Wellbeing, Space and Society 3 (2022) 100101

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Wellbeing, Space and Society

journal homepage: www.sciencedirect.com/journal/wellbeing-space-and-society

Freedom through constraint: Young women's embodiment, space and wellbeing during lockdown☆

Sarah Harding *, Laura Mazzoli Smith

School of Education, Durham University, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Wellbeing
Space
Lockdown
Lifeworlds
Relatedness

ABSTRACT

Following the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdown restrictions in March 2020, young people were suddenly faced with a reduction and reconfiguration of the spaces in which they could 'be'. This paper explores how in this lockdown context, young women (aged 10–20) experienced their bodies and wellbeing, where traditional social connections (particularly school and physical connections) were not possible. Based on qualitative responses ($n = 511$) from an online, open-ended survey on wellbeing, physical activity, body image and social media usage, we explore how a reduction and reconfiguration of space, understood relationally, contributes to an individual's wellbeing. Using abductive reasoning and taking a phenomenological approach, we concentrate on the embodied experience of wellbeing and how this links to the spaces in which the body is lived. We suggest that the removal of spaces during lockdown, which on the one hand can be seen as problematic for maintaining wellbeing, also enabled many young women to experience new connections – with their bodies, family, and the environment and nature, that supplemented previous connections and fostered positive relationships and wellbeing. The removal of specific performative modes of judgement associated with the school environment was a positive influence on many young women's relationships with their own bodies and their wider construction of wellbeing, but increased use of social media spaces were found to reconstitute these performative experiences. The benefits of the specific and newly delimited freedoms associated with the forced lockdown have implications for an understanding of embodied wellbeing that is not individual, instead embedded inextricably in relations of connectedness with others in space and the nature of these intersubjective experiences.

Introduction

The concept of wellbeing is used universally in daily discourse, yet there is little agreement about what wellbeing is, how it is defined, and how it can be developed (Dodge et al., 2012; Huppert 2014; Waldron 2010; Diener 2009). The importance of a clearer understanding of wellbeing is emphasised by growing evidence that the wellbeing of children and young people is an increasing concern across many countries globally (Vizard et al., 2020; World Health Organisation, 2020). Specifically for young people, cultural advancements, including the rise and influence of social media, coupled with the pressures young people face as they transition into adulthood, are associated with a decline in wellbeing (Buckingham, 2008; Cooper and Hornby, 2018; Fardouly et al., 2015; Perloff, 2014). Yet the distinction between mental health and wellbeing is also complex and contested (Huppert, 2014). Here we consider wellbeing through embodiment and spatiality, rather than the more usual framework of eudaimonia and hedonia (Hutto and Myin, 2013). We consider young women's experience of embodiment in the specific spatial and relational limitations and reconfigurations of lockdown as a novel way into better understanding how wellbeing as an embodied concept is lived and experienced by young women.

The importance of attending to the body, embodiment and physicality specifically in relation to wellbeing is discussed through a variety of approaches. We orientate our study in a manner that attends to the subjective experience and understanding of wellbeing, rather than its measurement (Diener, 2009). We approach this specifically in terms of the lived experience of embodied wellbeing and in so doing argue that this necessitates the holding of a conception of wellbeing as plural (Mitchell and Alexandrova, 2020). Accessing young women's own experiences of embodiment and wellbeing in this way is thus a largely

☆ (Dr Harding no longer works at Durham University, and since completing this research has taken as position at CFE Research.)

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: s.n.harding81@googlemail.com (S. Harding).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wss.2022.100101
Received 31 December 2021; Received in revised form 3 August 2022; Accepted 16 August 2022
Available online 17 August 2022
2666-5581/© 2022 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

phenomenological pursuit, dependant on rich insights that give us more direct contact with what these experiences might be (van Mannen, 2016).

Bodies are lived in specific spaces, which draw on connections between the self, the environment and others. The lived body is the basis for experience, and we are born into a coexistence of living bodies (Merleau-Ponty, 2014.) The human lifeworld conception (van Mannen, 2016) holds that space - lived space or spatiality - is the context in which social connections and relationships are built and maintained. For young people, forming social relationships and positioning themselves within their wider social network is an important factor for identity formation (Author anonymised; Read et al., 2011). The space and context of schools represents the environment in which many important connections are formed and negotiated for young people. However, the intense nature of schools as being sites of social judgement and normative pressures can have some negative connotations for young people's wellbeing (Bakker et al., 2010; Carey et al., 2013), and the dimensions of evaluative judgement can be more intense for young women (Author anonymised). Therefore, exploring how spatial connections and embodied wellbeing are experienced when available spaces are altered – such as the case when restrictions were imposed during the first national lockdown for COVID-19 in the United Kingdom (March–June 2020) – is an important avenue for research, as it allows us to ascertain some of the characteristics of spaces that may allow wellbeing to flourish for young women.

