

Young People's Future Orientations in Relation to Disability and Experiences With Non-Participation

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Abstract

This paper examines the time and future orientations of adolescents who face challenging life situations due to various disabilities, including visual impairment, chronic disease, and severe learning disabilities. Participants encountered institutional barriers related to their disabilities, which they experienced as “time outs.” Through contrasting cases, we develop a longitudinal typology that connects future orientations with experiences of non-participation from a biographical perspective. Our findings offer insights into the future orientations of young people at increased risk of exclusion, a topic the literature largely overlooks. Based on interviews with young people in Germany during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper explores changes in their perceptions of the future over time. The interviews were conducted and analyzed using the Documentary Method of interpretation to investigate both explicit meaning-making and implicit orientations as part of the habitus. Combined with time-oriented longitudinal research, this relational approach enables a holistic reconstruction of young people's future orientations.

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Future orientations, participation and disability

This paper examines how young adolescents who confront disability-related barriers retrospectively and prospectively navigate their lives, including their experiences of non-participation. In the first section, we introduce our two central theoretical concepts, rooted in symbolic interactionism and the praxeological sociology of knowledge. The second section provides an overview of empirical findings on young people's future orientations. The third section outlines our study, its methods, and methodological assumptions. It concludes with an overview of our findings on participation and future orientations. The final section connects our findings to current discourses on temporality and time work (Flaherty, 2012, 2010; Leccardi, 2021). This paper uses the concept of time work to offer an additional theoretical perspective beyond participation biography and habitus, which we use to inform our empirical reconstructions.

Applying the concept of participation biography (Schwanenflügel et al., 2019), we analyze young people's biographical interviews to understand how their participation shapes their personal development. By examining their past experiences, present circumstances, and future aspirations within participatory contexts, the paper reconstructs how formal institutions impact young people's sense of belonging and empowerment over time (McMahon et al., 2019: 161). Using a qualitative approach, we investigate participation broadly, examining how young adolescents engage actively or passively in political, social, and civic spheres, which are structured by unequal power relationships (Walther et al., 2019: 15). Participation biographies reveal when, where, and how adolescents are included or excluded in education and society, and their opportunities for decision-making. Drawing on this data, we explore how young people perceive their ability to influence their own and society's futures. While education and social engagement can create opportunities for young people's participation, they can also impose constraints and limitations (Bramsen et al., 2021). Therefore, young people must navigate time-related expectations while also reproducing field-specific norms in their everyday practices (Bohnsack et al., 2010; Bourdieu, 1997).

These time practices are framed by so-called time orientations (Siegert and Lindmeier, 2022: 299; Mundt, 2020: 60). Following Bourdieu's theory of habitus (1997), we assume that ways of perceiving and dealing with time emerge in everyday practices. As Bourdieu explains:

Habitus is that presence of the past in the present which makes possible the presence in the present of the forth-coming. It follows from this first that, having

within itself its own logic (lex) and its own dynamic (vis), it is not mechanically subjected to an external causality. (Bourdieu, 1997: 210)

This occurs through the time-related expectations experienced in socialization processes and the meanings of time that are interwoven, constructed, and practiced.

In sum, our research aims to uncover how young people navigate disabilities, time, and future orientations through the lens of how they describe and reflect on experiences of non-participation from a biographical perspective. Section three provides further insights into our research perspective, the Documentary Method, and its relation to habitus theory. This is preceded by a summary of the current state of research on time, futurity, disability and young adolescents' non-participation.

Research on youth futurity

International and interdisciplinary research on the connections between ideas about the future and how temporality is thematized during adolescence can be differentiated across studies on attitudes about the future, future images, and representations, expectations, and self-perceptions (Longo, 2018: 394). When exploring young people's perceptions of the future, time research studies primarily focus on various transitions within and from the field of education (Mundt, 2020; Schoon and Lyons-Amos, 2016; Brannen and Nilsen, 2002), with relatively few studies on the pathway to adulthood (Longo, 2018; Mandich et al., 2024; Worth, 2009). Additionally, studies on younger adolescents (aged 12–16) and their temporality are empirically underrepresented. The temporality of young people with disabilities is largely overlooked (Niediek, 2022; Siegert and Lindmeier, 2022; Bramsen et al., 2021; Worth, 2009).

Research relevant to this paper includes Smith and Dowse's (2019) study on young Australians, which shows how young people with complex support needs discuss their lives, critical moments, and future plans. Drawing on van Gennep's ritual theory, the authors identify liminal phases as starting points for self-development and meaning-making. However, they describe how young people may develop feelings of uncertainty if a liminal phase is prolonged. This is particularly significant during adolescence when future planning is expected and linked to transition regimes. Worth's (2009) important study focuses on geographic youth transitions, especially their perception of time and futurity. Based on narrative interviews with visually impaired young people aged 16–25, the study provides deep insights into their concrete future plans and how young people with disabilities may avoid such plans after experiencing disappointment (Worth, 2009: 1056).

