

## 16 Power and place for rural young people

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### CONCEPTUALISING POWER

This chapter provides an overview of how power affects, and is mobilized by, young people in rural settings. It also reflects on the theoretical frameworks operationalized in the preceding four chapters. In this process we recognize that each of the authors has very different ways of deploying notions of power in relation to young rural lives. This is a fruitful situation since the most problematic aspect of defining power is that it has no essential materiality (though it achieves material and social effects). Consequently, different approaches to power enable different emphases to be made and a fuller picture to emerge concerning the way power weaves through young rural lives.

We cannot see power; it is invisible, and it takes no constant form. We do, however, spend enormous amounts of time tracing the pathways and effects of power, asking: who did what to whom and what happened? The intangible nature of power creates a dilemma, especially considering Foucault's claim that 'power is everywhere' (1990: 93). Within human geography, power has become a key focus of analysis and contemporary thought; it seems to be everywhere. But this apparent ubiquity of power in the works of geographers has stimulated debates regarding definitions of power, how it is understood and how it is analysed in individual cases. Low (2005) wonders whether the ubiquity of power, and its unspecified use by human geographers, means that any in-depth exploration of the different theoretical manifestations is required. Simply put, Low's argument questions whether we need to ask ourselves what power means, especially since it is a term primarily used to augment explanations of social difference. The ramifications of this position are that it reinforces the unmediated ubiquity of power. It also does not recognize the spatially and culturally divergent ways in which power is manifest across the globe (Taylor 2004). In contrast, Allen (2003) argues that understanding power and its spatial manifestations is a core task. He reminds us that the relationship between people, place, and power creates very real lived experiences that should not be simply characterized as the effect of power—a ubiquitous, yet generalized, mediating force 'out

there'. Consequently, as well as providing an overview of dominant understandings of power in geography, this chapter considers the relationships between power, as a mediating force, on conceptions of young people, rural spaces, and socially negotiated relations.

There are many ways to conceptualize power, and for the purpose of this discussion, frameworks for thinking about power have been divided into two main groups. First, power is seen as an object or possession; something that institutions, groups, and individuals hold, harness, and direct towards others—including young people. In this framework, agency in a realist sense, is placed at the centre of conceptualising the working of power; operated by the haves (e.g. adults or schools) and inflicted upon the have-nots (e.g. young people). As such, power is primarily conceptualized as a negative and dominating process where it disempowers, oppresses, or creates disadvantage. Second, rejecting power as an object, a further approach theorises power as relational. As such power cannot operate independently, but has the capacity to constitute identities. The justification behind this simple division is that much recent debate in geography about which version of power is 'right' has unintentionally utilized this division as a starting point. The following discussion is not intended to be in any-way comprehensive, but rather to be an illustration of the main themes in these perspectives (for a detailed analysis see Allen [2003]).

## CONTRASTING APPROACHES TO POWER

### Power as an object

In this understanding, power is seen to 'belong' to, or be held by, the powerful and dispensed upon the less powerful. Its effects are observed in the actions of individuals or institutions. This book shows the ways that flows of power between adult/youth or parent/child can operate at the individual level (e.g. within families) or at wider social and institutional levels, where adults act in ways to control and mediate the lived experiences of younger people. We can see the immediate attractiveness of this understanding of power. We can identify the unequal forces and indeed we often note those who wield power to the disadvantage of others. However, this conceptualisation of power does not always readily distinguish between authority and influence, nor explain where these come from.

Recently, the work of Bruno Latour (2004) and Actor Network Theory has been adopted in order to more fully understand the operational aspects of authority, influence, and the workings of power. For Latour the social world is made up of a network of actors, including individuals, institutions, and technologies that produce a base or centre from which power is dispersed. Latour sees power as moving amongst a range of actors in these networks, but also that actors, both human and non-human, can do things

(Allen 2003). The network and the actors are mutually constitutive, but the power of one actor over another is dependent upon an actor's position in the network (Latour 2004). It also depends upon the scale of the network. For example, the ability to have children comply with adults' demands can operate differently according to the network in which the actors are operating. In a family network, the positioning of actors and the operation of power will differ from a community network that would include institutions such as the police and schools.

