

Making do: young people and mobilities at home

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates young people's mobile practices of 'making do' as they negotiate work, study and play in the home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Focusing on Singapore, and drawing on original empirical data derived from online journaling by twenty participants, the paper elaborates on their practices of 'making do' when working from home. Using an interdisciplinary approach spanning youth, cultural and architectural studies, the paper considers new formations and appropriations of domestic time and space. Critically situating the home as a hybrid domestic characterised by its porous public-private space and multiple-disjunctive time, 'making do' is evident in a range of spatial tactics: from occupying temporary mobile spaces to altering physical spaces with objects and devices, to time-sharing, to developing practices that affirm and contest ascribed social roles. Through switching objects and roles in the hybrid domestic home, our study participants not only created new mobilities within the immobile constraints of the pandemic home, they also transformed the spatial and temporal norms of study, work and play.

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Introduction

On 5 May 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the end of the COVID-19 (C-19) pandemic as a global health emergency. However, for over the past three years, especially in early 2020 when the virus began to surge, Singapore, like most countries in the world, went into lockdown, and quickly adopted work-from-home (WFH) and home-based learning (HBL) to combat its spread in communal spaces. WFH became the default, and students shifted to HBL. This condition remains prevalent today as workplaces and university campuses have reopened but are pivoting to flexi-work and blended learning. These pandemic-induced modes of adaptation, especially by young people's experiences of 'making do', provide a critical resource to consider the future of work, study and play in youth transitions.

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In many sectors, the pandemic response required the activities work and learning to move from public and civic spaces to domestic spaces. For young people—particularly the university students and fresh graduates who participated in this study—it resulted in a sense of *dépaysement* as they relocated activities from the city (and campus) that was previously their main social habitat, to the family home. WFH and HBL exposed the challenges of navigating these domestic tensions and negotiating household relations. This paper investigates the mobile practices of young people as they negotiate work, study and play in the home. It examines original empirical data collected from twenty participants using an interdisciplinary approach covering youth, cultural, communication and architectural studies. Elaborating on their mobile practices of ‘making do’ when working at home, it reveals new formations and appropriations of domestic time and space.

It begins with a critical review of the extant theoretical development of WFH and HBL to establish the home as a hybrid domestic characterised by its porous public-private space and multiple-disjunctive time. It next elaborates on our methodology and theoretical deployments of ‘making do’ and ‘youth mobilities’ as conceptual tools of analysis. The analysis discusses tactics of ‘making do’ to accommodate home-based work and examines participants’ spatial tactics of occupying temporary mobile spaces, altering physical spaces with objects and devices, and time-sharing. It also discusses how non-work—play—is negotiated including enabling participants to affirm and contest their wider social roles. Rather than repeat the myth that young people have missed out on key experiences of growing up during this pandemic period, we argue that young people create new mobilities within the immobile constraints of lockdown. They do so through substituting, activating, and switching objects and roles, and in turn, transforming the spatial and temporal norms of study, work, and play.

Situating HBL and WFH: the hybrid domestic

Common to both WFH and HBL is the reconfigured time-space of the domestic home. A brief critical review of the theoretical foundations of WFH and HBL reveals the home to be hybrid and disjunctive in its spatialisation and modulation. The C-19 scholarship on WFH emanates from organisational studies and examines the future of the office (e.g. Cappelli 2021); the impact of family conflict on the productivity of employees (e.g. Darouei and Pluut 2021); satisfaction from work-life balance (e.g. Irawanto, Novianti, and Roz 2021), and; the creative performance of digital knowledge sharing (e.g. Tønnessen et al. 2021). In studies about women, the emphasis is on the gendered division of unpaid labour (e.g. Hjalmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir 2021), an enduring site of life-course research on the role of women in parenting and work-family relations (e.g. Kwan 1999). The latter has focused on teacher readiness (e.g. Mansor et al. 2021); the role of parents and school administrators (e.g. Wai-Cook 2020); technological affordances (e.g. Watermeyer et al. 2021), and; parental stress (e.g. Zhang et al. 2021). Where it has examined its impact on young people, the early focus is on the effects of isolation on diet (Gallo et al. 2020), sexual health (Thomson-Glover et al. 2020), and now predominantly mental health (e.g. El Omrani et al. 2023). This paper complements the Australian lockdown stories of young people’s ‘future presents’ (Kelly, Seth, and James 2022) by focusing on

Singapore in general, and the effects of WFH and HBL on young people as they negotiate the changed spaces and roles of the home, in particular.