Drawing on qualitative survey data obtained from 511 young women (aged 10–20) during the first period of national lockdown in the UK (March–June 2020), this paper explores how young women experienced their bodies at a time when available spaces for young people to 'be' were limited – school buildings were closed and education was conducted remotely, people could not meet or see others in person, and no communal gatherings were possible (UK Government, 2020). The period of lockdown in response to COVID-19 represents a form of natural experiment - society was exposed to a condition in which normal social connections were disrupted, in a way that was unplanned by the researchers (Craig et al., 2012). In this case, young women not being able to attend school, only allowed out of the house for one hour a day for exercise, is a stark change to 'normal' life. Whilst some spaces and forms of communication and relationships were lost, others were present. Assessments about the impact of the removal of a normally 'taken--for-granted' element of social life are therefore possible in such events and lend themselves to phenomenological investigation of the taken-for-granted experience of embodied wellbeing. Key to our argument is that the qualitative, in-depth and reflective nature of the survey data that were obtained from our sample during this period of social restriction provides phenomenological insights into this embodied experience. Importantly, in this paper, we provide a new theoretical reading of the nuanced relationship between freedom, space and connection for how embodied wellbeing can be conceptualised, drawing on largely psychosocial understandings of intersubjective processes and the socially situated self.

Literature review

The key areas of literature on which this paper is based relate to space and place, as well as relatedness, as constitutive of embodied wellbeing. These concepts are our top-level themes which encompass our codes, of which we will relay details of our analysis further in the next section. This literature review will summarise the key ideas relating to these areas and how we are using these concepts in our abductive phenomenological analysis and reconceptualisation of wellbeing.

Wellbeing and embodiment

As has been documented elsewhere (Atkinson, 2013; Dodge et al., 2012; Phillips et al., 2015), wellbeing is difficult to define, and different disciplines have attempted to conceptualise wellbeing. The dominant understanding is that wellbeing is a multidimensional construct (Kiernan, 2020). As a result, there are often tensions between psychological, sociological and medical definitions of wellbeing that can be problematic for both academia and the general public in understanding wellbeing. For instance, wellbeing is often used as a synonym for health (Atkinson and Joyce, 2011), therefore an unclear definition poses significant ramifications for measuring health and/or wellbeing.

For this article, we are situating our view of wellbeing as embodied, context dependant and relational (Atkinson,2013). Furthering this perspective, the social dimension of wellbeing is therefore critical (Keyes, 1998), and this was brought into stark relief with the context under which this paper was written – the restrictions and lockdown caused by COVID-19 – where social connections and possible opportunities for physical connection were curtailed (UK Government, 2020). If wellbeing can become stable when our habituated routines of daily life mediate consistent representations of our wellbeing (Atkinson, 2013), then exploring young women's wellbeing in a context where habituated actions and practices were stopped, enables an exploration of the lived experience of wellbeing as fluid, dynamic and malleable where new habituated practices become possible.

As Freund (1990) argued, the fusion of mind and body is essential for the sociological study of emotions and health. Working with the premise that one's relationship with the body is integral to wellbeing, and that wellbeing is embodied, our focus is on experiences of subjective wellbeing as mediated through embodiment, or as beginning in the lifeworld (van Mannen, 2016) and which we aim to bring into reflective awareness through this study. As such, our analysis belongs to (Huta and Waterman, 2013) category of 'subjective experiences, emotions, and cognitive appraisals' of wellbeing (1431). We are therefore framing this study through a phenomenological approach to well-being that takes account of the lifeworld existentials of temporality, spatiality, embodiment and intersubjectivity (Dahlberg et al., 2009; van Mannen, 2016). If we attend to the notion that different spatialities allow different modes of subjectivity then so will they also support different experiences of wellbeing (Ivinson and Renold, 2013).

The next sections will specifically explore the two conceptual areas that will inform the rest of the paper: space and place, or spatiality, and relatedness, or intersubjectivity.

Space/Place and wellbeing

Space and place are the contexts in which wellbeing is experienced. How we respond to our external conditions can influence our sense of our embodied self and wellbeing (Freund, 1990). Geographical analyses of space and wellbeing have suggested that there are four overlapping spatial constructs that explore the relations between space, place and wellbeing: spaces of capability, integrative spaces, spaces of security and therapeutic spaces (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007; Phillips et al., 2015). Integrative spaces, which refer to the role of social networks on wellbeing, and spaces of security which concern perceptions of security and risk that affect wellbeing – are most relevant for our discussion, which centres on how relatedness is crucial for developing positive relationships with the self, and others, whilst simultaneously feeling contained and safe from judgement.

Spaces have strong cultural values that can influence behaviour and how individuals feel they should behave or present themselves (Kiernan, 2020). Relevant to this paper, young people spend a lot of time in the spaces associated with school; and thus the changes to the spaces in which people could 'be' following lockdown is a critical junction for exploring how wellbeing was experienced. Within the space of schools, there are high levels of social judgement and policing of gender norms and behaviours (Author anonymised; Read et al., 2011), and thus the expressions of wellbeing are likely to be mediated by different social and spatial contexts (Atkinson, 2013). It follows that changes to one's experience of different spaces will have an impact on wellbeing and that this can then help to develop a more space sensitive conceptualisation of wellbeing.