Conceptualising *power as an object* becomes tenuous because at times it, power, is simplistically turned into an object that is wielded by the powerful. The effects of such thinking gives power materiality and can ignore the crucial, yet micro-scale, manifestations and negotiations between actors.

### Power as relational

The second conceptualisation of power focuses upon it as relational phenomena. Undeniably the most influential thinker of 'power as relational' is Foucault (1990: 98) who contends that power cannot be held or bought as if it were a commodity.<sup>1</sup> Likewise Halperin (1995: 16) adds: '[p]ower should not be conceptualized as the property of someone who can be identified and confronted, nor should it be thought of (at least in the first instance) as embedded in particular agents or institutions'. For example, power embedded in adulthood does not give individual agents (i.e. adults) definable power, but the capacity to harness the privilege that operates around adulthood.

Employing a relational perspective, Mouffe (1996: 247) contends that power is not external to subjects and, '...we should conceptualize power not as an *external* relation taking place between two preconstituted identities but rather as constituting identities themselves'. As such, understandings of childhood can be thought of as embedded in the mechanisms of power and privilege; where certain subjects (e.g. children and youth) are constituted via powerful relations and discourses.

Foucault contends that power requires knowledge to have a disciplining effect over subjects (Campbell and Carlson 2002). The disciplining of bodies is not regarded in this relational framework as repressive, but productive (English 2005) where the relationship between power and knowledge is fundamental. Foucault could not envisage a time or point where either power or knowledge operated without the production of the other: 'It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power' (Foucault 1980: 52).

It is also worth noting that knowledge can be produced via other non-powerful routes and processes, and utilized by the 'subjects' both in secret and in public displays of them exercising their own power (see Beazley 2002; Scott 1990). 'Knowledge is power' is the basis of many grassroots status quo movements that aim to disrupt the status quo and raise awareness of

inequality and marginalisation. Thus, knowledge has more than a disciplinary effect, and is fundamental to many resistance movements.

From this relational perspective, power operates in the circulation of discourses that construct sets of 'truth'. Discourse becomes a fundamental instrument of a relational understanding of power (Grosz 1990) as well as a link between language and the production of meanings (see Jones, this volume). For instance, discourses of adulthood speak of—and for—child/ren and also have the power to silence. In this way discourse does not just refer to thoughts or words but to an amalgam of silent regulations and codes that are privileged and unconsciously accepted.

### Power and empowerment

Beyond the binary conceptualisation of power discussed thus far, recent empowerment literature (Parpart et al. 2002; Rowlands 1997) calls for a more nuanced understanding of power which recognizes that individuals or groups of people generally considered powerless exercise power in their own ways, individually and in groups (Rahnema 1992). An 'enabling' definition of power is not simply the ability to gain *power over* something but is a process which includes the development of *power within*, as well as the ability to enhance one's *power with* others who find themselves in a similarly marginalized situation (Rowlands 1997). This *power with* others may provide the collective *power to* bring about beneficial change and challenge existing discourses (Parpart et al. 2002). Rowlands argues that empowerment is personal, relational, and collective whereby marginalized people 'come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and have influence' (Rowlands 1995: 103).

This work on empowerment has been explored primarily in relation to gender relations but we consider it as also pertinent to the study of generational relations. The challenge that the authors in this edited collection demonstrate, particularly in Part III, are the diverse ways that children and young people negotiate their daily lives in rural locales, with instances of both empowerment and disempowerment. These negotiations or operations of power, as illustrated in the following section, are not simply occurring between subjects but are mediated by a range of other factors such as hegemonic notions of rurality, and global inequalities between the Majority and Minority worlds.

### POWER OF PLACE

To appreciate the ways in which rural young people are affected by, and participate in, layers of unequal power relations, it is also necessary to consider how power circulates through, or is associated in the rural environments and contexts in which they live (see Chapters 2–6, this volume). At a



micro level, the power of place involves the everyday arenas in which young people move through a variety of spaces engaging with a range of inter- and intra-generational power relationships (see the following section on ‘Social Relations and Power’). At the macro level, the power of place is partially dependent on a country’s global position in the world economy and may also concern the nature of rural versus urban locations, both of which are discussed below in turn.