Recently, studies on how young people envision the future in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic have gained prominence, although this debate is rather time-specific (Kanz et al., 2023; Keating and Melis, 2022; Köhler, 2023; Köhler and

Zschach, 2022; Leccardi, 2021; Lessard and Puhl, 2021; Nunn et al., 2021; Rinderspacher, 2022; Ringer and Kreitz-Sandberg, 2022; Stauber, 2021). A more nuanced look at future perceptions reveals that young people tend to have more positive outlooks on their private lives than on the future of society (Zschach, 2022: 37f.). Such skepticism is also evident in studies on young people's fears about the future, as social and global problems grow. This should not be interpreted as growing anxiety but as an expanding ability to reflect on time and draw conclusions about the future based on assessments of the present (Zschach, 2022: 31–44).

Drawing on interviews with Argentine youth, Longo (2018) established a typology of youth temporalities that distinguishes planners, executors, dormants, and opportunists. The planners are the only group who refer to distant futures and envision their lives further ahead, while other groups focus on the near future (Longo, 2018: 402). Following Flaherty's concept of "time work," Leccardi (2021) identifies three strategies young people use to deal with normative time requirements by relating their temporality to the future in a social context:

The first relates to the reduction of the temporal extension of projects; the second, to the strategy describable as 'wait and see'; the last, to the transfer of investments in terms of social and political commitment from the realm of long-term future envisioned in a utopian light to the here-and-now of daily life utopias. (Leccardi, 2021: 13)

Depending on the school system and the length of regular schooling, adolescents might have more or less time for transition, and they may postpone or avoid distant futures (Köhler, 2020; Leccardi, 2021). At the same time, some students may be able to take a gap year and delay completing post-secondary education in a phase of educational moratorium if their parents can support them economically. In her analysis of essays written by 18-year-old Italians, Cuzzocrea (2019) recognizes both a classical and waithood moratorium, differentiated across subcategories of "waiting for some procedures to be followed and completed" and "waiting for someone's intervention." Importantly, she questions how young people can resist temporal regimes and whether they might use wait-hood as a tactic rather than simply being too overwhelmed to act like Longo's dormants (Cuzzocrea, 2019: 581).

This study focuses on young people aged 12–16 undergoing the crucial transition into adolescence. This period marks a stage when young people begin to gain independence from their parents, expand their leisure activities with peers, and develop their political judgment, participation, and opinions (Bock and Braches-Chyrek, 2021; King, 2020; Krüger et al., 2011; Thomson, 2011). It also coincides with decisive educational transitions (Halvorsen et al., 2018: 20; Worth, 2009). At the same time, young people must confront the challenge of imagining the future while dealing with uncertainty related to their experiences of participation. Furthermore, the paper reveals how the impact of young

people's time out of school as disability-related barrier within the educational system, shaping their concepts and ideas of the future. Focusing on how adolescents experience time-related barriers in education and society during transitions, we enter new research territory informed by time-related approaches to disability studies:

Research into life-course issues intersects with disability issues in important ways. Persons with disabilities may experience that their timing of events is considered inappropriate and not compliant with dominant expectations, that they are moving out of their parent's home 'too late,' land paid jobs 'too late,' or become dependent on healthcare services 'too early' according to dominant expectations. (Halvorsen et al., 2018: 19)

With our focus on temporality, we aim to analyze time and future orientations and, in so doing, highlight systemic forms of time discrimination and time diversity (Köhler and Lindmeier, 2022).

Research design and empirical reconstructions

The longitudinal study "The Transformation of Peer Relationships and Participation during the COVID-19 Pandemic (PeerPartiCo)" conducted narrative biographical interviews at two time points with participants in Germany who are at increased risk of social exclusion due to disability.¹ At the time of the first interview, participants were between 12 and 15 years old and between 13 and 16 years old during the second interview in 2022–2023. The sample consists of ten girls and ten boys, 13 of whom have a diagnosed disability.² Seven participants live in large cities, eleven in medium-sized cities, and two in rural areas. The sample is broadly differentiated to enable systematic theoretical sampling. The project explores young people's opportunities for participation in school education and politics during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. One aim of this study is to contribute to scholarly understanding of adolescents' life situations and lifestyles, which have received little attention in studies of how youth were transformed by and navigated transformations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Building on the outlined goals and presuppositions, the project addresses the following overarching research question: What is the significance of peer relationships in how young people cope with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated non-participation in school education and political communication? To answer this question, we applied comparative analyses to the sample (Nohl, 2010). This process underscored that time-related barriers and future orientations were more relevant in the older participants' participation biographies. Based on this finding, we completed a second in-depth single-case

typification, which is the focus of this paper and follows a deepening of the question described in section one. Currently, the typology consists of three cases, with the aim of adding additional cases using the best practice of sequential analysis (Nohl, 2010: 211).

