their World: Essays on the Power of Youth Culture*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2016. 272 pp. \$39.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7864-9884-0.

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Joining in the scholarship recognizing adolescence as a unique and transitional time in an individual's life, the edited collection *The Youth Are Making Their World: Essays on the Power of Youth Culture* investigates the link between youth culture and popular culture and establishes the ways in which adolescents approach identity formation with agency and purpose. Covering topics ranging from international engagement and religious belonging to social activism and social media, authors from a range of disciplines and professions combat assumptions of contemporary youth as apathetic or disengaged. Rather, they argue, those evaluating youth culture and working with millennials or those belonging to "Generation Y" need to consider the ways in which youth have adopted innovative strategies for expressing themselves, testing possible identities, and navigating both a virtual world and a physical world that is constantly evolving.

While adolescence can seem a time of mixed messages—a moment of both expanding and restricted opportunities—editors Yuya Kiuchi and Francisco A. Villarruel have selected a combination of essays intended to highlight opportunities where youth have thrived. Some of these opportunities emerge from programs established and overseen by adults, while others are youth-led and directed. With a focus on how "youth view their own lives and how they actively pave their own paths for the future while recognizing their pasts and heritage" (pp. 1-2), the essays in the collection pay particular attention to how adolescent youth establish who they are and who they might be. While doing so, they often challenge existing stereotypes and barriers that might serve as impediments to their growth as individuals and as members of

distinct communities.

In consideration of the power of social media, Kiuchi's essay on the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and the power of the online tag #Ferguson considers how the Internet—and Twitter, in particular—allows for a sense of belonging to a movement when physical engagement is impossible. Rather than dismissing online protest as a kind of "slacktivism," Kiuchi sees the use and embrace of such slogans as #iftheygunnedmedown and #HandsUpDontShoot as connected to a long history of phrases intended to connect people to the cause for racial justice (such as "We shall overcome"). Kiuchi likewise connects the use of and questioning of media in such events as Ferguson to the civil rights movement's long history of relying on media to draw attention and sympathy to the quest to eradicate racial inequality.

Where Kiuchi's essay focuses on racial identity, Vicki Burns and Asia A. Eaton's essay on the use of social network sites establishes how girls use the Internet and online activism to combat sexism and gender inequality. The SPARK movement, for example, an intergenerational, international, and girl-fueled online community, "fight[s] everyday sexism" (p. 29). With a petition garnering 86,436 signatures, SPARK elicited a pledge from *Seventeen* magazine in 2012 in which the periodical promised to feature a more diverse array of girls in the magazine and to refrain from altering featured girls' body sizes or face shapes. Beyond this activism, participation in online communities, where girls might participate anonymously, allows for the possibility of subverting tra-

ditional gender norms or trying on identities as they figure out who it is they want to be. Likewise, Nicole Polen-Petit's essay on LGBTQ youth and social media suggests the centrality of the online world to this population's "process of discovering identity and sharing that identity with the global world" (pp. 56-57). As Polen-Petit notes, this is a very different world than that encountered by LGBTQ adolescents two or three decades ago, who navigated the process of identity formation without the support available via online channels.

Other essays consider the potential intersection of popular culture and education as a means of fostering youth development and community engagement. Jesse Silva, Stella Silva, and Joshua Quinn's contribution on the Hip Hop TRiO X-Change (HHX) discusses the outreach program's effort to reach marginalized youth in and around Austin and San Marcos, Texas, and to encourage completion of secondary education and the pursuit of postsecondary education. Students attending the program receive presentations on "college life, culture shock, and financial literacy and budgeting" (p. 140). They likewise hear student leaders' perspectives on the importance of support from family and friends. Hip hop is the link between the presentations, and the use of a medium attractive to the target audience makes college seem "attainable, important and a realistic goal for middle and high school students from disadvantaged backgrounds" (p. 140). Education serves also as a tool of global awareness and as a means of breaking down stereotypes encountered by youth, as indicated by Martha Montero-Sieburth's essay on her American students' on-site evaluation of Amsterdam's coffeehouses and red light district. With conscious instruction on "deconstructing their way of thinking about language use" and "active listening" (p. 185), students thought deeply not only about the culture they had traveled to study but also about their own identities and the culture that had shaped them. Consideration of cultural and public policy differences fostered a nuanced evaluation of and appreciation for the experi-

ences and perspectives of others.

Elements of youth popular culture traditionally dismissed—such as identities formed around fashion—also are reconsidered, as in Mariko Izumi and Naomi Kagawa's essay on the *no-gal* (farm gals) culture in Japan. Identified by their "anime-inspired makeup, bleached hair, and flamboyant outfits" (p. 202), the *no-gals* are likewise focused on agriculture, an "uncool" industry. Shiho Fujita, a former gal model who became CEO of her own business marketing company at age nineteen, led the trend and created her company largely to combat negative stereotypes about gal subculture, which adults deemed vulgar and ill-mannered. Fujita's blog and brand communicated a positive image of gals for critics but also for gals themselves, suggesting that their chosen status as gal is a kind of empowerment or testimony to who they are and what they are capable of. Indeed, through their attention to agriculture, they brought attention to agriculture and made it attractive to others. A previously dismissed subculture, generated and led by youth, became "a positive platform for social engagement and positive youth development" (p. 216).

The collection offers a variety of other essays linked to such topics as dance, sport, and body art. The essays, as a whole, point toward the necessity for a deeper and more nuanced consideration of contemporary youth and the potential means of fostering positive development. Heads of youth organizations, leaders charged with creating or reinvigorating youth programming, and educators wishing to better understand the population they hope to reach will find many fruitful ideas in this collection. As Izumi and Kagawa conclude their essay, they suggest scholars and practitioners of positive youth development rethink what is considered "positive," and by whom. In recognizing youth as agents of their own lives, those wishing to help them reach their goals would do well, as Izumi and Kagawa note, to "work *with* the youth, rather than work *on* them" (p. 218).

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