# ENGENDERING CREATIVITY, ENGENDERING LABOUR: GIRLS AND DIY MEDIA

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In recent years, several new online platforms dedicated to the creation and sharing of content made by children have emerged. For example, Storybird, "a storytelling community", provides a simple and attractive interface that invites children (and users of "all ages") to write and share their own storybooks, accented with illustrations by professional artists. For a fee, these digital storybooks can be transformed into professional-grade print versions, with a portion of the profits used to pay the artists for their illustrations. The combination of creativity, commerce, and institutional authority bound up in this site is but one example of the ways in which these spaces have begun to offer children something much more complex than a mere forum for making and sharing. In addition to transforming how and where children's creative practices take place, such platforms introduce important new elements into children's creative practices—including market processes, legal implications and the dissolution of traditional production/consumption relationships. The expansion of low-tech, inexpensive or free tools and spaces for children to engage in increasingly sophisticated modes of creative production thus prompts a number of questions regarding both the opportunities and challenges that may arise.

For one, these sites provide unique opportunities for children to share their writing, photography, film-making, and game design online, with equally unique affordances for collaboration, dissemination, feedback, and community. Indeed, the accessibility of these sites, technological as well as financial, may potentially afford participation by children that have historically been excluded from media production and sharing, including those on the other side of the "digital divide", children of colour, children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, children with disabilities, rural children, and girls.

To date, very little research has focused on the actual DIY media-making activities of these groups of children, with the notable exception of work on the productive practices of girls. Since the publication of McRobbie and Garber's 1976 article on girls' "bedroom"

subcultures, domestic spaces have been a key site of critical inquiry into youth culture, rectifying the historical privileging of public, and thus for the most part masculine, forums and practices. In particular, Kearney's ongoing work on female participation in a range of cultural and media production activities, from film-making (2003) to zine publishing (1998), has shifted the focus from leisure and consumption and reframed the bedroom as a site of cultural production. Girls' online participation in creative spaces and their significance for self-expression (Stern, 2006), identity performance (Thomas, 2007), community development (Reid-Walsh & Mitchell, 2004), and informal learning (Kearney, 2006), have also been the object of sustained attention, providing needed nuance to hegemonic constructions of masculine technological mastery (Turkle, 1984). Our paper engages with some of the gaps and questions that remain unanswered in these studies, in particular the social, spatial, and technical limitations that can still shape the creative practices of young girls. Kearney (2007) noted that a focus on the space of the bedroom often effaced the continued lack of privacy and gender-based power dynamics shaping domestic practices, as well as the impact of race and ethnicity on access to this kind of a bedroom culture. We seek to extend Kearney's injunction to attend to the ways in which power dynamics structure space and inform creative media practices in the online domains where kids' DIY media occurs, in conjunction with a focus on the ways in which gendered domestic relations related to leisure time and access to digital technologies still persist. We also challenge Kearney's rejection of McRobbie and Garber's emphasis on the primacy of consumption within girls' bedroom culture, particularly given the growing prevalence of commercially-controlled platforms for DIY media production and the continued popularity of fan creations. While the above-mentioned body of work made a major contribution towards addressing the absence of girls' creative practices in research on digital spaces, the tendency towards finding the use of the Internet and participation in virtual realms emancipatory can fall into the trap of overlooking the significant barriers and constraints young girls and women face in both online and offline spaces.

In particular we focus on the relationship between political economy and gender in the spaces in which young girls engage in DIY media-making practices. We ask how the growth of much-celebrated child-targeted tools and platforms for creative production can also serve to reify and reinscribe hegemonic values related to feminine labour, be it domestic, affective, immaterial, or virtual. We synthesize insights from contemporary and historical research on gender dynamics in the home and its impact on leisure (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1985), postfeminist analysis (Banet-Weiser, 2011) and critical education studies (Lammers, 2013) of young female creative practice online, to analyze findings drawn from a content analysis of the gendered design elements from our scan of 142 child-oriented DIY media websites. Through a consideration of the social, political, and technical relationship between domestic and online spaces for young female productivity, we offer insights into the entanglement of creativity, labour, and gender in kids' DIY media.

In 1998, Kearney asked "what power dynamics within and outside the home impact girls' formation of a culture of the bedroom?" (1998, p.128). We extend this analysis to consider the space of the so-called 'virtual room of one's own' and examine the ways in which novel digital spaces for girls' DIY media-making and sharing can, through their interpellations of feminine subjects and opportunities for particular forms of

engagement, serve to perpetuate hegemonic gender dynamics around feminized labour.

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