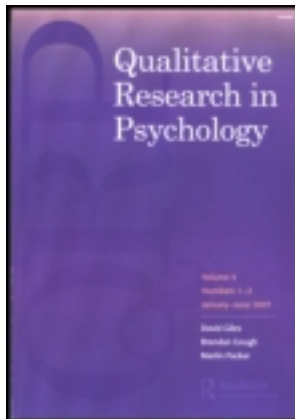


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### Mapping as a Method: History and Theoretical Commitments

Valerie A. Futch<sup>a</sup> & Michelle Fine<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Virginia, Youth-Nex, Charlottesville, Virginia, USA

<sup>b</sup> City University of New York, The Graduate Center, Program in Social-Personality Psychology, New York, New York, USA

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# Mapping as a Method: History and Theoretical Commitments

VALERIE A. FUTCH<sup>1</sup> AND MICHELLE FINE<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Virginia, Youth-Nex, Charlottesville, Virginia, USA

<sup>2</sup>City University of New York, The Graduate Center, Program in Social-Personality Psychology, New York, New York, USA

*Billig (2008) argues “some of the ideas in today’s critical psychology have a longer history than is often supposed” (p. 195). We begin with that premise by excavating the theoretical history of psychological mapping methods in social psychology (including, but not limited to, place/space mapping). We have found deep theoretical linkages between our uses of mapping and the development of social psychological theory over the last 50 years and also see mapping as holding great promise for interrogating the terrain between individual experience and social reality. We highlight three specific studies in which we have used mapping to discuss these theoretical connections, and we explore the possibilities and dilemmas inherent in such a visual and creative method. We conclude by suggesting ways to improve the method in the future. Then, we call on social-personality psychology to consider the increasing importance of methods that are able to resist the hegemony of the written word and draw on the complexities of our interconnected life spaces in a time when individualism is inordinately prioritized amongst psychological theories and methods.*

**Keywords:** identity; mapping; qualitative methods; visual methods

## Introduction

*Our cab pulled up to an empty storefront in a nondescript strip mall in suburban Florida. We entered through tinted doors and found a perfectly rectangular space, replete with mirrors, posters, photos, and black wooden boxes that could serve as an array of props. In this unsuspecting site for a Planned Parenthood youth theatre program, we had assembled nine “alumni” of The SOURCE Teen Theatre. Anticipating their 25th anniversary, we invited representatives from across cohorts to help us figure out how we might evaluate the embodied biography of teen sexuality theatre and its impact on youth development.*

*We walked in armed with flip-chart paper, construction paper, scissors, glue and markers, dialogical theory, and a modest understanding of mapping as a method that might help us document the biography of SOURCE as embodied across history and generations in our advisors. The prompt seemed simple:*

*How has The SOURCE been in your life from then to now? Where does it live in you, travel with you?*

Correspondence: Valerie A. Futch, Youth-Nex, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 400281, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4281, USA. E-mail: valerie.futch@gmail.com

*We encouraged them to represent their selves, the influence of others and the emotions surrounding their depictions on these maps. The room hummed, for over 30 minutes, and the images produced a collective aesthetic that spanned time and lives.*

In retrospect, we had asked our participants to engage a complex social psychological task: visually depict, in symbols of body and relations, and using some creativity, how their experiences in the teen-theatre group traveled with them, then and now, with a method we loosely termed “mapping.” We carried the knowledge and history of an underutilized but innovative research method which Stanley Milgram and Denise Jodelet (1976) innovated in the 1960s to gather Parisian perspectives on the city. Inspired by earlier work by Kevin Lynch (1960), their participants ( $N = 218$ ) were invited to create hand-drawn maps of Paris based on their own experience and knowledge of the city. For Milgram and Jodelet, it was not the geography of Paris that was paramount; rather they were interested in “the way that reality is mirrored in the minds of its inhabitants” (p. 104). They learned how class and race profoundly influence individuals’ experiences of the city and how they conceptualize its structure. Like Milgram and Jodelet, we were also interested in how personal experience informed representations of self and others in context. Across a variety of studies (Fine, Stoudt & Futch 2005; Futch 2011; Futch & Jaffe-Walter 2011; Sirin & Fine 2007; Zaal, Salah & Fine 2007), we have found *mapping* to be a rich method for social inquiry engaged with “thick” (Geertz 1973) theoretical and design questions of change, in which researchers seek to gather up qualitative material about selves and identities, that is:

- deeply social: material that reflects the dialectical ways in which people negotiate ideology and relationships, social representations, politics, and the unconscious (Bhabha 2005; Cross 1991; Sirin & Fine 2008, writing on hyphenated selves; Walkerdine 2002);
- critical: material that raises questions about power, structures, and inequality gaps that permeate individuals’ (particularly youth and young adults) sense of selves (Bhatia 2007);
- spatial/temporal: material that recognizes how selves-in-relation unfold, fragment, cohere, and are remade through engagement with place (Hart 1981; Katz 2001); and
- highly theoretical: a method that grows from a rich history of social psychological, personality, and geographic methods.

In the spirit of Sue Wilkinson’s classic (1999) piece on focus groups, in this essay we track the history, varied applications, critical issues of epistemology, theory, design, and analysis provoked by mapping.