### Global power relations

Simplistic distinctions between Majority world and Minority world rural areas are problematic because both children’s and adults’ experiences of rurality vary according to a range of factors such as culture, class, gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, and birth order. Furthermore, the contrasting nature of different rural environments (discussed in detail by Bushin et al., this volume) also differs, both within and between countries (see Schäfer, this volume) as well as within and between continents. Nevertheless, whilst recognising the heterogeneity of rural living, it is still important to acknowledge some basic general differences of socio-economic power between the Majority and Minority worlds.

Despite the great diversity of lifestyles, it is hard to ignore that much of the Majority world is economically poorer than most of the Minority world, something which is reflected in a range of social and economic indicators (see Table 16.1). Whilst being cautious about over-generalising and recognising that there are major inequalities between the rich and poor in both the Majority and Minority worlds, there is no denying that the overall levels of income and standards of living are very unequal. Thus, what it means to be poor in a rural area of the Minority world is different from being poor in a rural community of the Majority world, particularly regarding access to education, health, basic services, communication networks, and infrastructure. In addition, the urban–rural disparities in wealth and

*Table 16.1* Social and economic indicators of poverty by world regions

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>	<i>South Asia</i>	<i>Latin America</i>	<i>Minority World</i>
GNP per capita (\$US)	\$611	\$600	\$3,649	\$32,232
Under-5 mortality rate (2004)	171	92	31	6
Infant mortality rate (2004)	102	67	26	5
Life expectancy (2004)	46 yrs	63 yrs	72 yrs	79 yrs
Adult literacy rate (2000–2004)	60%	58%	90%	98%
No of TVs per 1000 pop (1996)	33	50	204	638

*Source:* Adapted from State of the World’s Children (UNICEF 2006)  
<<http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/index.php>>



services tend to be much greater in the Majority world compared with the Minority world (Drakakis-Smith 2000).

There is no scope here to discuss in detail the reasons for the imbalance of socio-economic power between Majority and Minority worlds. However, it is significant to note that nearly all the economically poor countries of the Majority world were once colonies of many of the economically richer Minority world countries. Dependency theorists and more recently post-development theorists argue that the economic and social development of the Majority world has been shaped to a large extent by its colonial past and continues to be dominated by the Minority world in a system of neo-colonialism (Potter et al. 2004). These authors point out that much of the Majority world remains, to some extent, reliant and dependent on richer, capitalist Minority world countries through transnational corporations, the disadvantages of world trade, loans, and debt (Murray 2006).

In addition, the impacts of globalisation are also uneven and diverse (Hoogvelt 2001). Not everyone benefits from international capitalism nor has the same access to new technologies and forms of communication, such as the Internet and e-mail. Goods, ideas, information, capital, and people can be linked up at ever increasing speed nowadays, but this global interconnectedness is not quite as 'global' for all rural areas, particularly in the Majority world (see for example Beazley; Carpena-Méndez; Klocker; Punch, this volume). Murray argues that the 'relative distance between some places and some people has become greater' (2006: 6) as those who do not have access to new technologies become relatively more isolated (Drakakis-Smith 2000). Hence, we should bear in mind that global economic restructuring shapes people's rural lives to different degrees, especially in Majority world contexts of poverty or HIV/AIDS compared with the more resource-rich environments of the Minority world (Klocker 2005a).

Making a spatial interrogation of power enables us to observe the dynamic ways in which power and place intersect at both macro and micro levels. For example, in the case study of rural Bolivia, Punch (this volume) shows that at the macro level young people are constrained by living in a relatively isolated rural community in an economically poor Majority world country which suffers from a lack of communications as well as limited work and education opportunities. Thus, power imbalances between rural and urban areas, as well as between Majority and Minority world countries, impact upon young people's everyday lives. Furthermore, at the micro level, Punch illustrates how the diverse spatial contexts of home, work, school, and migration can be both enabling and constraining for young people (see also Carpena-Méndez, this volume).