HBL arose from scholarship in the West on home schooling or home education, referring specifically to the education of school-aged children in the home or another place outside the school (Gaither 2017). The practice is not just spatial (i.e. replacement of the site of the school with that of the home); it is also ideological, temporal, emotional and gendered, relying on good mothering, domestic labour and the care work of motherhood (Lois 2013). With the C-19 lockdown, home schooling was enforced almost globally and universally. Known through various terminologies including remote learning or HBL (in the case of Singapore), it incorporates the structure of distance learning that now involves online education. While technology is important for access, effective remote learning also requires not just interactivity between students and teachers, but parents as key partners of teachers (Rodriguez et al. 2021). These characteristics highlight the hybridisation of the domestic space of the home into a virtual and institutionalised space of the classroom. The home is also temporally recoded through multiple timespans, including the academic routine of the school day which is segmented into fixed class times. Alongside this is the continuous care-work that mothers (usually) undertake to ensure children are properly logged into the school computer system and supervised while doing schoolwork, a role that continues after school in the evening with children's homework. Under these circumstances, domestic space becomes hybridised between private-public and real-virtual. Domestic time is also restructured into un-daily and dis-junctive temporalities that oscillate between scheduled school time and incessant care time.

WFH arose from the utopic ideals in the 1980s with the introduction of portable computing and the mobile office (Hong 2021), in the 1990s with remote work settings (Di Martino and Wirth 1990), and in the 2000s with the work-play lifestyle of digital nomads (Marx, Reimann, and Diewald 2021). Known also as telecommuting or teleworking, WFH refers to a flexible mode of work not tied to a place or an office and enabled by information communications technology. Remote work was suggested by the WHO during the pandemic as a new work innovation to prevent the spread of the virus while also off-setting disruptions in production by workplace closures. The term 'work from home' (WFH) was used to refer to home-based teleworking and was a temporary alternative solution to business continuity. This definition differentiates it from the more permanent telework that uses various locations outside the employer's premises or telecommuting that substitute telecommunications for physical commuting (Messenger 2019). This adaptation requires constant reconfigurations of personal digital infrastructures—an 'individualised assemblage of tools and technologies ... brought together by workers to perform their work tasks' (Jarrahi et al. 2021, 73). With the home as the office, and work—as paid labour traditionally conducted outside the home—now conducted at home, the home has become not just a hybrid private-public space but also intensified as a space for both income and non-income generating activities. Normative temporal rhythms of the home are also challenged. Pulignano and Glenn (2023) describe an emergent 'grey zone', characterized by 'time intensification' (blurring between 'work-time' and 'home-time') coupled with 'spatial extensification' (blurring between 'work-space' and 'home-space'). One report by white-collared female professionals states they are 'waking before dawn, and/or working late into the night,

on the weekends—whatever [they] can do to find the time and space needed for the deep thinking required by [their] profession’ (Couch et al. 2021, 270). The home, and its hybrid domestication of time and space, is not just literal, but also gendered, professional and social.

Young people living and studying at home are at the centre of WFH and HBL. Their practices reveal the new norms that shape hybrid domesticity and their contestations to these regulations of time and space. Rather than exceptionalised, these new norms have become imbricated as routine practices of young adults’ everyday life. Focusing on this cohort from Singapore provides a critical insight into how those in advanced economies negotiate life-course transition and adapt to youth mobilities.

Young people in Singapore, making do and youth mobilities

Youth is imagined in ways that are socio-cultural as well as developmental. Young people (aged 15–34) in Singapore are a distinct social generation and exemplify the social change of the nation. We chose this cohort for two reasons: first, the age-range follows the UN-recognised age statistics for ‘young people’; second, and more significantly, this group came of age in a city-state that has experienced rapid progress, urban development and cultural renaissance (MND 2019). They make up 18% of the country’s total population (NAC 2020), come from Chinese (79%), Malay (15%), Indian (7.5%) and Other (1.5%) backgrounds (gov.sg 2019) and live in one of the top thirty most densely populated urban centres of the world (Kolb 2019). As beneficiaries of the country’s smart nation development which began in the 1980s, they have also grown up in the most connected and inclusive country in the world (Goh 2021). Against these spatial and digital transformations, they have become adept at carving out meaningful spaces and practices for themselves.