### **History of a Method: Theorizing and Mapping “Life Space”**

Beginning with Winnicott’s (1971) “squiggle game” drawing task, psychologists have used drawings and other spatial representations of psychological experience in part because such activities were seen as a way to “tap in” to the inner workings of the mind and interpersonal relationships. While such methods provided an opportunity for appreciating the subjectivity of the research participant and thus avoiding the positivist leanings of the era, they were not without their shortcomings. Problematically and uncritically, these representations were often treated as the “true” window to the soul that words or interviews betrayed (i.e., read through a lens of “suspicion”; Josselson 2004). Child psychology often focused on visual methods, such as drawing, to work with children therapeutically, but this often still results in “adultist interpretations” of their drawings rather than bringing them into research in a participatory sense (Young & Barrett 2001, p. 143).

But social psychology, with its epistemological charge to engage the dialectics of self (see Asch 1987; Clegg 2011; DuBois 1903; Greenwood 2000; Hermans 2003; Lewin 1948; Moscovici 1984) has largely avoided this line of methodology in favor of a more positivist and experimental approach, particularly in the United States. It is from this history and puzzling omission that we begin our inquiry into how investigations of “life-space” in general, and creative expressions of this space in specific, can be re-discovered and revitalized as a highly useful qualitative method for researching our increasing complex and “hyphenated” (Sirin & Fine 2008) lives.

A central concern in social-personality psychology is the relation between self and other, that is, the interplay between individuals and contexts over time and place, as mediated by politics, relationships, and the precariousness of the current moment. We are particularly interested in how people conceptualize, narrate, and visually represent their own life spaces to self and others. In this article, we explore how mapping as a theory of method informs our understandings of our representations. Specifically, we consider how mapping has been used within the discipline of social psychology, uniquely drawing on the fields of critical geography and psychoanalysis to inform its use. Given this history, we then question the current methodological directions within social psychology and the increasingly narrow approaches to context and social realities. Theoretically we are most engaged with mapping as a “mediational” method in that it serves as a third party in the methodological and analytic steps (explained below) that actively interrogates the in-between spaces of social science work. In other words, it enables researchers to work with visual material that is highly interpretive, across conceptual landscapes (from the individual to the social), and in between various contexts and shifting structural conditions.

Theories of social representations (de Rosa 1987; Jodelet 2008; Moscovici 1984; Philogene 1999), dialogical selves (Hermans 2003), and hyphenated selves (Sirin & Fine 2007) all engage with the dialectics of self and other in banal and contentious historic contexts. It is not surprising, therefore, that mapping as a theoretically informed method has been central to the theoretical sophistication of these three fields. As a mediational method, mapping invites respondents to narrate and represent their varied relationships to place, people and time; to visualize the tensions of agency and structure; and to document shifts, contradictions, continuities and ruptures within self over time and space.

The theoretical roots of psychological work on lives in time and space, and on the dynamics of change and continuity can be traced to the early part of the 20th century when Kurt Lewin (1936) outlined “topological psychology” in which the aim of psychology should be to understand and interrogate the “life space”—all of the social spheres and relationships—that individuals inhabit. Lewin worried over the insularity of psychology, as did William James, Wilhelm Dilthey, W. E. B. DuBois, John Dewey, and later Marie Jahoda. These critical and humanistic scholars invited social scientists to widen the lens of the human social sciences to document the broad landscape of the life space and to appreciate the phenomenological line of vision held by respondents about the context and rhythm of their lives. Milgram and Jodelet were among the first to integrate a critical social analyses of life spaces with phenomenological visual renderings by participants themselves. During the 1960s, French psychologist Jodelet worked with Milgram to study (described above) how adults negotiate and experience the urban environment of Paris. They found that although many individuals shared common representations or images of the city, not everyone represented it in the same way and, in particular, different economic classes reflected and refracted distinct views of the city. They also coupled their mapping activity with innovative and creative questions, such as where would they live if they suddenly came into a lot of money, that probed future/possible selves in the city. In this way, Milgram and

Jodelet were committed methodologically to exploring difference and multidimensionality of space and experience in a way that built on Lewin's concepts of psychological topology.

In preparing this article, we interviewed Denise Jodelet about mapping and the study of Paris that she conducted with Milgram more than 30 years ago. She recalled that 10 years after its publication she attended a conference of environmental psychology and explained that the mapping had helped her to understand "the link between space and identity, space and experience, is linked to personal history" (Jodelet 2010, personal communication). Students and colleagues of Jodelet have since made use of the method for understanding social representations (de Rosa in press; Haas 2004) across relations of power, nations, languages, and scenes of political and cultural significance.

Critical feminist geographers too have produced mapping studies, within geography, cultural studies, and psychology, to theorize identities enacted and negotiated in and across space. Jen Gieseking (2010) has written on the shifting geographies of lesbian spaces in New York City, and Cindi Katz (2001) has crafted a critical exploration of youth development over time in capitalist societies. Gathering maps from youth in Spain and Brazil, Bomfim and Urrutia (2005, p. 38) argue that "the pathway from perception to verbalization is a complex process." Their use of maps with citizens of different cities (Barcelona and Sao Paulo) has provided, in their view, a way of surmounting this "methodological challenge" and "reaching the intangible" world of emotions and perceptions. Young and Barrett (2001) echo this advantage of mapping: in their work with Kampala street children, "the images produced were also useful tools in eliciting discussion with individual children as it provided a focus away from the researcher" (p. 145). Powell, in her work with residents of El Chorrillo in Panama City, finds that maps offer a "multisensory" method which "highlights and displays the ways in which place configures a sense of self in relation to historical, geographical, and localized environments" (2010, p. 553).