### **The power of the rural? Idylls, performances, and geometries**

Beyond global considerations, attention to issues of power also need to address the *power of place* and *power in place* that young people experience while living in—or originating from—specific rural settings. Cul-

tural geography encourages recognition of powerful (arguably hegemonic) notions of rurality. These are place and time specific within different societies and are instrumental in framing how rural life occurs—and how young people fit into that life. As Cresswell (1996) has shown for other populations in rural areas (New Age Travellers), spatial hegemonies can be produced in societies which subsequently involve the reproduction and naturalization of certain sets of meanings and relations while positing others as disruptive and transgressive. The work of O. Jones (1999) illustrates how powerful notions of Minority world rural idylls produce meanings of rural life as peaceful, safe, and appropriate for children, although children themselves have the capacity to disrupt some of the orderly, functional scripting of the countryside with their play and ‘disorder’ (O. Jones 2000; and this volume). Adriensen’s analysis of Egyptian desert reclamation (summarized in Bushin et al. this volume) also shows powerful imaginations about rurality motivating young families to aspire to a rural setting for their families as superior to an urban one.

In contrast, in the Majority world there can be an over-idealising of urban areas. Cities can be perceived as magnets for rural migrants, offering a disproportionate share of economic opportunities and social services (Drakakis-Smith 2000). Additionally, within the context of global neoliberalism, some rural areas of the Majority world find it increasingly difficult to compete effectively in agricultural production, resulting in decreasing opportunities in the countryside (see Beazley; Carpena-Méndez, this volume). Nevertheless, despite poor prospects, not everyone chooses to leave their rural community and many migrants return after temporary periods away (Ansell and van Blerk; Punch, this volume). Furthermore, there is a recognition that the reality of migrant work and urban living often does not match existing rosy urban myths (Klocker, this volume). Similarly, rural lifestyles in the Minority world do not always match the rural idyll, particularly for older young people (Matthews and Tucker, this volume).

Thus, the power of rural imaginaries is not simply a discursive or ephemeral phenomenon. Using Foucault’s (1990) perspectives, we can also observe that power circulates through rural societies in relational dynamics that are constantly producing, and reproducing rural places and rural subjects (youthful or otherwise). Rural places and people are constructed and contested via circuits of discourse and material relations where dominant meanings and conditions are reproduced, but opportunities for resistance also occur. Taking dominant truths and subjects first, we can see in the case of Cusco, Peru (Box 16.1) that both material conditions and narratives of rurality are entwined in young people’s lives. To have rural origins in this setting is to experience a form of shame and inferiority. So too, Punch’s (2000; and this volume) analysis of Bolivian rural life indicates how young people navigate parental power relations and expectations of obedience and work diligence while also contesting some demands and securing time and space to play or pursue other interests.



**Box 16.1 When rural origins mean shame: Perspectives from child traders in Cusco, Peru—Peter K. Mackie**

Recent research on child traders in Cusco, Peru, illustrates some of the “power of the rural”. Rural–urban migration has resulted in many rural children trading on the streets (Boyden 1991). In the Cusco study, approximately 42 per cent of ambulant child traders in the historic centre of Cusco are originally from rural areas but now work in the city selling their goods to tourists. During the study, when children were often surveyed in pairs, the problematic nature of rural origins emerged. On several occasions a child of rural origin stated that they were from the city. The child only admitted their true origins when corrected by a city friend. But, the question was not misunderstood. The child was not unsure of their origin, nor were they joking. Rather, they overtly chose to state an urban origin because they felt uncomfortable with rural origins. Subsequent, in-depth interviews with 30 child traders explored issues that had been raised in the surveys. Rural–urban differences became more apparent and further understandings of rural origins were framed in their narratives. For instance, when exploring the survey result that had shown children from the city tended to be more likely to sell postcards, clear views of educational differences and implications were identified. Approximately 93 per cent of children commented, or implied, that children from rural areas receive an inadequate education. They suggested that below-standard teaching, and a lack of schooling in general, resulted in rural traders’ inability to work with tourists and to buy and sell goods such as postcards. Furthermore, child traders were asked why city children were able to speak English far more fluently, and the responses also focused on the superior education received in the cities. The following quotations illustrate some of the views expressed by the child traders:

They don’t learn much in the country	(boy, 12, city)
Those (children) from the city are better	(girl, 10, city)
There are no schools in the country	(girl, 12, city)
Those from the city are more advanced than those from the country	(boy, 15, rural)
Teachers are better in the city	(boy, 15, rural)

Interviews with education officials confirmed children’s views (Mackie 2007).