Unlike in the West where it is more commonplace for young adults to leave home and live independently, young people in Asia (and Singapore) predominantly live at home with their family and many continue even after marriage. During C-19 and with the introduction of HBW and HBL, young people in Singapore retreated fully to the family home. This is at odds with the temporal and spatial norms of their everyday pre-C-19 routines. Normally, young people spend about one-third of their daily time in public spaces outside of the home: 5.5 h at school and an average of 2 h for commute (Statista 2021). In other words, they do not normally spend that much time at home, and instead are metaphorically ‘at home’ in the school, on the bus, or train, on the street or in the mall. During the pandemic, and in a country with little social welfare support, the domestic home and the family shouldered the heavy burdens of production and reproduction. This is consistent with a wider synergy in Singapore between a communitarian political emphasis on the family and popular acceptance of the family as the key moral institution (Chua 2002). The C-19 crisis exposed the communitarian ideology of the home and family to be at odds with the hyper-fragmented and hyper-dense social model of living in the family. Understanding young people’s adaptation of the home to study, work and play reveals their creative resilience during this period. We adopt the conceptual rubric of ‘making do’ to understand those practices that have remodulated the key components of space, time and family that shape youth mobility.

'Making do' is a seminal concept from French philosopher Michel De Certeau (1988) and refers to the myriad of appropriative practices that people create in everyday life to adapt to the order of the proper locus. It derives from his analysis into culture as a set of practices or operations, rather than texts, and suggests that when viewed from the point of 'doing', these practices are examined as uses of representations rather than representations. He understands power through strategy as a top-down assertion of power, and tactics as a bottom-up guerrilla force of power. While strategy is distinctly constructed as official and defined locations with hierarchies and rules, tactics are a set of procedures that produce without capitalising, and articulated on opportunistic situations and the will of others: 'A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance' (xix). While strategies are formalities of operations, tactics are modalities of action; the former is akin to the Saussurian *langue* (system) while the latter *parole* (act). Tactics are practices of using otherwise; to use tactically is to put what is existing into practice yet creatively circumvent official conditions. Tactics are practices of 'making do'.

Given that strategies are predicated on positions of power towards property, propriety and the proper, tactics are appropriated by the weak without proper places of their own. Their actions are structured around resourceful 'utilisation of time, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduced in the foundations of power' (39). Lacking ownership of or formal authority over place, the tactical user is necessarily agile and mobile for they must be ready to poach on momentary opportunities (37). Thus, the tactical user capitulates to time to create transient pockets of space. DeCerteau's emphasis on the tactical art of spatial production by those without proper entitlement to place makes his framework suited to the home as a conflicted site of work, and the temporary condition of youths as 'minor' co-householders during the lockdown.

We draw on the practice of 'making do' in this paper to extend dominant youth mobility studies that have focused on how place and space have shaped young people's 'geographies' (e.g. Evans 2008; Massey 1997). While this field traditionally discusses the new mobilities of people, ideas and cultures to nation-states' shaping of youth and their everyday social relations (e.g. Rizvi 2012), we depart from these foci to examine how new mobilities are created within the immobility of the home as fixed and enclosed during pandemic lockdown. In other words, while home-place is static, young people are in lockdown (i.e. immobile) and place is restricted both metaphorically and physically, home-space, as practised place, is reconfigured through digital technology and the new spatial-temporal routines of the hybrid domestic. Key here is the relational approach to social life where lived spaces and trajectories are connected, produced and reinforced through relations of power, difference and identity, and how such imaginaries reconstitute and potentially transform social roles. Below we elaborate our methodology before discussing these practices of making do among our participants.

Methodology

We conducted participatory online ethnography between August to September 2020. An ethnography is a method of qualitative inquiry in which the researcher aims to discover the order and meanings of everyday life in particular contexts by visiting these field sites and immersing themselves in the everyday experiences that occur there (Hine 2015).