In line with the broad interest in participation biography during adolescence, interviews were conducted using open-ended questions that focused on the participants' experiences. Drawing on the concept of time-oriented longitudinal research (Köhler, 2023), participants were asked additional questions about the past, present, and future. Data analysis was supplemented by a reconstruction of time-related topics, life-phase references, and temporal markers, such as temporal adverbs or tenses.

Qualitative reconstruction was completed using Ralf Bohnsack's Documentary Method, which specializes in reconstructing habitus and orientations based on narrations (Bohnsack et al., 2010). According to basic assumptions about the interconnectedness of so-called spaces of experiences and habitus from the sociology of knowledge (Mannheim, 1980), implicit tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966) and explicit knowledge can be reconstructed from transcribed interviews. The qualitative data reconstructions aim to analyze WHAT the interviewed youths explicitly think about time, their futures, and participation. Habitus theory was therefore used to examine the implicit habitual orientations evident during the interviews, allowing for a reconstruction of HOW meaning is produced through a communicative performance (Bohnsack et al., 2010).

Rethinking their participation biography is important for adolescents as it could help uncover potential time barriers. A cultural approach positions disability as a narrative construct shaped by discourses of inclusion and exclusion and, thus, stigmatization. How these narratives are formed and enacted shapes and is shaped by individual experiences, identities, meanings, and power and resistance (Waldschmidt, 2017: 25). This approach aims to understand adolescents' explicit meaning-making as they narrate their lives as a participation biography and reflect on disability. We assume that explicit meaning-making is relevant for self-development and for actively participating in participation settings (McMahon et al., 2019). At the same time, explicit meaning-making is necessary for identifying barriers and addressing how they can be overcome. As the basis for young people's explicit biographical meaning-making is their implicit habitus, we focus on time and future orientations as part of the habitus.

This article explores the time and future orientations embedded in such habitus formulations. This allows for a reconstruction of young people's confrontation with time-related expectations, how they experience the relationship between self-determined and externally determined time, and future constellations within and framed by their participation biography.

Comparison of empirical case studies

This article draws on a case study of several young people who were among the older respondents in the PeerPartiCo research project. At fifteen, they are on the threshold of transitioning into further education through school internships, pending graduation, or moving to a different school. As such, they have already confronted societal expectations about future planning. During their time in school, all three experienced numerous phases of being out of school for health reasons and barriers related to disability, ranging from visual impairment and chronic disease to severe learning disabilities. Furthermore, they have endured bullying and conflicts with their teachers, and they share an educational future orientation that will be difficult to realize due to their experiences of school-related barriers and conflicts.³

The following section examines how these three young people cope with their disability related time out of school as non-participation and how they experience their limited participation in school and society. It then reconstructs how such experiences influence their imaginations of the future in more detail. A closer look at the young people's personal and social references to the future and their experiences of participation reveals stark contrasts. As the following subsections depict, three types⁴ can be reconstructed longitudinally.

Type 1: continuous future planning and differentiated claims to participation

At the time of the first interview in June 2021, Melina was 14 years old and had just finished 8th grade in lower secondary school. Glaucoma has made her blind in one eye, and she has limited vision in the other. To participate in class, she needs access to a laptop that can zoom in on learning materials and textbooks, as well as a lamp and large photocopies. Her time in school has been characterized by a lack of access to the appropriate technical equipment and materials she needs to participate in class, which has resulted in periods of missed educational time. Since Melina values her academic performance, her time out of school coincides with periods of stress. The beginning of secondary education was particularly marked by conflicts with her teachers, some of whom refused to accommodate her visual impairment, such as refusing to make large photocopies for her. Melina had to continually fight—along with her family—to have her needs taken seriously. In addition to conflicts with her teachers, Melina also experienced tension with peers who were jealous of her good grades. However, she reported having close friends who stood by her and even helped make a video protesting how teachers structured students' learning at home during the pandemic. The video aimed to raise awareness of the excessive workload students faced as school time was not limited.

They screwed up⁵ completely during the lockdown, they made everything so hard or it was so poorly done that we really had to sit through eight sessions in a day and then we still had to do homework and sometimes I sat there until midnight [...] so we recorded a video and said 😊 what was bothering us so much and so on 😊.