Ferraro and Barletti (2016) suggest that there has been an under-appreciation of the role of space in the conceptualisation of wellbeing, which undermines the contribution of culture in forming and informing different discourses and practices of wellbeing. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that one's outward presenting image of wellbeing may differ from one's internal state (Atkinson, 2013), thus suggesting that the social environment and external pressures can influence how people feel able to present their 'authentic' representation of wellbeing. In each space and place, there are constitutive 'rules' and ways of being that are encouraged or rewarded. Therefore, our individual notions of wellbeing are constantly changing and are under ongoing construction through different relationships in society.

Specifically in relation to space, research has shown that engagement with outdoor spaces can be constitutive of wellbeing (Bell et al., 2014), and thus changes to available spaces can influence how wellbeing is experienced by individuals. Andrews et al. (2014) suggest that wellbeing can arise through physical connections with spaces, and the bodies and objects within. Spaces can be places of exploration, and learning new things about the body, being and wellbeing (Phillips et al., 2015). Spaces can be new or novel, and we present data from a lockdown context in which the spaces that young women experienced were novel, not in their newness, but in the relative importance of these different spaces to how we conceptualised our place in the world during this time. This therefore indicates the importance of space for how we can connect with ourselves and the environment, further emphasising the interconnected role between space and relatedness, of which we shall now review the literature.

Relatedness and wellbeing

Relatedness is a concept that necessitates a psychosocial understanding, that is both consideration of individual affect and epiphenomena (Venn, 2010) or where internal and external processes are co-constitutive (Hollway, 2010). We commence from the position that individualism constrains thinking about relationality (Slife and Wiggins, 2009). A weak sense of the relational places individual formation and boundedness as being primary to relations, for instance in the critiques of sociological accounts of community and relationality which are centred on a fixed, stable and pre-existing subject. In contrast, a strong sense of the relational holds relationships themselves as constitutive and immanent (Emirbayer, 1997; Simondon, 2005; Studdert, 2005; Walkerdine, 2010). Here the most basic ontological reality is itself relational (Macmurray, 1991; Slife and Wiggins, 2009). In Emirbayer's transactional approach, the beings-in-transaction only derive their meaning from the transaction and so the basic unit of analysis is not constituent elements, but the dynamic relational process (Emirbayer, 1997; Roseneil and Ketokivi, 2016). An individual in this sense is always in an already constituted field, that alters both itself and others in the field (Venn, 2010). A strong relationalist would holdall conceptualisations of the individual as tentative and in flux, as context is necessarily dynamic and would guard against abstraction and generalisation, which can give the illusion of stasis (Slife and Wiggins, 2009).

We also draw on literature on relationality which goes beyond a formulaic assertion that linkages simply exist, without engaging with the affective aspects of this (Walkerdine, 2010). Hollway (2010), bringing affect to the fore, suggests that there is a difference in social relations and relationality. This point is emphasised by Walkerdine (2010: 95):

I want to argue for the centrality of affect for understanding how people sharing a locality might be held together…There interrelations can be understood phenomenologically as actions, movements, feelings, objects, places and intersubjective bonds…such embodied affective relations are also experienced physically…intersubjective bonds bring feelings of being held, contained, alive.

For Walkerdine, arrangements of space, place and home facilitate particular ways of relating and this community of affect makes possible certain ways of being in relation with others, performed through particular affective practices and embodied dispositions. Crucially for this paper, the absence of certain spaces is also the absence of particular kinds of affective communication. Relations are therefore 'sets of temporal sequences, spatial relations, embodied affects and performances, which are strongly gendered' (Walkerdine, 2010:102). Walkerdine suggests that these affective relational dynamics become visible in particular ways through times of crisis, precisely because of this change to practices, which our study enables us to explore in relation to young women. The maintenance of these relational practices is contained within what we can think of as the social body, with a set of rhythms that can be damaged as much as can the physical body and which suggests the embodied affective relational as central.

Method

An online, open-response survey was developed with a view to eliciting responses from young women that would be open and contain as much depth as possible. To this end an introductory video was provided to contextualise the research and make the survey more personable and so accessible to young people. An online survey was chosen due to the advantages that this medium has, and specifically the advantages during a lockdown period. Using an online methodology meant that a larger range of respondents could be obtained geographically (Wright, 2005). Moreover, using an online format was chosen with the intention of creating an inclusive and relaxed space to allow young women to feel comfortable speaking about how they feel about their bodies. Given the prevalence of social media and online representations of the self, completing an online survey is most similar to the spaces in which young women frequently inhabit and is of course one modality of space which itself was coterminous with some aspects of online space prior to the pandemic, but also was remade in other ways. The strength of the survey method was shown by the high response rate achieved in a survey that was live for only three weeks.