Few teachers are willing to move to work in rural areas, so the state is reliant on local teachers, many of whom have no professional qualification and often only completed primary education themselves. The idea that one origin is 'better' than another is a serious issue in Cusco. The fact that children feel the need to deny their rural background has potentially significant implications; influencing the future choices they make in terms of where they live, work, and bring up their own children. Little is known about how the sense of 'rural shame' is reproduced. Much of the literature suggests that the media are at least partially to blame for shaping children's attitudes (Holloway and Valentine 2000a) and this is certainly possible in Cusco, with a proliferation of satellite television and children's preoccupation with the Internet. However, this study indicates that the notion that city life is 'better' is also being conveyed to many of these child traders through their peers. Children's own lay discourses can perpetuate the powerful classification of rural and urban settings, leading to further denial of rural origins.

But Foucauldian perspectives also emphasize that where power is exercised, so too is resistance. Chapters in this third section of the book are already demonstrating these possibilities. Young people's constructions of their own knowledge, their own 'fun', even their own sexual lives, suggest diverse examples of contestation (see also McCormack 2002; Panelli et al. 2002).

A contrasting resource exists in Butler's (1990; 1993) work on performativity. It is possible to employ her critique of identity (and gender and sexuality) to appreciate how young people's lives might also be understood as reproducing both normative patterns (e.g. of heterosexuality and gender identities), but also strategically choosing and reconstructing opportunities for themselves within their (albeit confined) range of options. These types of possibilities are available for future work of the genre Bell (this volume) achieves where sexuality and the cultural and spatial power relations involved may in fact be both simultaneously reproduced and adapted in various settings (compare also Thomas's [2004] reading of urban teenagers' explorations and performance of sexuality).

A further device for conceptualizing the *power of the rural* rests with the notion of 'geometries of power' (Massey 1993a; 1993b). This supports ideas of rural lives as lived in *places* that will be contingent and relational. Massey's (1991) progressive sense of place enables young people's rural settings to be analysed as an intersection of relations, flows, and interdependencies. Here then, we have a strategy for recognizing that rural lives are lived not only within rural places and power relations, but also that these are interdependent with the wider processes noted above. And the geometries of these conditions provide a conceptual device to acknowledging this complexity, for as Martin explains:

A power-geometry implies that what is important is not just one's location within a set of spatial relationships but also one's ability to control or construct the sites, flows, scales, and spaces that comprise that geometry. Such geometries are political and related to economic, political and cultural relations.... Such geometries shape and are shaped by multiple, differentiated, and unequal subjectivities. (Martin 2004: 27)

This perspective points to further directions in which we can appreciate young rural lives as dynamic, heterogeneous encounters; where power is negotiated in myriad social, economic, and political ways. Some of these are explored in the following section.

## SOCIAL RELATIONS AND POWER

The four preceding chapters, and several previous sections, illustrate the complex, multiple dynamics of how power operates and is experienced by young people in diverse relationships and settings. Throughout this volume, it is evident that inter- and intra-generational power relations are not static. They are fluid and ever changing; evolving over a variety of public and private locations within rural communities.

### Inter-generational power relations

Inter-generational relationships are explored in detail throughout the chapters in this book. Young people are 'entangled' (Sharp et al. 2000) in a range of relationships with adults, including their own parents (most chapters); relatives and neighbours (Beazley); friends' parents (Jones; Matthews and Tucker); teachers (Punch); employers (Klocker); the police (Dunkley and Panelli); landowners (Matthews and Tucker); and other community members (Bell). The influence of adults in determining the behaviours and 'rules' that are expected of rural young people is clearly evident: they may be supportive and offer spaces for opportunity, as well as being disciplinary and controlling. For example, Jones argues that at the heart of the 'rural idyll' in the Minority world lies parental expectations and perceptions that a rural lifestyle is healthier and offers more freedom without the risks associated with urban spaces. Thus, parental desires for their children to be outdoors, facilitates children's ability to create their own rural worlds beyond the adult gaze. In contrast other chapters indicate the controlling nature of adult influence on the lives of young people, revolving around what adults perceive as appropriate. Bell highlights adult perceptions with regard to (in)appropriate sexual behaviours between young people in rural areas of Uganda, whilst Dunkley and Panelli note the regulating nature of the police in reaction to young people's attempts to socialize in public spaces and on private land in rural Vermont, USA. These examples illus-

trate the controlling and disciplinarian nature of adult *power over* young people (Lukes 2005; Parpart et al. 2002; Rowlands 1997) in both Majority and Minority world contexts.

