While numerous scholars have discussed issues and approaches related to multiculturalism and national identity, few have attended specifically to how multiculturalism occurs between people in their everyday lives. Through her groundbreaking work in *Young People and Everyday Multiculturalism*, Anita Harris addresses this absence through an empirically grounded analysis of the everyday, interactional methods through which Australian youth engage in and negotiate diversity within and beyond their local communities. Through interviews and focus groups with 106 culturally and racially diverse Australian youth in five urban cities, Harris illustrates the limitations of multiculturalism as it is imagined at the national level and instead points to key moments in the lives of youth that inform their concepts of self and others.

This in-depth analysis is unique in that it connects national discourses and policies aimed at facilitating multiculturalism with the actual experiences of youth who are often the targets of these approaches. Based on their own accounts, Harris illuminates the multifaceted and creative
ways that youth negotiate identity, community and citizenship in ways that do not fit neatly within the “cohesion” agenda dictated by the Howard Government. Though she provides distinct instances of positive interactions among youth, she is careful not to romanticize those who participated in the study suggesting that, “racism and prejudice sit alongside care and recognition” (p. 3). That is to say, while engaged in alternate forms of civic participation that allow for increased mobility and cross-situational community building, these youth are still subject to deeply embedded ideologies about cultural “others” and appropriate expressions of citizenship.

Harris argues that youth engage in multiculturalism through mix, conflict, community, and citizenship and dedicates each chapter to delineating the unique methods through which young people in her study accomplished these interpersonally defined and enacted locations of belonging. While the forms of engagement produced by youth in her study are core to their own understandings of diversity, recognition, and national identity, Harris notes that they remain relatively invisible to law and policy makers who select particular types of youth and youth activities for exemplification of ideal citizenship. By addressing this contradiction she provides an alternate perspective on how multiculturalism occurs in the daily fabric of young people’s lives with implications for national programs aimed at cultural integration.

In Chapter One, “An Introduction to Young People’s Everyday Multicultures,” Harris situates her research within the context of the Howard Government’s “social cohesion” agenda, which promotes harmonious integration of diverse populations through programs aimed at civic engagement in mainstream activities. In contrast to the nationally sanctioned methods for promoting multicultural cohesion, Harris suggests that young people form various alternative networks through which they mix with one another, negotiate everyday conflicts, and maintain communities both locally and globally. As Harris suggests these forms of everyday engagement reflect young people’s
notions of citizenship in the Australian context while simultaneously producing alternative methods for expressing citizenship that are more relevant to and representative of young people in their everyday lives.

While the national incentive towards integration and cohesion sets the stage for this study, Harris articulates the significance of youths’ refusals to be neatly categorized and contained by existing identities, ethnicities and groups. Chapter Two, “Hyper-Diversity, Multiculturalism and Social Cohesion,” traces the history of Australian policies regarding immigration and diversity, attending closely to contemporary Australian “cohesion” agendas that treat hyper-diversity as a problem of lacking assimilation among white Anglos, Indigenous Australians, and non-white immigrants. In particular, Harris discusses moral outrage campaigns “demonizing immigrants, mainly Middle Easter and Muslim, as threatening and un-Australian” (p. 21). Here, Harris also offers a brief history of discourses about youth in Australia with particular attention to “problematic diversity” rooted in fears over extremist groups, gang youth, and the overall failure of youth to socialize into proper forms of citizenship. In relation to social policies aimed at integrating youth, Harris introduces the concept of youth “hybridity,” suggesting that by forming “new kinds of mixed cultural identities … youth complicate multicultural policy that requires ethnic identification” (p. 22).

Harris’ notion of mix allows for a more multifaceted understanding of how multiculturalism is negotiated among Australian youth in the face of white national discourses. In Chapter Three, “Mix,” Harris elaborates on the interactional processes through which youth complicate fixed notions of ethnicity, culture, and belonging. Counter to social fears that diverse youth are failing to properly integrate, Harris suggests that “young people’s identities continue to be defined through the material cultures of everyday life” rather than through “events and programs staged for community harmony” (p. 41). Through what she calls “ordinary mixing,” Harris suggests that youth
engage in organic forms of multiculturalism such as growing up in communities with people from diverse cultures, and developing multicultural social networks through friendships at school, shopping centers and other public spaces (p. 44). According to Harris, these encounters represent the normalization of diversity among youth in juxtaposition to national discourses that sensationalize diversity as a problem to be managed and contained. Unlike social programs that require youth to engage in sanctioned sports events, Harris also suggests that youth develop multiple less recognized methods for engaging in “creative mix” among diverse peers through music, dance, and artistic collaborations.