The online survey covered young women's experiences of their body, focusing on levels of physical activity levels during lockdown (comparing to pre-lockdown and future intentions), self-perceptions of their body, presentation of bodies on social media, and potential intentions to be active in the future. The survey was piloted with some young women of the same age as the target respondents, and small adjustments were made to the wording of the questions for comprehensibility. The survey contained open text questions, focused towards a phenomenological exploration of what young women were experiencing and aimed at eliciting insight into their lifeworlds, as well as reflections on their experiences and hopes for the future, offering the opportunity for young women to explore their embodied experiences and desires without predefined categories.

The survey was 'live' for a period of three weeks in May 2020 and was programmed using Microsoft Forms. Participants were recruited through existing contacts with organisations that engage with young people, as well as wider advertising of the study on social media (Twitter accounts and targeting groups on Facebook). In total, 511 young women responded (number obtained after duplicates were removed). The age range was between 10 and 20, and the average age was 14.4. The survey was targeted at secondary school-aged young women (11–18); however, three respondents were outside this age range. A requirement of participation was parental consent, and therefore, these individuals are also included in the analysis as their data was provided ethically and with full consent. The respondents' postcodes were linked to indices of deprivation, and there was a spread across all 10 deciles of deprivation (12.6% were from the most deprived postcodes, and 15.6% were from the most affluent). Due to the open and inclusive nature of the survey design, no further tickboxes of demographics were included. This precludes any analysis of other demographic variables; however, the purpose of this survey was to explore lived embodied experience and develop a better understanding of this through detailed and in-depth descriptions by the participants. In this sense an investigation that is

phenomenological in character can lead to generalisation in terms of what is essential to the experience of specific phenomena (van Mannen, 2016). This is not however to imply that this study is indicative of all young women's embodied experiences in lockdown and further research could look at experiences specifically based on other demographic information. All qualitative survey answers were extracted from the survey and read by both authors before analysis began.

Analysis was designed to take account of the young women's own decisions about how to articulate their experiences and so *in vivo* codes were generated. The first stage was therefore a standard approach to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), where the researchers were both involved in order to increase the reliability of the coding. This approach to thematic analysis was also appropriate because it did not presuppose a theoretical commitment with minimal interpretation on our part (Braun and Clarke, 2014) and proceeded on a line-by-line detailed reading (van Mannen, 2016: 96). Abductive reasoning was then used to derive theoretical generalisations, as described below. During these discussions about coding it was quickly apparent that the codes encompassed a range of aspects of experience that went far beyond what we might have expected to see in a survey on bodies and physicality. It was therefore decided that any discussion about these codes should also go beyond literature directly focused on young women and their physicality and take account of literature that could support an understanding of these wider concerns, as found in our themes and how they were being linked together. A process of abductive, rather than inductive, reasoning was therefore most appropriate.

Abduction is a form of reasoning which is explicitly an appeal to explanatory considerations in addition to what is evident in the data under consideration (Douven, 2017). 'Abduction means that single events or occurrences – by means of concepts, theory and models – are described and interpreted as expressions of more general phenomena' (Blom and Moren, 2011:69). It is sometimes aligned with reasoning to the best explanation (Lipton, 2004), although McAuliffe (2015) argues that this is more properly a description of the last stage of an enquiry. The original meaning of abductive reasoning, coined by Pierce (1903), derives from the logic of pragmatism, that is the generation of an instinctive and meaningful explanation as might be drawn upon in common-sense reasoning and particularly applicable when we have a surprising observation that we seek an explanation for. This leads to theoretical generalisation and inference is from the particular to the general in this sense (Fann, 1970). For Pierce this is the only form of reasoning capable of introducing new ideas, as deduction and induction explicate and test hypotheses based on existing theory or existing data.

Abductive reasoning necessitated broadening the scope of literature that might have been initially envisaged to support analysis. The four top-level themes that emerged as being crucial for how wellbeing was conceptualised were: space/place, relatedness, agency and freedom. For the purpose of this paper, we are focusing on space/place and relatedness, particularly with respect to physical rather than online spaces, in order to explore and develop a phenomenological understanding of embodied wellbeing through the specific context of lockdown.

Findings and discussion

The following sections present the findings and discussion relating to these young women's experiences of their body and wellbeing during lockdown. In our initial analysis, we attempted to keep the concepts of space/place and relatedness separate; however, the iterative process of engaging with the data, literature and our own discussions, emphasised the interconnectedness of the two concepts and the need to present them together.

The first theme relates to how young women experience their bodies and perceptions of their body. The introduction of COVID-19 related restrictions on individual freedoms and opportunities to 'be' in the world had a powerful impact on young women's experiences of their bodies and sense of self. As the spaces that individuals were able to inhabit were reduced in some senses and reconfigured and made more significant in others, this subsequently influenced how people related to social norms and the power of such norms changed (Haslam et al., 2021). A key theme found in many of the responses related to an experience of the lived body and visible and judged. As one young woman stated, 'I can be in the house in an outfit and think I look nice, and then leave and feel like everyone is judging me'. As a result, data we collected suggest that there was a widespread experience in the respondents of less judgement from others during lockdown, offering more freedom to young women to experience their bodies in a kinder space: 'lockdown has made me a bit more comfortable in my body as I worry less what people think as I see less people'; 'I've enjoyed not seeing people as much it makes me not think about my body as much and just focus on eating healthy and feeling comfortable with it'; 'sometimes I feel more confident in my body, because I'm not comparing it to other people in person'. Places normalise practices of division (Dixon and Durrheim, 2004), and for young people, schools epitomise the spaces in which social hierarchies reinforce difference (Author anonymised). Without school, young people expressed a sense of no longer experiencing these divisive environments, and, for some of these young women, the reduction in available space during lockdown offered the opportunity for greater wellbeing less influenced by external pressures to conform in a particular performative relational space. van Mannen's assertion that 'when the body is the object of someone's gaze it may lose its naturalness' (2016, 102) does speak to young women's words about judgement and visibility, where the relational body is experienced differently and as more of an object under the comparative gaze.