Whilst power can be oppressive and constraining, it can also be enabling, whereby young people manage to exercise power, on their own and with other young people, in their daily lives in order to balance adult demands with their own needs and desires. For example, Punch illustrates that some children decide to collect water with siblings because, not only is it more fun, but it also gives them more opportunity to divert to non-work activities. Thus, whilst fulfilling parental expectations, young people also find time and space to engage in their own activities. This may occur beyond adult surveillance, or may lead to contestation with adults over the appropriate use of space (see Bell; Dunkley and Panelli; Jones, this volume).

Negotiation and bargaining emerge as key features of inter-generational power relationships. Matthews and Tucker, and Dunkley and Panelli illustrate how some young people agree to parental curfews and rules framing their lives, and Punch refers to children's negotiations with parents in order to gain more financial autonomy. Young people also engage in a range of subtle and overt strategies in order to resist adult expectations. For example, Bell describes how girls and boys maintain forbidden relationships in secret, and Dunkley and Panelli illustrate the 'cat and mouse' nature of young people's continued evasion of local police. These case studies illustrate that young people's management of their power relations with adults fluctuates between acceptance, cooperation, and compliance on the one hand, and resistance, struggle, and contestation on the other.

### Intra-generational power relations

A key attribute of Chapters 12 to 15 is that they recognize and further analyse the power relations and power differentials that exist between young people themselves, such as siblings (Punch), boyfriends and girlfriends (Bell), cliques (Dunkley and Panelli), and peer groups (Jones). These relationships can be supportive, where young people develop *power with* (Parpart et al. 2002; Rowlands 1997) each other for social purposes whilst playing and completing household tasks. This indicates the development of horizontal or bonding social capital to fulfil adult requirements as well as to resist adult expectations (Bell, this volume). At the same time, young people develop *power within* themselves through feelings of increased self-esteem and happiness from these relationships, finding people to confide in and trust, and to share their experiences of constraint or hardship. Peer networks are an important source of both *power with and within*, indicated in Laegran's accounts of råners teaching each other mechanical skills to support their identity and perform better, and Schäfer's description of boys and girls helping each other train for future job interviews.

However, intra-generational relationships are not always positive and harmonious. The preceding four chapters also highlight the divisive, conflicting, and hierarchical nature of power relations between young people. Dunkley and Panelli's account of the 'preppy-jocks', 'rednecks', 'stoners', and 'scum' illustrates how young people 'create their own tangles' based on perceptions of identity-based differences. Despite having fluid boundaries, the creation of social cliques leads to some groups being privileged and others marginalized, resulting in varying degrees of social inclusion/exclusion, whilst also inhibiting or encouraging the potential to develop social capital and access opportunities (see also Laegran). Birth order and age (see Punch, this volume), and financial status and consumer power (see Dunkley and Panelli; Matthews and Tucker; Laegran, this volume) are also illustrated to have a similarly divisive influence amongst young people.

Another important theme illustrated throughout this book is the dynamic nature of power relations between young people: the temporality and flexibility according to who they are interacting with, and the environment in which they are situated. For example, Punch explains the changing nature of the migrant identity. When working away from home a young person may experience decreasing confidence (power within), limited social support networks and friendships (power with), and may also be paid less than other employees (economic disempowerment). Yet, when a migrant returns home with cash, he or she may benefit from improved respect from peers and broaden his or her support networks (see also Beazley; Carpena-Méndez, this volume). Migration illustrates the importance of understanding the material, spatial, and relational aspects of power.

The empirical chapters also emphasize the dynamic nature of relationships between peer groups and individuals as a result of changing behaviours, and perceptions of what is good and bad, right or wrong. Dunkley and Panelli illustrate how a girl stopped spending time with a good friend who started smoking pot frequently. This exercise of 'social distancing' illustrates that peer relationships can fluctuate between those of support and inclusion to those which are divisive and exclusionary (see also Bell, this volume).