In Chapter Four, “Conflict,” Harris acknowledges that though youth in this study engage regularly with people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, conflict is not absent from their lives. But far from being a negative component of multiculturalism, Harris emphasizes the productive potential of conflict among youth suggesting that racialized conflicts over territory and recognition reveal “productive possibilities that … are rendered invisible by a cohesion and harmony frame” (p. 72). Against the backdrop of Australian moral panics that youth conflicts were “evidence that ‘others’ (especially Muslims) were unable to assimilate” (p. 67), Harris suggests that multiculturalism is adeptly negotiated among young people through everyday disagreements and challenges over space and belonging in a hyper-diverse society. While youth in this study suggested that interethnic conflict was uncommon, for example, they also told stories of how racializing certain conflicts and creating of interethnic allegiances among their peers enabled them to challenge daily instances of racism, question taken for granted assumptions about national identity, and negotiate limited power in specific spaces. Contrary to Australian programs that promote harmony and portray conflict as foreclosing possibilities for interaction among diverse citizens, Harris suggests that conflict is a common yet productive part of the lives of all Australian youth. In fact, she asserts that that
conflict promotes multicultural engagement among young people rather than stymying diverse interactions. While cultural programs aimed at intercultural communication aim to minimize conflict, Harris’ findings suggest that “it is sometimes only through unpredictable mix and confrontation that legitimate issues of disadvantage and the distribution of resources that sometimes drive the most serious forms of conflict can emerge” (p. 87).

In Chapter Five, “Community,” Harris further explores how Australian youth form attachments to places, spaces and communities both locally and transnationally. While concerns over civic engagement tend to focus on the lack of youth visibility in nationally sanctioned programs (p. 111), Harris suggests that youth are constantly engaged in civic interactions through informal participation at clubs, churches, artistic and music venues, volunteer work in their local communities, and participation in virtual communities. For example, although it falls below the radar of national diversity initiatives, Harris points out that mutual support among households in specific neighborhoods lends to “productive contact” among young people (p. 99) and facilitates localized forms of community more attuned to their everyday lives. Through the use of social networking sites, consumption of global news media and popular culture, and through email correspondences, young people were able to maintain connections with family and friends both locally and transnationally, resulting in hybrid identities and senses of belonging. Through these practices, belonging in the Australian context was negotiated through recognition and respect of difference rather than through the creation of “non-conflictual relationships” (p. 100) among youth.

Despite their active engagement in multiple local and transnational communities, however, young people consistently engaged in “self-effacing” discourses with regards to their involvement, reflecting the impacts of national ideologies on young people’s concepts of their own successes or failures as good citizens (p. 111). In Chapter Six, “Citizenship,” Harris discusses how
young people’s practices of multiculturalism connect with “renewed efforts to manage the national image as Anglo and white, the display of this national managerialism and the insistence on integration into core national values” (p. 116). Much of this has to do with what Harris refers to as “being” and “feeling” Australian, sites of belonging that young people negotiate through practices conceived of as appropriately “Aussie.” Many of these practices are linked with stereotypically white, Anglo activities. For example, young people in this study describe expectations associated with participation at public beaches, a conventionally Aussie past-time, and discuss how “failures” to dress “appropriately” in those spaces reflect failed integration into national cultural norms. Once again drawing connections between national cohesion discourses and the daily enactments of multiculturalism among youth, Harris suggests that “the everyday racism, incivility and exclusion from belonging that is expressed towards Muslims—and in some cases, is enacted on Muslim bodies—is not a breakdown in the cohesion ideology of a shared national belonging, but a very important take-up of its core message” (p. 129). Significantly this chapter highlights how key expectations guiding appropriate citizenship inform young people’s engagement with cultural “others,” their interpretations of who has a right to claim citizenship, how youth define freedom in relation to national values, and the ways that these expectations translate into everyday interactions between young people in multiple public spaces.

In “Living Together Beyond Cohesion” Harris concludes with a discussion of how the young people who are often the targets of social cohesion initiatives are already capable of negotiating everyday living in a hyper diverse society. The heterogeneity of identities, methods for navigating conflict, and community formations characterized in this study exemplify productive alternatives for conceiving of and addressing multiculturalism. At the same time, Harris connects youth tactics for making sense of and living in connection with others with national ideologies about diversity. Noting that incentives
to integrate ethnic “others” contribute to the erasure of cultural identities, she also analyzes the aspects of cohesive multiculturalism that are connected with racist and deeply exclusionary values. In doing so she adeptly reveals how youth simultaneously challenge and reproduce hegemonic forms of integration through internalization and application of those ideologies through daily engagements with others and negotiations of selfhood.

This text is an essential read for anyone specializing in youth cultures or with an interest in issues of diversity and multiculturalism. Harris’ empirical analysis of the interactional processes that govern the everyday experiences of Australian youth represents a unique contribution to the field of multicultural youth studies, and adds to theoretical discussions about what it means to “live diversity.” By bringing micro-level dynamics to the forefront of her analysis, Harris provides key insights into how youth participate in nation-making as “agents engaged in the messy work of negotiating diversity through an ongoing contestation of identity, place and national belonging in mundane sites within communities and neighborhoods” (pp. 7-8). Because of its far-reaching implications Harris’ work provides an exemplary, multidimensional approach that can be used in a variety of courses whose topics range from studies of specific youth cultures to more broad analyses of national belonging, multiculturalism, and diversity.

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