Most recently, and most akin to our work in this article, Sirin and Fine's book *Muslim American Youth* (2008) explores how mapping allowed young Muslim American youth in the United States, just post 9/11 and gathered in focus groups, to express a range of de-stabilized thoughts and affects, including fear, anger, betrayal, and hope in images that reflected at once deep desire and contestation, hope and despair, sense of belonging, and exile. That is, the visual narratives produced by youth, for themselves, each other, and for the researchers, enabled them to express complex identities, extreme contradiction and vacillating contestation because maps—unlike interviews—do not insist upon a "resolved and coherent narrative." This work represents a significant departure from the mapping of place and a shift to mapping selves in place, in relation, and in development. It is that focus, one that extends mapping beyond place to consider mapping selves and identities, which we further explore.

### **Mapping as a Developmental, Longitudinal, Identity-Based, and Affect-Laden Method**

In the section below, we sketch three studies where we have used mapping to show how it has informed our work developmentally, operated longitudinally and retrospectively, taught us about our own understanding of identity processes and social representations, and exposed us to the rich affective components of social psychological research. We begin with the first project, a study of lives over time, gathered from graduates of the International High Schools in New York City, where we first used the maps. We then describe a second study of Muslim-American identities, gathered from youth in the United States who simply stood still as the political world destabilized their ethnic and national identities. Finally,

we present the most recent way we have used maps in a study of generations of individuals who participated in a sexuality theatre group from the days of the HIV epidemic (the 1980s) until today's climate of abstinence-only sex education (the 2000s), carrying wisdom and collective experience over time and political shifts in the U.S. culture and comfort with adolescent sexuality. We use each of these studies to draw attention to a particular aspect of the mapping method that we have found useful to our research process. After presenting these three examples we will consider the commitments, dilemmas, and methodological moves that have opened and those yet to be explored.

### *Mapping Selves over Time and Space*

In a multimethod study of recent graduates of a network of high schools that serve recently arrived immigrant students, we sought to document how the rich relational, cultural, and inquiry-based practices of the school, committed to linguistic and ethnic diversity, were carried to new contexts in the bodies, memories, and relations of graduates (see Fine et al. 2005; Futch & Jaffe-Walter 2011). In a design that integrated statistical analysis of institutional archival material with focus groups and interviews, we asked young people to: "Map your journey from your home country to where you are today in life. Include people, places, obstacles, and opportunities on the way. You can use different colors to show different feelings, or use lines and arrows. These are just suggestions. Be as creative as you like and, if you don't want to draw you can make more of a flow chart."

We integrated maps into our multimethod design (archival analysis of students' graduation/drop out rates, college going and persistence; interviews with graduates; focus groups with students and graduates; maps by alumni and current students) as a creative tool in group interviews to help bridge cohort and language differences and (dis)comfort with English. This prompt produced a number of interesting maps that helped us theorize selves in motion, temporal, and spatial shifts in affect (sometimes represented as tears/smiles, or rain/sunshine, or alienation/friendships) and the relational and psychological presence or absence of people or voices (Hermans, Rijks & Kempen 1993) tucked into the traveling bodies of youth. For the analysis we drew from the theory of dialogical selves, in which Hermans (2004) describes the self as a traveler, one that "moves from one position to another and . . . takes a variety of perspectives on the world [which] open particular vistas and, at the same time, close off others from view" (p. 298).

Resisting the notion that the picture *is* the person (and thus directly open to our gaze/interpretation), we asked the young people to draw and then narrate the sketch to provide us with (and privilege) their own interpretation. As argued above, we appreciate the historical roots of such drawing exercises but also see mapping as an inherently narrative and dialogical approach that is premised on deepening the conversations between researcher and participant in a way that privileges the inner thought-processes and experiences of the participant. Catalina's journey (Figure 1) shows the powerful ways in which the academic, social, and emotional lessons learned were able to persist, mutate, and navigate across context. From her statements, we begin to see that real locations impact the selves and "innovation" (Hermans 2003) of the self for these participants in ways that are significant. Catalina's experience provides us with a story that depicts the influential role of context, the force and power of the past, and the ways in which a young person is able to comprehend and act upon/within their surroundings. The map provides a useful tool in understanding how Catalina positioned herself in her environment as well as the emotions and thoughts she experienced.



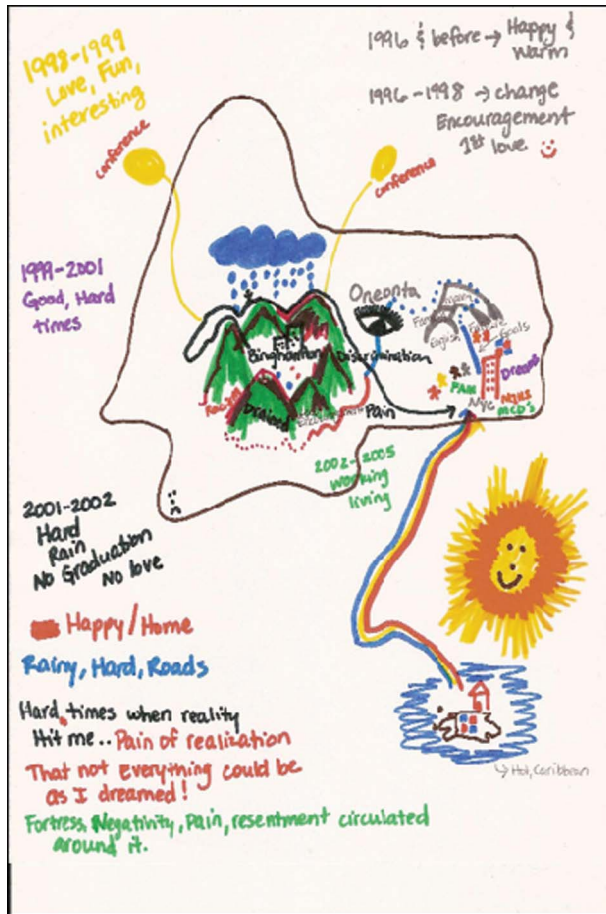


Figure 1. Catalina's map (color figure available online).