### **Gendered power relations**

Power relations are negotiated across gender as well as age, birth order, and generation. This is particularly explicit in accounts from patriarchal Majority world societies where socio-cultural norms and practices promote male dominance in the creation of identities and in peer relationships (see Klocker; Bell, this volume). Young people's geographies of opportunity are also gendered. For example, Dunkley and Panelli explain that some parents prohibit their daughters from utilising certain spaces which are known as drinking party spots, and they set evening curfews. Likewise, Bell illustrates that boys in certain areas of rural Uganda are encouraged to build their own houses, and gain greater independence from their parents

than girls, who are more closely controlled and observed. Indeed, it is this house building that increases both boys' and girls' opportunities to develop *power with* each other to resist parental demands and engage in sexual relations, albeit in a male space and on male terms. In contrast, however, Punch illustrates how a brother noted his sister's opportunities to engage in urban work away from the hard grind of rural subsistence labour, thereby increasing her access to a cash income and a higher status as a result of her contribution to the household income.

These scenarios indicate differing perceived and actual abilities to articulate and exercise power in various relationships for boys and girls. However, it is important to emphasize that relationships between boys and girls can be supportive, building *power with* or creating social capital as mentioned in the previous section. While certain relations are gendered and divisive, affecting young people's inclusion in society, others are mutually supportive.

## NEGOTIATING POWER

This chapter and the four preceding ones have shown that interpersonal power is exercised both between and within generations in a variety of ways. Power has multiple and diverse meanings, and as Lukes points out: 'we use the vocabulary of power in countless different ways in different contexts and for different purposes' (2005: 62). The chapters in this book have discussed material, discursive, relational, and spatial aspects of power for rural young people, coinciding with Lukes's view that:

...social life can only properly be understood as an interplay of power and structure, a web of possibilities for agents, whose nature is both active and structured, to make choices and pursue strategies within given limits, which in consequence expand and contract over time. (Lukes 2005: 68–69)

The ways in which children respond to unequal power relations varies not only in different contexts and spaces, in response to different individuals, but also according to young people's actual and perceived competencies. To some extent, the way young people manage and negotiate the power relations surrounding their everyday lives depends on the opportunities and constraints of the rural environment. This includes physical, socio-cultural, economic, and political factors in relation to both global and local conditions. Hence, there is a continuum of power relations where the balance of power between young people, or between young people and adults, moves back and forth according to multiple factors. The dynamics of power which young people experience are not static, but change over time, ranging from shifting balances of power during daily encounters through to more gradual changes over the life course.

It is worth remembering that exercising power may not always be positive and there can be negative consequences to power (for example, see Bell, this volume). Similarly, young people do not always want to exert their power and are sometimes willing to accept a more powerless position or choose not to resist (see Klocker, this volume). Furthermore, the chapters in this section have shown that young people can be powerful and powerless at the same time (Punch, this volume), or in fluctuating cycles according to their shifting geographies of the different arenas of their everyday lives (Dunkley and Panelli; Jones, this volume).

Thus, there are undoubtedly a diverse range of ways that young people experience the mechanisms of power, yet it could also be argued that despite the multiplicity and fluidity of power, one universal characteristic is shared: the social positioning of children is more disempowering compared with the greater capacity of adulthood to maintain its position of privilege (see also Klocker 2005a). Mayall (2002) argues that ideologies, social policies, and institutional practices structure the way that childhood and adulthood are understood, and that these discourses and social practices are mediated through adults, thus enhancing an adult-based power in society. Thus, she calls for greater exploration of childhood as a relational category:

Study of generationing is essential because childhood is essentially relational with adulthood, not least because the power to define it lies with adults, who define it as different from adulthood. Children are in no doubt that childhood differs from adulthood. (Mayall 2002: 40)

The chapters in this book provide many examples of the complex and multiple ways in which rural young people's everyday lives are enmeshed in different layers of unequal power relations. They experience *power over*, *power with*, and *power within* but their structural positioning constrains their ability to exert *power to* challenge and transform generational hierarchies (see also Parpart et al. 2002; Rowlands 1997).

## NOTES

1. But note Rufo's (2003: 68) cautions about providing discourse with such power and agency. He asks: 'If a discourse can be called 'powerful', where then does that power reside'? Opponents of this conceptualisation of power argue that it withdraws the possibility that the action of the individual or groups can produce social change, where any shift in the relations of power can work in favour of the social order.