These experiences of the relational body have consequences for one's sense of self. Haslam et al. (2021) note that life transitions can lead to people experiencing social identity loss which can compromise their health and wellbeing by depriving them of support, meaning and control. Whilst not a traditional 'transition', the lockdown induced changes to available space and opportunities also suggested that social identity and personal reconfiguration of the self-occurred. For instance, one young woman suggested that 'in general, lockdown has made me reflect on everything'. For some of these young women, lockdown represented a form of dislocation through a removal of space, whereby shared constructions of the forms of located subjectivities that are appropriate in a given space were altered.

The second key theme relates to the environments and role of space in influencing how young women experiences their embodied selves. As young people have experienced lockdown and the changing of their environment, this has changed the field in which they can experience their self and wellbeing. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of field (Bourdieu, 1990), in which fields have their own set of rules that can influence behaviours, the changing environment inhabited during lockdown exerted a different set of rules that young women had previously experienced. Set in the context of physical activity, young women were able to experience their embodied physicality in new spaces. For instance, a common theme in the interviews, expressed by nearly three quarters of the young women, was exemplified in the following: 'I feel like being outside being active is an amazing thing to do – it helps with everything – there are amazing places nearby which I have visited', and 'being outdoors is really important, it might be the fresh air, or a change in location'. Many young people explained that they had explored their local area and found new places in which to exercise and engage in positive health behaviours. These young women therefore experienced new encounters with spaces, and subsequently with the self in the context of those spaces. It is important to note that the act of 'being' implies a connection – an awareness of one's own position and how it relates to others and the environment. Space, and our understanding of the spaces in which we can 'be', depend on connections in order to make meaning of the world around us.

The third theme considers the possibility of new opportunities for wellbeing and how this can be realised by the young women. During the lockdown period, lived space and the lived body were experienced in

ways that suggested the possibility for less judgement, allowing these young women new emotions and feelings that were described in ways suggesting they were constitutive of a healthier and more nourishing experience of self. This led to many of the young women indicating experiences of positive wellbeing and emphasising the importance of space, place and connectivity. This idea connects with a sense of freedom. The freedoms that young women were able to experience were in relation to freedom from judgement and pressures to conform to social norms. For instance, one young woman emphasised that '[lockdown] makes you appreciate the freedom'. It can be argued that freedom during lockdown is a contradiction as one's usual opportunities for agentic decision making and choices were taken away; however, the data suggests that freedom for wellbeing was experienced in the sense of freedom from judgement, particularly with respect to the lived body. This is linked to the concept of wellbeing freedom - the ability to choose things that are constitutive of wellbeing (Deneulin and McGregor, 2010) – the freedom from judgement in school environments meant that young women were able to make choices that allowed a new relationship with their bodies and sense of wellbeing.

However, this was not universally the case and the lived body was still a source of scrutiny in a more private space but here with a different experience of lived time; 'I have always been self-conscious about my body, however with fewer distractions I have been thinking about my body even more'; 'I feel quite disappointed about my body because I have more time to think about it'; 'I do not like my body now more than ever because I am constantly looking at it's flaws and how lockdown has affected it. I am concerned that when I get back to school that I will look really different to my friends as my body has changed'. This theme of more time leading to more scrutiny was also a common one and linked to extended time and also the social media space, which brought with it a different space of scrutiny: 'My body has always been a big problem for me mentally, but lockdown has definitely make me more aware of this… social media has become a competition as to who can get the fittest rather than people wanting to do it for their own health benefits'; 'I definitely feel that I've become more obsessed over how my body looks during lockdown as looking through social media so often makes me compare myself'; 'I've become a lot more anxious and self-conscious about my body during lockdown…I spend all day on the internet seeing photos of perfect people rather than being around normal imperfect people like me all day'. These quotes demonstrate the underlying significance of experiencing the lived body in a performative space and how this appears to be detrimental to wellbeing, whether in the physical space of school, or the virtual space of the online world. This leads us to the next theme of relationality and the inter-subjective experience.