*Catalina (describing her map):* Okay, so that's, that's um, me right there, that's my country, my nice house. Then moving here was exciting; that's why it has a lot of different colors. It was exciting. . . . The money was a big thing when I had to go to college. Um, but I went . . . little by little I got there. Um, I met a lot of cool people; the sun was so bright! . . . That's the flag! Then, um, as I moved from Oneonta to Binghamton it became, more like the realization; I would look through my eyes at everything that was around me. I didn't really know stereotype and all that stuff until actually I got to Binghamton.

The map rendered visible the play among context and affect, thoughts, ruminations, and desires, reflecting critically on the power dynamics of a “White” university, and the pulsating spatialization of the selves across various contexts and times (i.e., the presence of family, friends, and flags that denote her home country). The jagged and dotted lines denoted a sense of struggle and uncertainty as she literally traced the path of her life over the last decade. Catalina depicted happiness and excitement through bright colors and the sun. Her first encounters with “problems” of money, language, and leaving her family, were

drawn as small hills. Overcoming these challenges in Oneonta, she depicted her time there as full of people and sun. However, upon her trip to Binghamton, she drew a large eye to symbolize how her eyes were opened to the “pain of realization that not everything could be as I dreamed!” She encountered the rather large mountains of racism and discrimination and talks of how she felt drained by a “fortress [of] negativity, pain, [and] resentment.” She drew on the tools, lessons, and innovations (Hermans 2003) learned during high school to navigate the obstacles at Binghamton and make her way—depicted as a person trekking through mountains and rain—back to New York City, where she described herself as now “trying to get over Binghamton, taking me a little longer than I thought, but I’m working and doing good.”

Through this experience we realized that maps offered a way to account for change over time without reifying developmental stages and served as a critical analytic tool when interpreting other data sources, from quantitative surveys to qualitative interviews. The maps “texturized” the interview and survey data of the participants to show that development is rarely linear or unidirectional. They also provided a way of contesting and contending with other sources of data; seeking contradictions that we considered essential to discussions of validity in our analysis (for further discussion, see Katsiaficas et al. 2011). With regard to theory, the maps elucidated processes of multiplicity, mechanisms by which people and experiences travel with an individual while acknowledging the contextual considerations that allow that individual to flourish or flee. The maps show us, visually, the emotional forces present in various contexts, and through individual explanations of the maps, we learned how both emotions and context factored into key personal decisions (Futch 2011).

### *Exploring Hyphenated Selves: Maps with Muslim-American Youth post 9/11*

For immigrant Muslim youth living in the Northeast United States, negotiating their identities across different cultural terrains became decidedly more challenging after the events of September 11, 2001 (Cainkar 2004). They have learned, in the last decade, that their standing in the United States is provisional, as Sarah Gualtieri would argue, “not-quite-white . . . not-quite-free, subject to ‘the hyphen that never ends’” (p. 65; drawing from Suad 1999, p. 268; Gualtieri 2004; Maira 2004). This is the current context within which Muslim-American youth find themselves laboring at the hyphen: simultaneously citizen and alien, American and Muslim. In this second example, we used maps to study life on the hyphen, for these newly excluded citizens (see Sirin et al. 2008; Sirin & Fine 2007; Zaal et al. 2007). We found mapping to be a particularly useful method for examining how young people represent, internally and to the world, complex selves animated during times of political crisis; selves in motion not because they were going to college (as above) but because the political context in which they are situated has shattered such that their bodies are now covered in demonic/terrorist representations.

For this study, the second author, a co-researcher and a participatory advisory group of Muslim-American adolescents, designed a multimethod project integrating surveys of hundreds of Muslim-American youth in the Northeast, individual interviews and focus groups in which mapping was our opening, as a method to invite young people to display the complexities of living with multiple identities of differing political weight (see Sirin & Fine 2007 and Zaal et al. 2007 for details on analysis). Participants were presented with the following prompt:



Using the materials provided with this survey, please draw a map of your many ethnic, religious, and social identities. This should be an illustration of how you see yourself as a Muslim-American person. You are free to design the map as you wish. You can use drawings, colors, symbols, words . . . whatever you need to reflect your multiple selves. (Sirin & Fine 2007)

The prompt facilitated representations of selves that were affectively fueled, often with dense and multiple traumas imported from politics into the selves-portraits of these young adults. The maps were drawn just prior to their involvement in a focus group; each person introduced him/herself through the map, thus facilitating a re-presentation of self that resisted an overdetermined narrative of coherence. Mapping as the portal to focus groups disrupts the impetus for a dominant narrative by instead normalizing fluidity, contradiction, struggle, resilience, and diversity.

