

Alexandra Lee PhD thesis abstract

Reimagining Motility: Young Mobile Asian Australians' Reorientations to the Future

Through emerging paradigms such as 'mobile transitions' (Robertson, Harris, et al., 2018), recent youth mobilities scholarship has worked to productively 'unsettle' the linear trajectories through which youth mobilities and transitions have been historically understood. However, my thesis argues that this scholarship has yet to critically engage with the emplaced, embodied, and more specifically *racialised* orientations through which young people's movement departs. Taking up calls to unsettle whiteness in Australian youth studies (Idriss et al., 2021), and to disrupt 'methodological whiteness' (Bhambra, 2017) in mobilities research (Benson & Lewis, 2019), I thus examine how possibilities and *capacities* for mobility (understood as 'motility' (Kaufmann et al., 2004)) come within reach, or within imagining, for racialised young people—specifically, young Asian Australians. In doing so, I put forward a new conceptual framework of *racialised (im)motility*, which draws on critical phenomenological theorisations of bodily 'motility' as it is conceptualised in relation to systems of whiteness and racialisation (Ahmed, 2006, 2007), to further develop conceptualisations of 'motility' in youth mobilities and aspirations scholarship (Cuzzocrea, 2018).

Applying this conceptual framework to a qualitative study of 20 Asian Australian young adults who have lived overseas, I ask, how might youth mobilities studies reframe transnational mobility from the perspective of young people departing places where they are *already* positioned as out of place (Alloul, 2020; Mandin, 2020)? How might we reconceptualise the meaning of 'going away' for racialised young people, who may feel 'stuck' at not only biographical but fundamentally *bodily* levels in the places they depart (Ngo, 2021)? From this emplaced, embodied perspective, the thesis argues that transnational mobility represents a possible 'interruption' to the specific orientations of *racialised immotility* that participants had previously habituated in the places they departed (Ngo, 2017); as, through the experience of being in new places overseas, participants perceived alternative possible orientations to motility, and ultimately, futurity, in relation to the new places and communities they inhabited (Prince, 2014). Further, I explore how these experiences of new forms of motility overseas might enable racialised young people to re-narrativise their biographies (Thomson & Holland, 2015)

and crucially their futures, in relation to past experiences and perspectives, and through relationships with new communities (Fricker, 2007; Hull, 2017).