In the data we therefore see a preponderance of relational statements that reflect on the lived body as always inter-subjectively experienced through the embodied practices that young women engage in. We saw an absence from comparison and judgement, as introduced in relation to space above: 'Lockdown has made me care less about my body in a way due to not many people being able to see it, so I feel less self-conscious'; 'going out into the public now causes me great amounts of stress, so going back to my college where there is close to 2000 people will be difficult'. This suggests a direct link to wellbeing as affective terms such as caring and worrying are linked to the gaze of the other, from which the young women are now spared. These quotes are indicative of one of the most common themes in the data, that of freedom from judgement, a word used directly in some quotes: 'nice to not be judged by other pupils!', and the body in relation to the gaze of others, with metaphors for this exposure of the body to the relational view of others also being commonly used: 'Lockdown has made me feel a bit more comfortable in my body as I worry less what people think as I see less people'. As Walkerdine says, 'Absence of a certain space therefore signals the absence of a particular kind of affective communication' (Walkerdine, 2010:100).

This understanding of the relational through which to moderate and manage embodied practices is supported by the concept of strong relationality, with the affective as central (Venn, 2010; Walkerdine, 2010). Through our analyses we found that the practices of embodiment that the young women wrote of could not be understood in a reductive sense of individual bodies. So here the loss of others is linked to experiences of isolation and a lack of communication, which negatively impacts on experiences of the body: 'I feel a bit down most of the time about my body because I am just sitting and thinking about it more and not being able to talk to people gets me down a lot, making me think more about my body and insecurities'; 'I feel worried that I might be getting a bit chubbier, so I then try harder to exercise and try to eat less. It's difficult without your friends to tell them any anxieties. I feel a bit isolated and my confidence is starting to drop'. The paradox of both being less visible in space but more seen with time came together in some responses: 'Lockdown has made me care less about my body in a way due to not many people being able to see it, so I feel less self-conscious. However, lockdown has also made me feel insecure due to noticing more negatives about my body'. We see here how it is more appropriate to conceive of the experience of the lived body as in relational process and not prior to it, predicated on a decentring of the young womens' bodies, in order to better account for how they relay their experiences (Venn, 2010).

Linked to the theme of relatedness is the opportunities that lockdown provided for new relationships, or the development of existing relationships that can positively contribute to wellbeing. New opportunities for spatial relatedness with family members became possible, being linked to the opportunity for exercise or new engagements with local spaces: 'I definitely want to make sure that after lockdown I stay as active as I am now because I [have] genuinely been a lot happier in myself and it really has brought me and my family together (especially me and my brother)'; 'I'd definitely continue going on walks because you get to talk to family a lot more and it's relaxing, especially if I'm worried about something, it takes my mind off it'; 'I like going out for walks with my sister as we talk a lot. I hope that carries on'; 'Passes the time and healthy, gets quality time with my mum'. This brings to mind Walkerdine's theorising of how 'intersubjective bonds bring feelings of being held, constrained, alive' (2010:95). This psychic body for Walkerdine provides us with a sense of boundaries, of wholeness and of containment, that contributes to wellbeing. We can therefore surmise that there was freedom for the young women in terms of the creation of such containment and of safe boundaries, expressed in their survey responses about newly found and appreciated embodied practices with family. It was notable that there were almost no reports of negative lived experiences with family. This was in the context of a time of great anxiety and of newly configured boundaries and heightened constraints, in which feeling contained and held in a positive sense could be seen to link to wellbeing. Lived temporality could be linked to a new-found intensity brought to bear on local spaces and places; 'I feel like I have had time to just process the outdoors and the wildlife around us which before I never really took any notice of'; 'Once lockdown is over I will definitely be continuing to go on walks because I think we take things like that and the places around us for granted'. New-found spaces are also linked to being away from a wider gaze, or with being less visible; 'I have found two secret and virtually deserted places. There is a secret wood where we saw two people and a really quiet bank where no one goes.' This further links to the idea of spaces of security, safe spaces where wellbeing can flourish in an unthreatening and uninhibited manner.

Conclusions

The rich data presented in this paper and analysed in light of the particular theoretical concepts of the lifeworld, can tell us something about wellbeing and its conceptualisation. Set in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the curbing of social life brought about by the UK Government's lockdown regulations, the spaces available to young women to 'be' and explore their wellbeing were severely limited.

This represented a key change to their social lives and a dislocation from the social norms and expectations that typically exist within young people's social networks. Connections can mean to friends, family, but equally to spaces and places that signify meaning and containment in the sense of safe, bounded practices. Our analysis suggests that these experiences demonstrate how an experience of the lived body as essentially inter-subjective and the forming of positive connections is constitutive of wellbeing. Inter-subjective connections are critical but are also experienced as more or less positive with respect to the lived body. Analysis suggests that wellbeing was not experienced in a way that could be conceived of as individual by any of these young women.

Not all young women experienced positive wellbeing in a general sense as a result of lockdown. Across the data, there were different experiences of lockdown and the body; however, the key theme that came out as being essential to lived experience across our sample was the experience of the body and wellbeing as relational. The data have shown that others can be 'real' others of friends and family, but also others on social media and the imagined other in terms of the judgemental gaze. The proportional impact and role of these others has changed during lockdown as certain relationships became stronger and/or weaker and were constituted by changed practices, including significantly around the nature of the performative gaze. For instance, actual peer relationships became weaker for young women when they were not in school; however, for some, these weaker peer relationships instead manifested in stronger imagined others or online relationships - creating another altered performative space and fear about what might be said/judged on return to 'normality' and school.