In this project, we analyzed maps with a doubled technique. We coded the maps qualitatively to understand the complex negotiations of political context and selves; to gather up public incidents of surveillance and suspicion, hidden transcripts of resistance and varied strategies of resistance and solidarity (see Sirin & Fine 2007). We also categorized the maps into three broad categories of “integrated” selves (Muslim and “American” are compatible identities, feeding and flourishing in interdependence), “parallel” selves (living double lives in parallel, not in conflict, a form of code-switching; see Cross in press), or selves in “conflict” (reflecting tensions and conflicts across one’s cultural and national identities). A map was coded as “integrated identity” if the two identities were portrayed as blended in a nonconflicting way. For instance, a map depicting general fluidity between Muslim and American identifications, or explicit overlapping between the areas of the map where each identity was expressed is coded as “integrated.” A “parallel identity” code was assigned to maps where both American and Muslim identities were depicted as if separate (e.g., with a line passing through the middle of the page or as separate circles). Finally, a “conflicted identity” code was assigned to maps that represented tension, conflict, or irreconcilability of the Muslim and American identities.<sup>1</sup> Despite complex and painful stories of social isolation, stereotyping, being feared as a “terrorist,” or pitied as an “oppressed women,” the majority of these young people chose to represent identities that braid elements of their multiple cultures, without evidence of conflict, a form of integration that colleagues in Europe (Jaffe-Walter 2011; Zaal et al. 2007) and in Israel/Palestine (Hertz-Lazarowitz et al. 2010) have found to be far less prevalent. Placing the maps into these three categories using a protocol designed previously with a sample of Muslim youth (Sirin & Fine 2007), we were able to also integrate analyses of the maps with the survey data on depression, public/private regard for multiple identities, and sense of alienation or belonging in the United States.

Jehan, a 19-year-old Pakistani female, drew a map (Figure 2) that shows how integrated paths creatively combine or layer several different aspects of complex personhood that co-exist. Narrating creative responses to severe and sudden exclusion from the moral community of their peers, several of the participants in our sessions told us that their layered identities nevertheless give them a greater sense of belonging; a wider “access to the rest of the world.” Iman describes the transformation that comes from the integrated layering of her many selves: “You’re like a new culture. It’s like those new restaurants that mix . . . you’re like a fusion . . . a new fusion. And it’s just interesting to be you, you know, because you’re fusing two cultures in one.”

Amir, a 20-year-old Albanian, spoke of the many sedimented identities he has come to “acquire” over his young life:

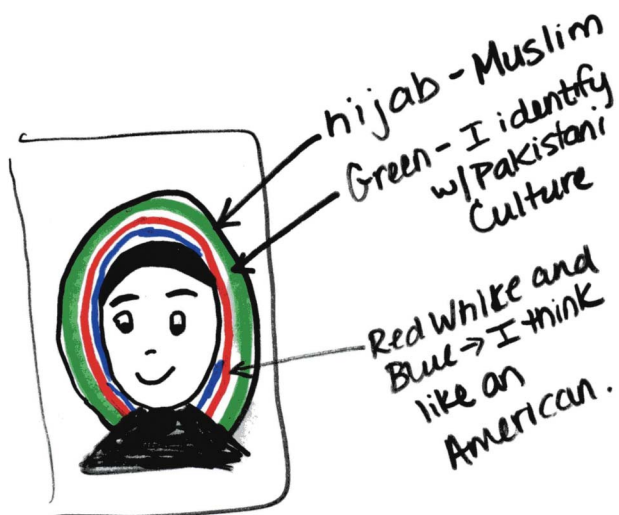


Figure 2. Jehan's map (color figure available online).

When people limit [identity] to one or two things I think I struggle with it because, lets say somebody is from . . . I don't know where . . . Mongolia and he immigrates to this country and somebody tells him "you're American." He might actually get sensitive and say "no I'm not" or vice versa. I think in fact if we acknowledge that we are all these things it makes it much more simple, you know? 'Cause it's the truth you know? Some people refer to their ethnicity as their identity you know and I don't think that's the case you know? Who knows. Well my ethnicity is, I can claim I'm Albanian but I can be anything, you know I can be Roman, Turk, Arab, so many different things you don't know what you are. If you look at it from a scientific perspective, identity is just what you acquire.

In this project, the maps offered a space for reflecting on and refracting difficult political dynamics, for integrating the pain of Islamophobia with the strength of conviction borne, for many, in Islamic beliefs, convictions, or community; the maps as method invite a discussion of contradictions in political context and subjectivities, refusing binaries of Muslim or American; resilient or alienated; alienated or in community.

### *Mapping Affect and Embodiment over Time and Space: Returning to The SOURCE*

Our collective experiences led us to try using maps with a creative group of individuals, described in the opening of this article, who had participated in a teen-theatre group during their high school years. The SOURCE Teen-Theatre Group is located in Sarasota, Florida. The group consists of mostly high school students from the Sarasota-Bradenton area who meet weekly for group workshops and to rehearse plays. The meetings provide a space for discussion about topics relevant to teens and creative ways to express and work through issues members are facing. The plays, which deal with a variety of issues such as peer-pressure, sex and sexuality, dating, bullying, and health, are created collaboratively with members and performed for communities and schools.