There are now robust models for online ethnography, including journaling (Sade-Beck 2004). For this study—accommodating the fact that site visits were not possible—volunteer respondents participated in a 3-day visual and textual documentation of their experience of working from home. Through a set of guided prompts and guidelines, participants photographed their work-study space and reflected on the ways their household has accommodated work-study into the space of the home (e.g. see Figure 1). We asked them to photograph their adapted work-spaces from side, front and long shots, and visually document their spatial practices (such as how they have arranged furniture or zoned the use of the home) and behavioural adjustments (such as devising schedules, routines, rules about priority users/uses). They submitted these photos and an online journal reflecting on these adaptations. Both visual and textual data-sets serve as triangulation points to support analysis and synthesis.

We advertised for participants through personal and university networks and social media (Telegram and Instagram). Participants were recruited via these channels and through snowballing. Fifty participants were invited to join and 35 completed the exercise. Of these, 20 participants are chosen for this paper as they fitted the 15-34yo youth cohort range of our thematic focus. 40% ($n=8$) are men and 60% ($n=12$) are women. 16 participants are students in colleges or universities. The rest work full-time, as research ($n=1$), office ($n=1$) and remote workers ($n=2$). Two full-time students also work part-time and one full-time worker also owns a part-time business.

As this study focuses work-and-study conditions at home, participants' dwelling type and household size are also important. The former is significant as a proxy indicator of social class in high-rise Singapore. 10% of our participants live in landed houses ($n=3$)

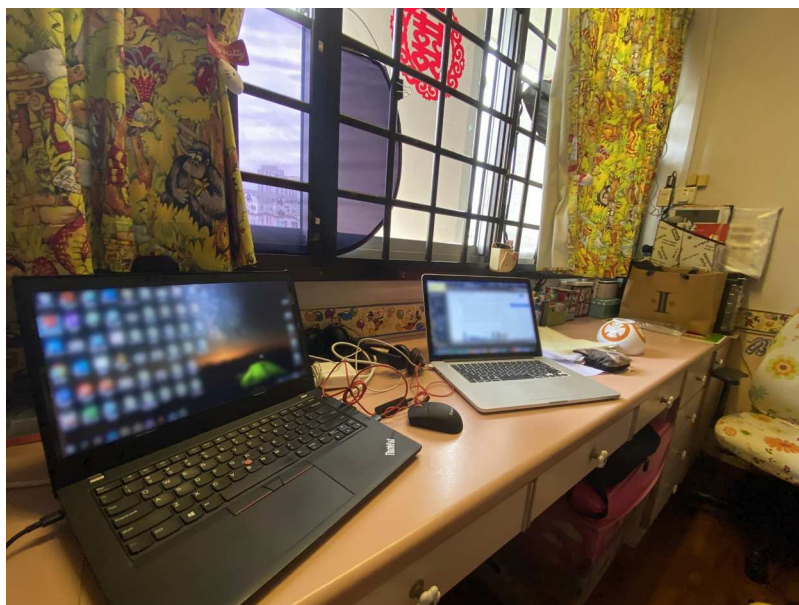


Figure 1. An example of the photographic documentation of home-based work spaces collected during the study. Here we see a narrow desk located in a shared bedroom and used concurrently by two home-based youths. Source: Authors.

and the rest in high-rise flats ($n = 13$) and maisonettes/condominiums ($n = 4$). This ratio matches the country's distribution, with 78% living in high-rise public housing flats, 17% in private condominiums and 5% landed houses (DSS 2022). As stated earlier, all participants relocated their work or study to and within the domestic home during this period. Most ($n = 17$) live in predominantly nuclear family households including as three generational (with grandparents) ($n = 4$) or extended (with in-laws, nieces and nephews) ($n = 1$) families. There are two single-parent and one shared households. In all households, other members—including parents, siblings and flatmates—are also working and studying remotely.

We examined 167 submitted photos and 20 journal reflections. Ethics was approved by the National University of Singapore Institutional Review Board (reference number 2020_05_03). To de-identify personal data, participants have been given pseudonyms such as YP1 (Young Person 1) and YP2 accordingly (see Appendix A). The following elaborates on their practices of adaptation using a visual review of journal photos, and analyses are then triangulated with participants' brief journal descriptions. To further protect personal data privacy, we sought and received consent to publish selected photos discussed in this essay.