This excerpt shows that Melina makes herself heard as part of a collective community. She can clearly identify responsible individuals to express her participation claims. Participation and temporality are thus intertwined in Melina's biography, with educational institutions serving as temporal markers. Melina is future-oriented; she seeks to improve her school situation and achieve her educational and professional goals, as the following interview excerpt shows:

After 9th grade, then you make it to the 10th and then upper-secondary school to do get your high-school diploma and afterwards I want to study law unless I end up taking another hit and want to do something else but I've wanted to do this for like five, six years or maybe even seven, so, 😊 yeah, quite long actually 😊 that I wanted to do law or something like that (.) and yeah, what exactly was my plan, my plan B earlier was to become a teacher, now I have absolutely no desire to do that anymore because I know what students are like and I don't have the slightest desire to deal with them.

Melina underscores her long-standing desire to study law in her reference to how she has had the same desire since childhood and that only a complete change of heart could dissuade her. She also mentions that she had abandoned her plan B, indicating how she thinks about her previous imagination of the future in her biography. Moreover, she brings up her former professional alternative of becoming a teacher in relation to the social dimension of having to deal with students' behavior. These educational and future-related orientations are the only somewhat differentiated references that she made to her future in the interview. In terms of her thoughts on the future, Melina remarked at another point in the interview that: "Actually, no, I don't know why you should think about it more often, um, no idea, I don't do it that often." Accordingly, Melina exhibited a limited future planning orientation during the first interview.

Overall, school dominates her entire biographical narrative, and it is retrospectively and continuously shaped by her recollections of the time she was forced to be out of school and the conflicts she experienced with her teachers and peers. She depicts her experiences with her friends or family in less detail. Compared to other interviews, she dedicates much of her narrative to discussions of politics and society as she considers herself politically interested. Politics is also a source of regular conflicts and disagreements at school and with her family. Melina tries to mediate class discussions because she believes that everyone has positive and negative views.

Therefore, her orientation toward the future of society is clearly more passive. This raises the question, how have her future orientations developed longitudinally? And how does her biographization of her school experiences remain durable?

Melina's second interview was conducted in September 2022, when she was 15 and beginning tenth grade. Throughout the interview, it is apparent that her time markers remain focused on educational institutions. In this interview she reflected more on growing older and becoming more mature, and how she feels during this transitional period as she approaches the move to a grammar school at the end of tenth grade.⁶ She will have to repeat a class, marking a further temporal break in her school career. Like her previous interview, she only briefly references her personal future, focusing on her educational and career plans:

Actually, I always wanted to be a lawyer but the thing is [...] I think the rules are stupid because when you go from general secondary school to a school that prepares you for university, you have to repeat [what you have already learned] again and because now I actually would like to be a teacher because I hate so many of my current teachers so much that I think I could actually do a better job.

Although it is evident that Melina has changed and adapted her career aspirations to her current reality, her reference to the social dimensions of teaching remains. She also refers to her teachers and implicitly to her negative school experiences, expressing that she could do a better job and influence the school system for the better if she became a teacher. She also criticizes how lower-secondary school students are forced to repeat the tenth grade. In this interview, she contextualizes the time she loses to school because of the short periods she is forced to take off and how it will take her a year longer to graduate. Thus, changes in her future vision are evident alongside continuities related to Melina's fundamental orientation towards how people must struggle to meet their needs and, ultimately, for inclusion in education. This also includes leading and engaging in socio-political debates.

The second interview also highlights the importance of an impending collective fate, as another reference to the future in terms of friendship underscores: "And I also believe that it is relatively important to us politically that we also have a good future, as politicians are ruining everything and what will we be doing in ten years, yeah?." Overall, the second interview shows growing autonomy and politics' increased importance. Melina is well on her way to becoming an active citizen, scaling back her personal future plans while focusing on improving the social fields to which she and her significant others have a personal connection. In the second interview, Melina identifies the addressees of her claims for participation and has thus entered public discourse. This is exactly

what she learned over the course of her school biography as she fought for inclusion. This also defines the type, “continuous planning for the future and differentiated claims to participation.”

Type 2: differentiation of thoughts about the future and increased participation

The first interview of 15-year-old John was conducted in July 2021 when he was at the end of seventh grade. At that time, he attended a special school focused on physical and motor development. He had been diagnosed with obesity and chronic immunodeficiency, which meant that his school trajectory, like Melina's, had been riddled with regular time out of school. However, he missed significantly more time than Melina, several weeks per school year. Accordingly, he works hard to complete his schoolwork and does better at the special school. During the COVID-19 pandemic, his performance improved, and he took on a prominent role in his class, coordinating group work and thereby establishing school time management for others as well: “I was the leader, I coordinated everything, and I also learned a lot about independence.” His school orientation is also similar to Melina's.