For wellbeing we can conclude from this analysis that spaces need to be considered 'safe'. Safe to 'be', to explore, and to experience nurturing relationships in a non-performative inter-subjective space. The concept of space as explored here through the phenomenon of a national lockdown and the concept of thick relationality, as was suggested from the data, entails a set of affective relations and practices which are, for many of the young women in this study, containing during difficult times (Walkerdine, 2010). We see the centrality of embodied affective relations and of boundaries to wellbeing and ontological security, and how an understanding of space, which is faithful to the young womens' lived experiences, has to be one where internal and external processes are co-constitutive (Hollway, 2010). Therefore, through having boundaries and containment of certain performative spaces, many of the young women in this study were able to explore through different safe spaces, what we could term spaces of security (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007) their own relatedness, wellbeing and sense of self without the fear of external judgement or the pressure of social norms. However, the reconfigured experience of temporality and an increased inhabiting of the social media space for many, was a source of practices in which embodied wellbeing was found to suffer.

This article has shown the possibilities for developing a related sense of wellbeing, offering ways in which young people can curate environments and spaces through which connections and relatedness can be maximised. These environments were possible for young people through the forced lockdown and resulting limited available spaces. Now that young people are able to attend the physical space of school, future research should explore whether the potential benefits accumulated during lockdown have persisted. Moreover, if young women understand how wellbeing and space are connected, ensuring the positive habits of connecting with others, the environment and the self continue is an important element for promoting through education, social media advertising and existing relationships.

Funding

This work was supported by an Economic & Social Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship for the first author, conducted at Durham University.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the young women who provided such thoughtful and considerate responses to the online survey, for this article would not have been possible without their experiences.

References

Andrews, G.J., Chen, S., Myers, S., 2014. The 'taking place' of health and wellbeing: towards non-representational theory. Soc. Sci. Med. 108, 210–222.
Atkinson, S., 2013. Beyond components of wellbeing: the effects of relational and situated assemblage. Topoi 32 (2), 137–144.
Atkinson, S., Joyce, K.E., 2011. The place and practices of well-being in local governance. Environ. Plann. C 29 (1), 133–148.
Bakker, M.P., Ormel, J., Verhulst, F.C., Oldehinkel, A.J., 2010. Peer stressors and gender differences in adolescents' mental health: the TRAILS study. J. Adolesc. Health 46 (5), 444–450.
Bell, S.L., Phoenix, C., Lovell, R., Wheeler, B.W., 2014. Green space, health and wellbeing: making space for individual agency. Health Place 30, 287–292.
Blom, B., Moren, S., 2011. Analysis of generative mechanisms. J. Crit. Real. 10 (1), 60–79.
Bourdieu, P., 1990. The Theory of Practice. Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, CA.
Braun, V., Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qual. Res. Psychol. 3 (2), 77–101.
Braun, V., Clarke, V., 2014. What can 'thematic analysis' offer health and wellbeing researchers? Int. J. Qual. Stud. Health Well-Being 9, 26152.
Buckingham, D., 2008. Introducing identity. In: Buckingham, D (Ed.), Youth, Identity, and Digital Media. MIT Press, pp. 1–24.
Carey, R.N., Donaghue, N., Broderick, P., 2013. Peer culture and body image concern among Australian adolescent girls: a hierarchical linear modelling analysis. Sex Roles 69 (5), 250–263.
Cooper, P., Hornby, G., 2018. Facing the challenges to mental health and well-being in schools. Pastor. Care Educ. 36 (3), 173–175.
Craig, P., Cooper, C., Gunnell, D., Haw, S., Lawson, K., Macintyre, S., Thompson, S., 2012. Using natural experiments to evaluate population health interventions: new Medical Research Council guidance. J. Epidemiol. Commun. Health 66 (12), 1182–1186.
Dahlberg, K., Todres, L., Galvin, K., 2009. Lifeworld-led healthcare is more than patient-led care: an existential view of well-being. Med. Health Care Philos 12, 265–271.
Deneulin, S., McGregor, J.A., 2010. The capability approach and the politics of a social conception of wellbeing. Eur. J. Soc. Theory 13 (4), 501–519.
Diener, E., 2009. Subjective well-being. Sci. Well-Being 11–58.
Dixon, J., Durrheim, K., 2004. Dislocating identity: desegregation and the transformation of place. J. Environ. Psychol. 24 (4), 455–473.
Dodge, R., Daly, A.P., Huyton, J., Sanders, L.D., 2012. The challenge of defining wellbeing. Int. J. Wellbeing 2 (3), 222–235.
Douven, I., 2017. Abduction. In: Zalta, Edward N. (Ed.), The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/abduction.
Emirbayer, M., 1997. Manifesto for a relational sociology. Am. J. Sociol. 103 (2), 281–317.
Fann, K.T., 1970. Peirce's Theory of Abduction. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague.
Fardouly, J., Diedrichs, P.C., Vartanian, L.R., Halliwell, E., 2015. Social comparisons on social media: the impact of Facebook on young women's body image concerns and mood. Body Image 13, 38–45.
Ferraro, E., Barletti, J.P.S., 2016. Placing wellbeing. Anthropol. Act. 23 (3), 1–5.
Fleuret, S., Atkinson, S., 2007. Wellbeing, health and geography: a critical review and research agenda. N Z Geog. 63 (2), 106–118.
Freund, P.E., 1990. The expressive body: a common ground for the sociology of emotions and health and illness. Sociol. Health Illn. 12 (4), 452–477.
Haslam, S.A., Haslam, C., Cruwys, T., Jetten, J., Bentley, S.V., Fong, P., Steffens, N.K., 2021. Social identity makes group-based social connection possible: implications for loneliness and mental health. Curr. Opin. Psychol. 43, 161–165.
Hollway, W., 2010. Relationality: the intersubjective foundations of identity. Sage Handbook Ident. 216–232.
Huppert, F.A., 2014. The state of wellbeing science. In: Cooper, C.L (Ed.), Wellbeing. John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken: NJ.
Huta, V., Waterman, A., 2013. Eudaimonia and its distinction from Hedonia: developing a classification and terminology for understanding conceptual and operational definitions. J. Happiness Stud. 15, 1425–1456.
Hutto, D.D., Myin, E, 2013. Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds Without Content. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
Ivinson, G., Renold, E., 2013. Subjectivity, affect and place: thinking with Deleuze and Guattari's Body without Organs to explore a young girl's becomings in a post-industrial locale. Subjectivity 6 (4), 369–390.
Keyes, C.L.M., 1998. Social well-being. Soc. Psychol. Q. 61 (2), 121–140.

