Big Data and Adolescent Play in Public Space

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Significant strides have been made through design and policy on "youth rights to the city" toward improve young people's health and wellbeing outcomes. However, adolescents, especially minorities, are frequently confronted with institutionalized disparities as they are denied access to participate in urban, public space, through policy (e.g., posted 'no loitering' placards), policy implementation (e.g., police profiling and monitoring), and physical barriers (e.g., skate stops). The current situation has led to a lack of adequate data to support design and policy to improve youth outcomes because: 1. only within the past decade have young people been recognized as having positive developmental opportunities associated with activities outside of home and school; 2. young people, especially those facing socio-economic disparities, are aware of their *a priori* delinquent status in public space and typically move-along in the presence of an unknown adult. Their status limits current research to known samples, such as focus groups and participatory ethnographic methods. While multiple comparative indices on youth health, well-being, and academic success exist, no similar large data set on young people's participation in public life is available. A solution to the deficit in information is readily available through publically available channels young people use daily. The presentation will comprehensively review how social media, primarily YouTube, can contribute to the current lack of data on youth participation in public space. I propose that another means of exploring how design supports cultural diversity at the individual level is through publically posted videos and other social media. By turning urban environments into a stage to support social performances, people play in local, public place for a global audience. I contend that such interpretations are an example of the success of public space and urban design to support social and cultural diversity. During the presentation I will show how the assessment of adolescent *performance* in-place will fill a current void in understanding unstructured adolescent activity in public space. By conducting research using big data—YouTube and online videos—I will identify how *landscapes* across multiple cities support positive behavioral outcomes for *active youth.* I suggest that the inclusion of social media as a research method will help researchers interested in addressing inadequate design policy and practice with highly generalizable findings.

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