His strong school performance at the special school allowed him to switch to a grammar school when he was in grade 5. There, he experienced pressure to perform well, a lack of inclusive pedagogical support, increased physical abuse from his mother's partner, and 70 days of absenteeism, all of which negatively affected his grades and his psychological well-being. His future perspective was clear in his very open biographical account of this time:

I see no future, no perspective, school just makes me sick, it was just so that the school just wore me out, the whole circumstances, the pressure to perform that was enforced there [...] and we all sat around the table and talked about it and I just clearly stated that I wanted to change schools and that I definitely wanted to go back to the B-school, that is my goal, I don't want to be in upper secondary anymore, I can also do my, ah, my, um, my Abitur⁷ later.

As this excerpt documents, John consulted his teachers, therapist, and his mother about his decision to leave grammar school. As this decision was difficult, he actively sought input from multiple perspectives. He was nonetheless able to participate in shaping the decision, and he even admitted that it was his own decision to change schools. In the end, he decided to delay his graduation so he could prioritize his health. This meant putting his performance orientation on the back burner for a while. In this context, his further references to the future are interesting:

to finish school successfully (.) to graduate then I want to check out what I might do in terms of a profession, I don't know quite yet, I don't have any big plans (.) Teaching could be a good job, ah, I could see myself doing that [...] yeah, I'll see, I have to finish school successfully first, and then I can have a look, next year we have to do a practical, and we should check out different careers [to get experience] to see what there are for jobs and whatever (.) and then I will just check it out.

John's future orientation is evident in how he identifies his next step in the near future. He envisions the goal of successfully completing middle school. He does not mention getting his Abitur, although he would need one if he is going to become a teacher. This makes the ambiguity and vagueness of his future orientation clear; he might become a teacher or he might take another career path entirely. He references the future in the sense of "wait and see" (Leccardi, 2021: 13) and he does not seem bothered that he does not have firm future plans. In contrast to Melina, he does not feel any social pressure to already have established career goals. John is one of the few cases in the sample who refers to different aspects of his life in his future orientation, and he thinks a lot about his future: "Yes, I'm thinking a lot about it at the moment again; I'm excited and looking forward to the future" (867). As it turns out, John is actually optimistic about his personal future. He is not only focused on his near future, but he also imagines what his own distant family life might be like. This is a significant characteristic of the Type 2 differentiation: future relevance and the oscillation between pessimism and optimism about the future, which leads to increased participation.

This raises questions about whether he is also optimistic about the future of society. During the second interview, John again emphasizes social closeness, continuing his focus on public and local spheres. Additionally, he underscores his attempt to influence others to get involved in the social community. Moreover, his future orientation regarding social closeness has become differentiated to the extent that he now uses abstract and general terms for social groups, such as references to "big" and "small" people. Over time, his references to the future of society have evolved from a specific desire for the future to a differentiated forecast, which includes both an evaluation of the current state of society and a predominantly pessimistic view of the future. His personal imagination of the future is also somewhat pessimistic.

My dream job is actually a teacher ☺(.)☺ (.) but the problem is that I am already 16 years old and when I'm 18—then I'll have graduated from Realschule and then I have to do my Abitur and I will also have to repeat the tenth grade and then after two more years, when I am 21, then I will have to complete my post-secondary studies and then I'll be like maybe 26 or 28, I think that's a bit too late because,

um, I would actually like to be independent as fast as I can and, um, I'd also like to have a professional life [...] something along the lines of pedagogy because there are also possibilities in the field that you don't have to go to university or something like that (.). I'm also thinking that maybe I'll do another year of voluntary service after grade 10 so I can see how well I can deal with children before I do something that I might not even like.

Like the first wave, John limits his future. If he prioritizes achieving independence, he will not have enough time to realize his dream job. Like Melina, he finds a reason to step back from his goal, stating that he wants to avoid a long educational path and maintain his economic independence, although he still keeps his professional future open. Over time, it is significant that he has transitioned from coordinating group work in his class to becoming the school representative and taking on various student leadership roles. He actively participates in shaping his school life and makes numerous future plans. Consequently, he has developed a clear collective orientation towards the future, embodying the role of an active citizen. Unlike Melina, however, his future orientation is more concretely and predominantly related to local spheres, such as his school.

I'm interested in school psychological counselling centers because something like, I think it is very important, because you would also, um, also have a contact person and I would also like to organize a small project perhaps with [...] and there I would also like to look at whether we could also do something together, and then I am also revising the school's homepage, and, yes, that's all the things that I have to do.