For this study, mapping was used in conjunction with a number of other methods: a group interview with past participants, individual interviews ( $N = 20$ ), and an online survey ( $N = 51$ ) for past participants. The maps were produced as part of a “Design Team” meeting in which a group of past participants, who were now between the ages of 18 and 32, met for two days in 2007 to discuss their experiences in The SOURCE and work collaboratively to design the next phases of the research study (the interview protocol and the online survey). For the mapping segment, the participants ( $N = 9$ ) were asked to use large sheets of paper, markers, construction paper, and glue “to visually and creatively depict how The SOURCE lived in their bodies/lives then and now.” The instructions were purposefully “loose” and open-ended to allow for creativity and ownership of the product. Because this group had spent a number of hours together, and because they were used to sharing in the intimate space of The SOURCE, we went around afterward and each person described their map in detail. This level of openness, while practical in this setting, may not be ideal for all studies. In other settings, participants have been able to opt out of sharing or the sharing would have been limited to only a few minutes.

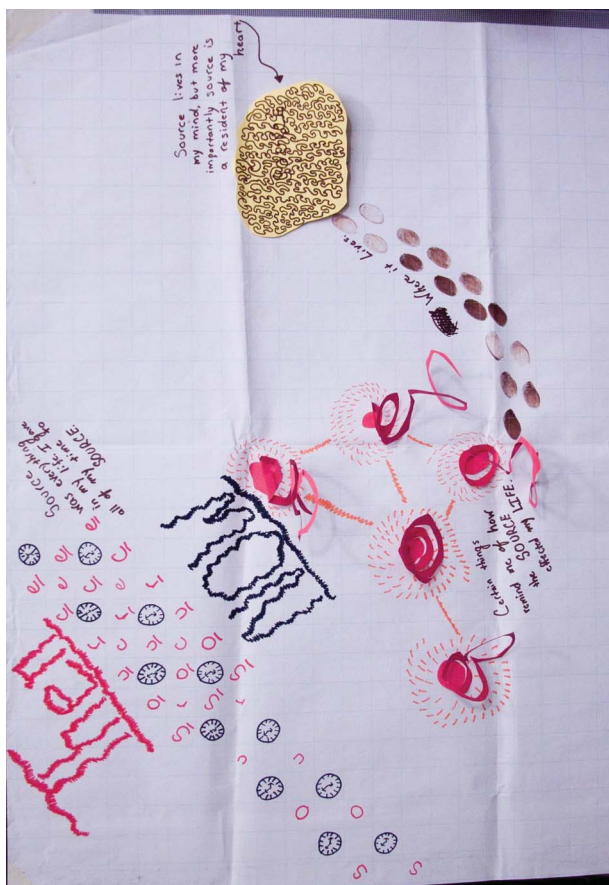
The map (Figure 3), drawn by Todd, is divided into “then” and “now” sections. For “then,” he draws the letters of SOURCE spaced out with a clock in between each letter and repeats this pattern. As he explains it, “SOURCE was everything in my life. I gave all of my time to SOURCE.” For the “now” section, he creatively depicts a set of interconnected “synapses” that are actually three-dimensional spirals that jump off the page. As he explains, “Certain things remind me of how the SOURCE affected my life.” In his explanation of the map, he elaborates that he will experience something in his life that will remind him of a moment in SOURCE (i.e., a discussion or event). He used synapses to depict the way that his memories are connected and that one memory can spur a string of other memories. In terms of “now” and “where it [SOURCE] lives,” he says “SOURCE lives in my mind, but more importantly SOURCE is a resident of my heart.” The yellow cut-out filled with squiggly lines represents his mind/brain and it lifts up, revealing a heart with “SOURCE” written inside. Though it may not be clear from this reproduction, there is a path that leads from the synapses to the mind. This path is actually composed of his thumbprints. He explains that he wanted to use his thumbprints because they are unique and they represent his identity.

Todd’s map was unique because it was very embodied in a way that many of the other maps were not. A theme across maps was to include various people and events and to depict a very relational and often a very emotional map. Todd’s map, however, was more explicitly embodied in a way that stood out to us. He shows us how the “identity work” (Chase 2005) that he was doing in The SOURCE became integrated into his sense of self. What began as an activity that occupied a lot of time led to future synapses firing, to full presence of mind/brain, to incorporation into heart (soul).

Cromby (2007) discusses this embodied experience of identity processes that Todd depicted in his map by explaining that such extended consciousness

is symbolic, representational, narrativized and discursive; it is both reliant upon and constructed through memory and symbols. It uses the uniquely human capacity for memory, representation and meta-representation, to generate webs of meaning and understanding within which to locate the ever-present flux of information supplied by core consciousness. (p. 154)

Yet Todd is not speaking of memory encoding and embodied/sensory events per se; rather, he is showing how his body is memoried and his identity is embodied in interconnected



**Figure 3.** Todd's map (color figure available online).

ways that move and develop with him. We were struck by how Todd's map was able to use a metaphor of synapses and brain cells to convey the concept of an “autobiographical self”—something neuroscientists (e.g., Damasio 1999) and psychologists (particularly those in developmental and narrative psychology) have more recently devoted attention to. Todd was able to use his map to narrate his understanding of how his identity is socially, personally, and biologically constructed out of past events and relationships while maintaining an understanding of how these experiences live in his body and contributes to his “self” going forward.

Todd's example shows that what began as a simple exercise aimed at facilitating group discussion and understanding personal experiences with a particular space and program can open up, for the researcher, a new line of understanding and journeys into conceptual terrains unanticipated at the start of the project. We consider this to be the primary strength of the method and discuss this “mediating” aspect below.