Study-Work and play

Space is central to land-scarce Singapore and underscores its commitment to high-density, high-rise living. Participants' photos and journals reveal three 'making do' tactics: occupying temporary mobile spaces, altering physical spaces with objects and devices, and time-sharing. These are organised along relations of age and class within the order of the socially stratified home. As space is relational (Massey 2005), it is produced through the social interactions of these identity determinants. And as all (but one) of our participants live in biological family households, these identity determinants are constituted by the family. In addition, participants' practices of play further affirm and contest entrenched gendered roles in the family. As the below elaborates, youth mobility is evident in these practices: the movement and embodiment of moving bodies, switching objects and roles, and transforming the spatial and temporal norms of study, work and play.

Occupying temporary mobile spaces

Participants occupied different spaces in the home and were mobile in their occupation of these spaces. Photos revealed diverse locations used for work or study such as: living room, bedroom, balcony, laundry room, dining room and piano-study room. Half reported having dedicated study desks in their bedrooms and studying in that space. This arrangement reflects the bedroom desk as a common design solution in the West and Asia for middle-class families. The other half adopted a range of other spaces and ways of making a desk space. Photos revealed they studied in the living and dining rooms in spaces adapted from the bar counter, dining table, sofa or coffee table. Parents and siblings also drew on similar tactics, using the balcony, laundry area, piano room and kitchen bench. Some wrote in the journal they shared dining and bedroom study tables, or the coffee table in the living room. As one participant (YP2, a full-time female student

completing a virtual internship living in a three-generational household with grandparents, parents and two siblings) stated,

[It] is a very important ... for us to inform each other of our needs of the spaces, such as the date, time and duration. With proper arrangements ... my siblings would find alternative locations to conduct their activities. Similarly, when they have a need for a specific space, I would have to find alternative solutions to do my own stuff too.

She stressed the need to time these tasks so activities in shared spaces would not 'clash' due to the lack of space in the house.

This spatialisation evinces De Certeau's tactic of poaching where various official uses of space in the domestic home have been converted into a hybrid space of paid work and non-paid work. Private and family-centred spaces and practices of cooking, dining, eating, cooking, and lounging co-exist with the public-facing socio-economic relations of wage labour. The privacy of the bedroom and the space where participants occasionally study at night to complete schoolwork are also altered with school-study etiquette that requires quiet concentration, decorum, and participation during day-time online classes. These practices support how time-based opportunities are appropriated to produce temporary spaces for the other, such as our youth participants.

Altering physical space through objects and devices

Participants reported altering the physical space through adjusting or adding objects or devices. This is pertinent to those sharing bedrooms or work desks. For example, one participant (YP6, a full-time female worker who also runs a home-based business baking cakes) who lives with four others at home and shares a bedroom, placed an extra foldable table in her bedroom. She differentiated the use of these tables:

Sometimes, I switch tables with my brother depending on what is required for the day. Mostly, that depends on whether either of us has to be on a video call. Should there be any video call, he/I sit at the bigger white table inside the room so that he/I can have a better background and also, lesser distraction — the table near to the room door is an obstruction as we use the passage to enter/exit the room.

In the home of another participant (YP10, a full-time male student in a 6-person household, with three siblings also studying), the father hung a cloth partition around a newly created study niche so each sibling has a dedicated study desk/nook. One of YP10's photos revealed a curtained off section wide enough only to fit a desk and chair. His other photos also showed other family members' temporary workstations such as an extra study table in the living room or a second study space with a long table and two work chairs. Similarly, many other participants reported repurposing other furniture objects to create study-work spaces, such as laptop stands, small mobile desks, mahjong tables, foldable chairs, and laptop tables.

These objects compensated for spatial lack such as the absence of a study space or private study-bedroom. This practice enables the temporary carving out of a re-privatised space, be it a room or a section of a table, so work-study can be optimised. Jostling for a work-study space is linked to the need to create niches within the communal space of the family home and of autonomous or private space that optimises the conditions to participate in study-work. Its temporariness (or happenstance)

recalls Massey's (2005) theory of space as a site that is always configuring and heterogenous.

All participants relied on media devices such as extra laptops, desktops, tablets, and earpieces to scaffold their work-study spaces. For example, YP2 and YP10, who both share their bedrooms with siblings, used earpieces when their sibling is sleeping. YP5 (a full-time female student who also works as a part-time tutor, lives with her parents, younger sister, grandmother and helper, and works in her bedroom) also used her earpiece to block television noise when her grandmother was watching TV in the same bedroom. YP19 (a female student who lives with her parents and brother), who has a TV mounted on a wall above her desk, also wore her headphones when her mother was watching TV. She stated: 'I invested in a pair of noise-cancelling headphones so she can still enjoy her TV shows while I work on my own things'.