Types 1 and 2 differ primarily in their future orientations but share similar biographical portrayals, as they actively and constructively attempt to shape their lives despite various barriers and phases of being out of school. Despite their efforts, the interviews highlight how they exclude their desired professions. This sharply contrasts Type 3, characterized by much greater difficulties in imagining the future and less participation in everyday life.

Type 3: increased uncertainty about the future, less participation and intensified constraints

The first interview with 15-year-old Yaron was conducted in October 2021. At that time, he was completing eighth grade at an integrated comprehensive school (IGS) and receiving special education support for his learning difficulties. Yaron's narrative interview provides insights into his educational biography, which, like Melina and John, is characterized by numerous challenges and conflicts with both his peers and teachers. He references these difficulties early in his interview, beginning with his time in elementary school and elaborating on

his experiences in long narratives. Yaron had to repeat the first grade, which marked a significant break, along with being diagnosed with learning exceptionalities: “As a special needs child, you always lag behind. Right now, I am in the eighth grade, but I am mostly just completing seventh-grade material; you’re always a year behind” (74–76). His extended time in elementary school, his perceived slower way of working, and inferior school performance are central to his student biography. Already engaging in self-stigmatizing behaviors, he identifies as a slow remedial child and has been doing so for years. During homeschooling, however, he discovered that he did have a motivation to learn, and his performance improved: “All the assignments were done on a computer, and I was the first to upload them each morning.” This optimism also finds its way into his personal future orientation, as the following excerpt from the interview shows:

because it’s going very well at the moment, um, hopefully it will be the same ☺ after Covid ☺ that you can sit again in class with friends and without a mask [...] as far as jobs and something like that are concerned the ga- I haven’t even thought about what I want to become. At some point, so I will at some point, but at the moment I can’t think of anything, for example, so at the moment I’m just concentrating a lot on school right now so that I can get good grades so that in the end I can also do something as far as jobs are concerned.

Unlike Melina and John, he does not have any concrete plans. He links several areas of his life together in terms of his personal future and hopes that his improved academic performance will continue and that the pandemic-related limitations will be rescinded. He is not focused on educational and vocational goals. Instead, he positions good academic performance as a prerequisite for having any career prospects at all. Currently, he states that he does not think about the future in his everyday life.

Pessimism dominates his imagination of the future of society, which is underscored by a lack of participation. At the same time, when he speaks of digitalization, he does so in the local context of his everyday life. Yaron spends a lot of his time on his computer and has been able to use digital solutions to improve his homeschooling skills. Whether his internet is fast or slow directly impacts his daily activities and he has no control over these technological developments. Like Melina and John, he is also aware of what he sees as insurmountable social conflicts, but he describes them in an abstract and detached manner without identifying who exactly is responsible for such social division. This raises the question: What does Yaron’s situation look like from a longitudinal perspective?

Yaron’s second interview was conducted in January 2023. Overall, his school experiences were no longer the sole focus of his narration. In this interview, he recalled the many health restrictions he has endured since his childhood as one facet of his biography. Moreover, a pessimistic attitude was prominent

throughout the entire interview. When he spoke of school, he reported that he was increasingly being labeled as a child with special needs and that he no longer had any real motivation to do well in school. He justified his change in attitude by explaining that since returning to in-person school, he can no longer use the computer to complete his schoolwork. This took away his temporal flexibility to complete his work when it suited him. His work tempo decreased accordingly, and he could no longer manage his time without difficulty. Deprived of a better way to learn, external factors increasingly determine his school performance, and he experiences a lack of participation in determining his school trajectory. His retrospective descriptions in the second interview underscore that his reflections on the future have become more differentiated in terms of content and that the hope that his health will improve is now at the top of the list:

It would be so awesome if I could finally get treated for the headaches that I have (.) the right medication for it (.) most of all when we get an x-ray, and I am shown, you really don't have anything there, then I could move on, then you would see things differently about what I will do after school—now, after the tenth grade, I'll go to Berufsschule⁸, and get my diploma and then I'll do my apprenticeship, and I am not yet sure, I am not really interested in any job really at the moment, so I can't really say anything about that yet because I don't know what my future will be like, so I always say, we'll see what will happen (.) see how the next five years go, what will come up, I always let myself be the person who never has plans for his life, I just let myself be surprised everyday by what happens.

Yaron hopes that he will be able to receive the appropriate medical treatment to alleviate his headaches soon. Elsewhere in the interview, he describes himself as a hypochondriac, which means that his fear of developing a serious illness also restricts him regularly. Accordingly, he thinks an x-ray will provide him medical reassurance that there is nothing wrong with him, which give him a new lease on life and improve his attitude more generally. Thus, his health is the starting point for his future life in his second interview, and he expresses some optimism that things will get better. In contrast to his first interview, his initially vague future education plans have been replaced with a clear educational trajectory in the near future. He not only rejects the expectation that he should already have career aspirations but also proposes that his lack of future plans distinguishes him as a person. His habitus is clearly oriented toward the impacts that external factors have on his life and a rejection of the need for a future orientation. Nevertheless, he experiences comparatively fewer opportunities for participation in his everyday life.