### Mapping as a Mediation Method

With the three studies described above in mind, we now move to how we view mapping as a “mediational” method in that it dynamically interfaces *between* the theories we have used

to guide our inquiry and the richly layered stories we gathered in each study. Maps enabled us to work with material constructed on psychological platforms that stretched within selves, and in relation; across time and space; between science and aesthetics. We found the maps to not be *static* sources of data; rather they actively elicited new interpretations, highlighted hidden stories, and provided new lenses for viewing other data. Mapping can be a tool for dialogical analyses of self (Hermans et al. 1993) an exploration of hyphenated identities in politically contentious habitus (Bourdieu 1977), and a way of reflecting on and analyzing the embodied negotiations of global and local politics in young bodies. Mapping enabled respondents to display affective experiences of shame, trauma or dissociation in ways that language may limit. Maps enabled us to jump scale, analyzing at once the complex circuits joining individual, social, cultural, and political material. Most explicitly, maps insisted on analyses that took seriously a conversation between interpretations of respondents, researchers and readers/audience. For us, then, the maps answered the critical historical call of early social psychology to consider the topology of life spaces, the subjectivity of individual social representations, and de-center the more traditional and hierarchical aspects of research participation endemic to our field.

As Rom Harré argues, “human behaviors and states are reflective of, and implicated within, dynamic structures of meaning. These do not act as causal influences: instead, they provide rules and guidelines toward which individuals orient, which they take up flexibly and apply creatively” (in Cromby 2007, p. 158). Shouldn’t, then, our methods be flexible and creative in return? Below, we describe key ways that mapping has offered such opportunities to enhance our research process at many junctures.

### *Maps as Facilitator*

In their exploration of visual methods, Young and Barrett (2001) cite the “analytic and catalytic properties” of the methods (p. 143). We have found the catalytic properties of mapping, that is, the way that maps initiated or encouraged a process, were particularly useful during data collection. Maps were instrumental in our group interviews because they provided opportunities for ownership and “release points” in that they were a method “capable of shedding light in ways that make the context of the subject explicit and foreground the social unconscious” (McClelland & Fine 2008, p. 243). The Internationals group interviews (Study 1), like many group data collection settings, brought together people who may not have been familiar with the other members or who may not have felt comfortable speaking about their experiences in a relatively short window of time. By positioning the mapping exercise in the first half of the group interview, we found that it provided each member with his or her own piece of data. Group members who may have been quiet before were able to contribute long narratives to the group and became more involved. In our experience, mapping has served as an antidote to the concerns Wilkinson raises about focus groups, particularly with regard to power; maps re-center authority and focus onto the participant and away from the facilitator.

Additionally, we found that maps provided key moments of “opening,” that is, opportunities for the discussion (e.g., interview, group interview, focus group) to follow a trajectory not anticipated by the researcher. The opportunity for personal creativity is limited only by the materials the researcher provides and this often results in compelling products. One Internationals graduate, an architect, organized his map as beginning on the right one-third of his paper and wrapping back around to the first one-third on the left. He said that this was representative of his own personal trajectory as well as how he sees things as an architect, two things he considers inseparable. In a follow-up study with SOURCE members



the first author presented them with maps they had constructed three years ago and invited them to add or edit them as they pleased. Participants did not want to edit the earlier maps because they felt they were accurate representations of their self at that moment in time, but they took the opportunity to extend their maps into the present and document the three years that had passed. One participant, looking at her map filled with arrows, emotions, and words, commented on how it was suddenly clear how her life went in cycles. This observation, facilitated by viewing and discussing the map, led us into a conversation about the emotional cycles in her life, how she views them, and what she has learned about herself throughout. This follow-up interview provided longitudinal data about the impact of The SOURCE that may not have emerged without the facilitation of the map.

### *Maps as a Spatial/Dialogical Method*

Second, we have found maps particularly useful in a dialogical sense, in that they provide representations of data that often contest or elaborate upon the theoretical claims under investigation. With regard to space, maps offer many representations and visualizations of what space can mean to personal identity and experience. Maps have shown us both how a person moves through a space, changes and is changed by the space, and then how space can be embodied, metabolized, and carried over time within a person. Similarly, maps provide a dialogue with experience and capture what happens in between selves and others. Thus, maps have been useful in our own dialogue with theories of self and identity. Josselson (1996) argues that there are moments of “awakenings” that turn the “kaleidoscope” of the self and allow one to see parts of themselves differently and in a new light. We see maps as a useful way of understanding self and identity, the dynamic nature of both, and therefore an important method for advancing identity theory and multiple/hyphenated selves.

They also show particular promise for social-personality psychology in that they also depict *personal* (and often differing) experiences of *shared* social representations. For example, in The SOURCE study, we saw how individuals uniquely related to their shared experience of being a SOURCE actor. Despite a shared identity of SOURCE participant, this took on different meanings for each person, as evidenced by their maps (Futch 2011). By asking participants to map the space, or to map their bodies, we saw how these representations were complex and layered. The maps were a useful methodological tool for showing how individual experience can align or differ from collective representations of spaces or psychological phenomena. We found that there was a collective image of The SOURCE space that emerged from the surveys and interviews as an exceedingly safe space for personal exploration. The maps, however, were able to interrogate this image at the individual level and show different ways that individuals worked through (or contested) the space. This is particularly important for much of qualitative and evaluation work that is often critiqued for either presenting a too “rosy” view of their settings or ending at the point of description. Pluralism, or triangulation, via mapping allows for a collective image to emerge and for the individual differences of experience to simultaneously flesh out how this image is experienced on the personal level.