YP18 (a female student who lives with her father and mother who were also remote working) constantly switched to mobile data (as opposed to wifi) when other household members require more bandwidth. She revealed how this was operationalised:

the wifi bandwidth ... slow[s] down considerably when all members of the family are using it at the same time. So if someone has to take a very important call over the wifi ... the rest of us would switch to streaming data from our phones.

YP17 (a female student living with her parents and one brother) adjusted the laptop volume and YP15 (a female remote worker living with her parents in a 5-person household) wore a headset to block out aircraft flying noise. YP14 (a male student who lives with his parents and one sister, and his father is an 'essential' worker not working from home) repurposed an old TV as an extra monitor. YP12 (a female student in a 6-person three-generation household) switched between the laptop when listening to lectures and the tablet for notes and drawing.

In the absence of exclusive use of a private space in the home, digital technologies compensate for environmental externalities such as noise, or visual distraction. Being online also brings the public order of school or office into the private sphere of the home through the co-presence of virtual-real. Earpieces or headsets also make the hybrid domestic more intimate through interiorising sound or exteriorising noise. Such practices provide evidence of 'technological flexibility' (Jarrahi et al. 2021, 76), referring to the extent to which individuals are able to curate infrastructures to support their work-study tasks.

Time-sharing

All participants practised time-sharing in the hybrid domestic. YP2 has a shared bedroom and when studying, moved between a small mobile desk (angled to face a corner) in the bedroom, or a mahjong table and foldable plastic chair on the balcony (see Figure 2). YP3 (a male student in a 4-person household living in a double-story maisonette with his parents and one sister) switched between studying in the bedroom with the door closed and using the dining room table, and swapping between swivel and static chairs. His photos revealed a spacious home with every member having laptops or computers in their bedrooms. YP4 (a female student with both parents working at home) shared a bedroom with her younger sister and used a low makeshift table or the bed

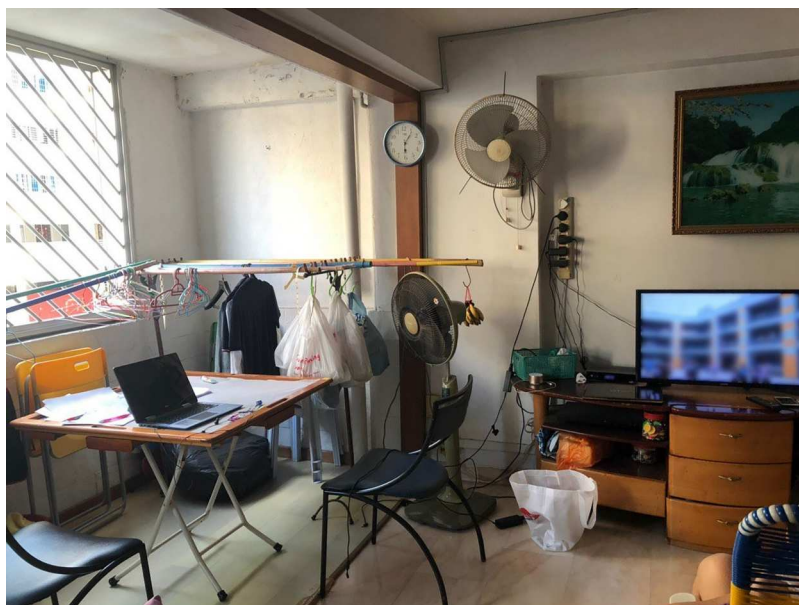


Figure 2. One respondent resolved the problem of their primary desk being in a shared bedroom by setting up a second home-based work space on the balcony or drying annex of the family home. The provisional office space comprised a folding mahjong table and folding chairs and was shared with the drying laundry and a television. Source: Authors.

as a table. She avoided using her dedicated study room because she ‘felt claustrophobic’, ‘conscious’ of her ‘intense’ father who was working next to this room. She also avoided the bedroom in the morning when her sister was sleeping and worked in the living room every morning till mid-afternoon.