In his second interview, Yaron does not refer to global conflicts or potential war. Instead, he takes retrospective stock of developments in his neighborhood,

where increased violence has restricted his everyday life, as he does not leave his house after 9 p.m. He told his father that he had noted a decline in public safety, and they discussed how he does not want to grow old in the district if things get worse. They review and revise their future plans accordingly. The increased neighborhood violence contributes to his imagination of a future characterized by apprehension, catalyzing increased limitations and decreased opportunities for participation in public space. In clear contrast to Types 1 and 2, he does not name who is responsible for securing public space, which also means that there is no addressee for his claims for participation in terms of his ability to shape his future, which is characteristic of Type 3: "Increased uncertainty about the future, less participation, and intensified constraints."

Discussion

Studies on youth, time, and the future focus on how young people navigate time demands, particularly during institutional transitions in educational and occupational systems. Findings on the relevance of future-oriented ideas often highlight action-related distinctions such as autonomous vs. dependent or passive vs. active. Along these lines, Longo (2018: 402) established four types: the planner, the executor, the dormant, and the opportunist. This categorization distinguishes youth who actively shape and plan their future (planner, opportunist) from those who are more passive (executor, dormant). Longo (2018) found that only planners envision their intermediate and distant futures, challenging studies that suggest adolescents are more present-oriented with near-future references. Our findings support and expand on Longo's (2018) work as our types discuss the near, intermediate, and distant future. Our time-oriented longitudinal analysis also reconstructs different concerns about the future. Type 1 exhibits the most concrete future plans, while Type 2 focuses more on the near and distant future, and Type 3 exhibits the most limited future orientation. We assume that a young person's current situation influences their future orientation. This aligns with Smith and Dowse (2019), who found that prolonged liminal phases can result in critical and negative time orientations, hindering active educational and social participation. Our results indicate that, especially for Types 1 and 2, active meaning-making and planning are crucial for how young people perceive their participation opportunities.

From a qualitative social science perspective, our typification shows how existing time-related barriers in the education system are connected to various disabilities. We propose that such barriers should be considered under the lens of time discrimination as systemic barriers that limit broader participation. These include times when young people are out of school and must invest additional effort to keep up with their studies. Often, such time out of education means extending the normative school course by up to an additional year.

The young people we interviewed clearly problematized such time out of school. From a longitudinal perspective, transition demands and future planning increase over time and are necessary for social inclusion and participation (Bramsen et al., 2021; Worth 2009). Importantly, two participants abandoned their original career aspirations to avoid further complications or delays. Thus, following Walther (2015), our longitudinal findings confirm that young people experience a cooling-out phase in terms of their future plans as previous career aspirations are modified in tandem with how disabilities force students out of education for periods of time.

Moreover, all three types show how institutional barriers and time discrimination lead to exclusion. For Melina, this included lacking the technology needed to participate in her classes, leading to temporary periods out of education and the increased time investment associated with homeschooling. John referenced the excessive pressure to perform and the cancelled remedial classes at his grammar school, while Yaron experienced the barrier of being “different,” resulting from being taught differently than his peers. This not only restricted his schoolwork but also led him to feel deviant and that he was being stigmatized because of a lack of institutional support while his classmates completed the “normal” school program.

Our research also shows that biographical case reconstructions can comprehensively trace the relevance of significant others and social contexts for temporality, especially for future orientations. Cook and Woodman (2020) identify this as a clear research desideratum. Our empirical data align with what Flaherty (2010) describes as “cohabiting a ‘temporal commons’” (Flaherty, 2010: 110). Type 1 underscores the importance of classmates’ time-related participation claims during homeschooling. Longitudinally, participation claims are differentiated in the future in relation to political spheres, as such claims are shared with the young people’s closest friends. For Type 2, participation increased over the longitudinal perspective as time expanded beyond the classroom to encompass the entire school. Even Type 3, which exhibited longitudinally increased limitations and comparatively little participation, found the social context crucial, as seeing how fast others worked made slower speeds a “temporal indicator” (Flaherty 2010: 110) and different from the classroom norm.

Studies have a long tradition of examining young people’s future perspectives and distinguishing between personal and social futures. Such research reiterates how young people are increasingly adopting pessimistic imaginations of the future, and this article confirms such findings. Nonetheless, our reconstructions show that young people’s assessments of society’s future can differ in terms of what is seen as a given, an inalienable social condition, and the degree to which such conditions shape distinctions.