### *Maps as an Analytic Tool*

Finally, we have found that maps can sit in dialogue with other pieces of data and thus change the traditional shape or course of research participation (Katsiaficas et al. 2011). Our observation of the pluralistic advantage of maps is most likely directly related to our continual use of this tool in a mixed-method context such that it never stands alone,



and also that it does much more than simply complement the other methods. It actively interrogates, especially at the point of analysis. Maps privilege visual, interpretive ways of knowing and representing experience. The research participant's story is no longer limited to verbal (either written or spoken) expression, but can also be depicted visually. This is particularly important for those working with respondents who may have a different native language, or who may be asked to relay experiences that are difficult to verbalize or those who seek to convey the unsayable (Rogers 2006; Segalo 2011). Second, maps provided additional opportunities for the voices of participants to enter the analysis. When the researcher is sitting at their desk, surrounded by data, we have found that the maps were able to bring the participant back into the room in a way that text-based data does not. Throughout our various projects in which we have used maps, we have experimented with where they fit in methods of analysis. We have examined maps first to develop an image of a person/phenomena and then examined interviews or surveys with this image in mind. Likewise we have begun with close examination of an interview transcript or survey and then used the map to further our analysis. But the method that has proven the most useful is to use the map as a discursive tool, one that sits in conversation—and physical juxtaposition—with another data source, such as an interview or survey (see Katsiaficas et al. 2011 for detailed explanation). This is particularly useful when the participant did not describe the maps in depth because it allows the interview or other data source to guide an interpretation of the map. Additionally, elements of either data source become represented in different ways—verbally and visually—which allows for further interpretation and understanding of their meaning. For example, “change” may be a theme that runs through an interview narrative fairly consistently but it may be visually depicted as emotionally charged, in relation to other people, or as isolating. Another example may be a person who draws their self off-center on a map or as holding hands or somehow connected to other people on a map. This can give us an idea of how that person views their self or their self in relation to others and we can more explicitly read for this in the interview. Mapping, therefore, can be both a mediational method and a complementary method in the discursive sense. It becomes a third party and another representation of the participant that the analyst can engage with as they interpret the data.

## Conclusion

Social psychology, at its conceptual roots, takes up the complex dialectics and variation of human experience as embodied, narrated and represented across and within time and space. At this moment in history, however, our discipline, like the broader culture, is engaged in an epistemological move to occlude evidence of the thousands of little threads of the political and social that connect, support and circuit individual and collective lives. Indeed, the rise of theory and method joined in the fetish of individualism and de-historicism has been identified before (Billig 2008; Greenwood 2000). We worry that social psychology has become both a handmaiden to the de-socializing of the self. More importantly, however, we are committed to critical psychology as a serious counter voice that attends to and reveals the dynamic membranes and activities that connect, mediate, separate and join selves and collectives; individuals and the social; private and public.

The time is certainly ripe in the social sciences for innovative methods that capture the nuances and complexities of human experiences of social climates. As Gildersleeve and Kuntz (2011) explain, in their recent call for qualitative inquiry to more explicitly consider space and spatial analyses, “our research methods often fail to make room for a transformative dynamic to the sociocultural contexts we examine” (p. 21). They present

dialogue as one such mode of engaging space; to this we would add mapping methods, for their dual purposes of visually depicting space and of providing image-based data that can work dialogically with narrative, quantitative, or other forms of data.

The opportunities for mapping are as endless as the creativity of the researchers and participants who embrace the method. In this article we have outlined our own experiences with mapping over the last five years in a variety of contexts in order to begin a dialogue around a method we feel has particular promise for the epistemological questions at the heart of social-personality psychology. As our understanding of selves and identities, collectives and movements, become increasingly complex and lived on a variety of planes—historic, generational, geographic, digital, and cultural—we believe mapping holds particular promise for theorizing, re-presenting and analyzing complexity and shifts over time and space, for capturing the continuities and the ruptures, tracing the solid and perforated lines of lives

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### Note

1. Initial inter-rater agreement level for the two coders was 87%.

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## About the Authors

Valerie A. Futch is a postdoctoral fellow at Youth-Nex, The University of Virginia Center to Promote Effective Youth Development. Her research interests include adolescent identity development, youth–adult relationships in out-of-school programs, and community-based research and evaluation. Her most recent project documented the developmental impact of participation in a peer-education teen-theatre program located in Central Florida. She has recently published in *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, and *Curriculum Inquiry*. She is currently involved in the Society for the

Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI, APA Division 9), an active member of the Public Science Project, and secretary of the newly formed Society for Qualitative Inquiry in Psychology (SQIP, a Section of APA Division 5).

*Michelle Fine* is a Distinguished Professor of Social Psychology, Women's Studies and Urban Education at The Graduate Center, CUNY, and is a founding faculty member of the Public Science Project (PSP). A sampling of her most cited books and policy monographs includes *Charter Schools and the Corporate Make-Over of Public Education* (with Michael Fabricant, Teachers College Press, 2012), *Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion* (with Julio Cammarota, Routledge, 2008), *Muslim-American Youth* (with Selcuk Sirin, New York University Press, 2008), and *Working Method: Social Research and Social Justice* (with Lois Weis, Routledge, 2004). She was recently honored by a substantial Elizabeth Hurlock Beckman Award (2011) for her deep mentoring legacy over the past 25 years. The recipient of the 2012 Henry Murray Award from the Society for Personality and Social Psychology of the APA, Fine was also the recipient of the 2011 Kurt Lewin Award from the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.