YP5 (a female student living with her parents, sister, grandmother and helper) shared a bedroom with her grandmother and did not use it during the day because her grandmother watched television in the room. She used the study table in the piano room from morning until 9pm when it then became the domestic helper’s bedroom, a pattern that arose due to various noise challenges:

Working in my bedroom was tough because my grandma would sit behind me (due to the location of her bed), and other participants/students on Zoom would be able to see her from their screens. Also, my grandma has the habit of watching tv in the bedroom instead of in the living room, so I would hear noises from the television while working/learning. There are a lot of distractions as the walls are thin ... My dog occasionally barks as well, and sometimes when it goes on for an extended period (1 h), it can get distracting and annoying. Recently, my sister bought an expensive and huge speaker, so when she’s around, the bass of the speaker is powerful and creates a lot of noise.

YP6 (a female full-time worker with a side business who lives with her university-going brother) has a desk that was moved at night for the pull-out bed to be used. YP9 (a male student who works part-time, and lives with his mother) shared the bedroom study table with his mother and used the living room when she was working at the bedroom study table. YP11 (a female office worker sharing a flat with two office

workers), who has a study desk in the bedroom, closed the bedroom door in the mornings (when she is in online meetings) and opened the door and windows during lunch time so she could socialise with her housemates. YP13 (who lives in a landed property with a family of 10 members) studied at the dining table and removed her study materials (including laptop) from the dining table during each mealtime.

Similar time-share switching practices were also observed with participants' family members. YP2's elder sister, who works in remote sales, went to the corner of the house whenever she needed a quiet place for online meetings. YP3's parents and sister shared a foldable laptop stand that was entirely portable and sometimes laid on the floor or collapsed on the study table. YP10's young brother, who is in secondary school, only used their shared desk only at night. YP16's parents worked on a mahjong table that they placed in the centre of the living room and used a long extension power cord to connect to the laptop every time they need to use it (as it was unsafe to leave the cord permanently dangling across the room with a dog and an old grandmother in the house). The parents of YP20 (who is a single male child and lives in a landed house) extended the dining table for their water bottles to be within arms' reach during the workday.

These spatial tactics of making do—temporarily occupying, altering and time-sharing spaces—momentarily usurp official spatial norms and expand formal uses of objects (e.g. furniture) so that study-work can continue unabated. Their daily impermanence highlights the novel domestic routines that had emerged. Spatial arrangements and social roles are constantly switching between the orders of the domestic home and those of the office or school. Provisional appropriation is evident in the diversity of using and doing. Rather than sitting permanently at a desk in the office or a classroom, participants and family members constantly move about, stand (by the kitchen bench-top or next to the washing machine), squat (at the low coffee table) or lie down (in bed or on the floor). We might think of this as hot desking the home. As poaching suggests, rather than the proper function of domestic furniture, objects such as mahjong tables or pantry side tables are repurposed for transient work-study. Additionally, in adapting official places and roles, participants' tactics—temporary co-location at home and momentary switch into householders with responsibilities—demonstrate the transitory and diversionary practices of making do. Youth mobility is significant in these practices. Locked in the fixity of the home-place, their movement is constituted in how the hybrid domestic supports their daily switching of physical spaces and social roles. Even as they remain enclosed within the home, their switched practices are embodied and performative, moving in tandem with the new rhythms and repetitions of the day, seeking to choreograph their activities with others in the family.

Relationality: family, age and class

As space is the product of interrelations (Massey 2005), it elucidates the social orders that construct the relationships of people, power and place. A brief visual review of participants' photos evinces that improvised work-study spaces are structured according to the hierarchical norms of family, age and class. They revealed the spatial organisation of things and the aesthetic performance of the home-based work-study persona. For example, while all photos share a few common features, parents' and childrens'

workspaces were markedly different. While almost all photos also showed tightly-arranged furniture and congested arrangements—most had at their centre a desktop or laptop computer, and sometimes, a monitor; spaces were surrounded by the suspended cords of makeshift electrical connections and contained personal ephemera (these are not uncommon adaptive spatial customisation and personalisation of domestic space as many participants live in high-rise flats where space is a premium and lives are lived in close proximity)—some parents' workstations were shown to more sophisticated, with bigger built-in desks and a more complex WFH computer set-up, including external speakers and extra keyboards, and often in a dedicated space of a 'study'. In contrast, participants' workstations were smaller and more cluttered, and often surrounded by books, backpacks, note pads, musical instruments, pens, drink bottles, portable fans, cosmetics, toiletries, pot plants or postcards and stickers stuck to the bookshelves. They were often in a mixed-use space, such as a bedroom. Young people's minor status is evident here. In addition to constantly having to move about different rooms and workspaces (as indicated above), their junior status is also demonstrated in these personalised aesthetics of their smaller-size (and sometimes mobile) workstations, repeating the social ordering that structures the hierarchical Confucian family (Chua 2002).