Kiernan, F., 2020. Emotion as creative practice: linking creativity and wellbeing through the history and sociology of emotion. Int. J. Wellbeing 10 (5), 43–63.
Lipton, P., 2004. Inference to the Best Explanation, 2nd ed. Routledge, London.
McAuliffe, W., 2015. How did abduction get confused with inference to the best explanation? *Transactions of the Charles S.* In: Peirce Soc., 51, pp. 300–319.
Macmurray, J., 1991. The Self as Agent. Atlantic Highlands.
Merleau-Ponty, M., 2014. Phenomenology of Perception. Routledge, London.
Mitchell, P., Alexandrova, A., 2020. Wellbeing and pluralism. J. Happiness Stud. 22 (6), 2411–2433.
Perloff, R.M., 2014. Social media effects on young women's body image concerns: theoretical perspectives and an agenda for research. Sex Roles 71 (11–12), 363–377.
Phillips, R., Evans, B., Muirhead, S., 2015. Curiosity, place and wellbeing: encouraging place-specific curiosity as a 'way to wellbeing. Environ. Plan. A. 47, 2339–2354.
Pierce, C.S., 1903. Pragmatism—the logic of abduction. Collect. Papers 5, 196.
Read, B., Francis, B., Skelton, C., 2011. Gender, popularity and notions of in/authenticity amongst 12-year-old to 13-year-old school girls. Br. J. Sociol. Educ. 32 (2), 169–183.
Roseneil, S., Ketokivi, K., 2016. Relational persons and relational processes: developing the notion of relationality for the sociology of personal life. Sociology 50 (1), 143–159.
Simondon, G., 2005. L'individuation à la Lumière des Notions de Forme et D'information. Éditions Jérôme Millon.
Slife, B.D., Wiggins, B.J., 2009. Taking relationship seriously in psychotherapy: radical relationality. J. Contemp. Psychother. 39 (1), 17–24.
Studdert, D., 2005. Conceptualising Community: Beyond the State and Individual. Springer, New York.
U.K. Government (2020). Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 23 March 2020. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronavirus-23-march-2020.
Van Manen, M., 2016. Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy. Routledge.
Venn, C., 2010. Individuation, relationality, affect: rethinking the human in relation to the living. Body Soc. 16 (1), 129–161.
Vizard, T., Sadler, K., Ford, T., Newlove-Delgado, T., McManus, S., Marcheselli, F., Davis, J., Williams, T., Leach, C., Mandalia, D., Cartwright, C., 2020. Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020: Wave 1 follow Up to the 2017 Survey. Health and Social Care Information Centre, NHS, London.
Waldron, S., 2010. Measuring Subjective Wellbeing in the UK. Office for National Statistics, Newport.
Walkerdine, V., 2010. Communal beingness and affect: an exploration of trauma in an ex-industrial community. Body Soc. 16 (1), 91–116.
World Health Organisation, 2020. Guidelines On Mental Health Promotive and Preventive Interventions for Adolescents. World Health Organization, Geneva.
Wright, K.B., 2005. Researching internet-based populations: advantages and disadvantages of online survey research, online questionnaire authoring software packages, and web survey services. J. Comput.-Mediated Commun. 10 (3), JCMC1034.