For participation research, it is particularly important to understand what young people consider to be under their control in their futures and who they identify as having the potential to change that aspect of the future in their participation biographies. As Bourdieu (1997) frames it: “The more power one has over

the world, the more one has aspirations that are adjusted to their chances of realization” (Ibid.: 226). As the editorial of this special issue outlines, the concept of “time work” (Flaherty 2010; Leccardi, 2021) is important for research as it systematically and precisely reconstructs temporal experiences (Flaherty, 2012: 240). Like Flaherty (2012), we contend that “the individual in question is a product of a particular location and, consequently, the allocation of time reflects cultural priorities” (Ibid.: 249). Theoretically, this aligns with habitus theory (Bohnsack et al., 2010; Bourdieu, 1997; Mannheim, 1980). We supplement Flaherty’s (2012) aim to show that people are permanently engaged in “temporal agency” (Flaherty’ 2012: 248), drawing on Bourdieu (1997) to describe such processes as being related to their habitus as a result of socialization.

But what could Flaherty’s concept add to our research on time and future orientation from a praxeological and biographical point of view? When we carefully examine the three cases, time practices and changes in their time work are evident. Initially, Melina was committed to her school and homework but found it too much during the pandemic. This resulted in her protesting the norm and challenging school-related time conformity, engaging instead in “temporal deviance” (Flaherty, 2012: 246). Longitudinally, such deviance must be seen as an exception, as she returned to time conformity after the pandemic. Similarly, Yaron also engaged in time deviance with different participation results. During homeschooling, he experienced school time differently and was able to learn in his own way. This allowed him to gain self-esteem and self-efficacy as he completed his homework faster than his classmates. When school returned to “normal,” that experience and his participation faded.

Thus, through its analysis of future orientations and participation, especially in the context of school, our study shows how engaging in time work and establishing time practices can empower young people and increase their self-esteem and motivation. Based on the concept of the participation biography, we can also assume that school is a space of learning for political and social participation and that time work has significant importance for young people’s citizenship claims.

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Notes

1. The legal requirements of the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the German Federal Data Protection Act (BDSG) and the ICC/ESOMAR Code apply to the recruitment of interviewees, data collection, data use and data analysis. As the participants comprise minors consent was obtained from the participants' legal guardians. Accordingly, all adolescents who were asked to participate in the project got "youth friendly" privacy notices and project information. It was clearly explained to all participants that their consent to participate in the project can be revoked at any time and that data collection can cease at any point during the interviews. Our research team have had broad experience in youth research and youth work and thus accustomed to speak sensible with young people. In addition they were familiar with concepts of disability studies for considering and avoidance of stereotyping during the interview and during data interpretation. In addition we managed all the impaired young people need and want for the interview setting, for example, technical support, room equipment.
2. For the seven other we could indicate other risks of exclusion, for example, poverty, which allows as a more sensible theoretical sampling and the opportunity to reconstruct non-participation related with disability prior and not-related with disability but other exclusion mechanisms. In this paper we focus on barriers related to disability.
3. Additionally, the young people come from lower socio-economic and non-academic homes. Although the sociocultural space is not the focus here, this facet should not be underestimated in terms of its potential relevance for time and future orientations (Leccardi, 2013; Maschke and Stecher, 2009).
4. Using our typology as part of the well-conducted Documentary Method, we construct types based on the topics the adolescents highlighted and discussed during their narrative interviews. Naturally, they have many more experiences throughout their lives, and typifications with other focuses are possible. Additionally, as Worth (2009) and Gibson et al. (2009) show, older adolescents discuss different topics related to their future, such as the transition to work and romantic relationships. Therefore, our typification is relevant for the current transition period, but as adolescents gain more experiences and engage in self-exploration, the typification must be revisited in an ongoing longitudinal research process.
5. German interviews have been translated. Breaks are marked in brackets, while indents indicate speaker overlap. The smiley ☺ denotes that something was said laughingly. The underlined words are spoken emphatically and words in bold are spoken loudly.

Words or phrases written in the symbol °... ° were spoken quietly. Not or only hardly understandable words are written in brackets, and the symbol [...] marks cuts in the cited part of the material.

6. In almost all federal states in Germany, the transition to Gymnasium as grammar school takes place after primary school (after Grade 4). Later transfers to Gymnasium are, however, possible.
7. Final examination of upper secondary education allowing access to higher education.
8. Here Yaron is referring to a vocational high school that students in Germany can attend while completing an apprenticeship or on-the-job training, which prepares them for working in a specific profession.

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