Class is also evident through dwelling size. As earlier theorised, it is an indicator of social status in the country (Lim 2018). One participant's (YP7, a full-time female student who lives with her parents and one brother) photo showed the living room of a two-bedroom public housing flat (known in local parlance as a 'three-room flat'). In a country that encourages aspirational upgrading of flats and its attendant monetization to support one's retirement, this type of flat is commonly occupied by those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Chua 2014). A narrow table was pushed to the side of the wall between the kitchen and the living room (see Figure 3 below). The desk was covered by a plastic sheet commonly used to protect the table from food stains. On one side of the table were stacks of plastic food containers with snacks, a vase with artificial flowers and an electric mosquito killer lamp. On the other side above the table to the left was one power board with multiple extension plugs in the socket, and next to it on the table was a telephone phone cable with a cordless handset. It is clear from the plastic table-sheet that the table was originally and predominantly used for eating, and now it is occupied by YP7's father's laptop (he goes to the office one day a week) in a corner area equivalent to the size of two A4 size paper sheets. In other photos, YP7 identified the sofa as her study workstation with her laptop perched on its armrest. Similar to our middle-class participants above, the young working-class person is also subjugated to the parental hierarchy of spatial norm. These relationalities of family, age and class demonstrate youth mobility is also constrained by the order of the socially-stratified domestic home. Below examines how youth practices of play create adaptation practices through new routines that challenge social and temporal norms.

Play and performing roles

With one third of young people's time normally spent in the public spaces of school, streets, malls or commuting, the forced return to home during the pandemic meant that tensions naturally arise. Interpersonal conflicts within the family and the domestic



Figure 3. Class-based differentials in the size and age of Singaporean homes meant that some home-based workers had to resort to carving out work space from small, multifunctional surfaces such as this corner table, used variously for ornaments, a land line phone, eating and snack containers. Source: Authors

home environment are common, especially during this youth transitions period where they are growing up into young adults and desiring independence. When asked to choose one word they would use to describe their experience, some pointed to 'strained' family relationships (YP3), 'chaos' in a 10-person household (YP13) and a 'stifling' home environment (YP15). Others also highlighted family issues (YP8, a male student who lives with his parents, and a brother), the difficulty of living with housemates (YP11) and clashes with neighbours (YP4). Low personal motivation is also common complaint. A few could not focus and lack the motivation to study (YP3; YP19) or manage their time (YP12, a female student living in a landed house with three generations); one was

distracted because she had to move her computer monitor daily (YP5), and two lived on flight paths and were constantly disturbed by the noise from aircrafts flying past (YP17; YP20). These conflicts are created by social expectations of their roles within the family as good sons, daughters and students, and congenial neighbours, and environmental factors such as noise especially in small, high-density flats. Significant is how participants turn these conflicts into varied practices of play in the home.

Play is a site by which young people struggle and negotiate their practices to create meaning in everyday life. While play has its genealogy in subcultural studies, we use play as a concept to show how young people reinscribe practices as new ways of life (rather than post-subcultural theory's focus on lifestyle) (Bennett 2015). In addition to leisure and recreational consumption activities, play encompasses all the resources that young people draw on, temporarily or permanently, to make their domestic home-life meaningful. Crucial is how they create encounters of mobilities in the contextual constraints of immobility. These are evident in daily activities that enable them to perform various social roles that naturalise and challenge their status in the home.

Participants listed three main types of activities they undertake when they are not studying: first, sports such as exercising, walking, running or jogging; second, consuming media such as watching TV or Netflix, and playing computer games, and; third, learning a new language or improving skills such as reading, coding, baking, cooking and gardening. They participated in these alone, with friends online, or with their families at home or in the neighbourhood park. These activities prevented boredom, created sociality and allowed them to reconnect with their family members beyond the fraught choreographies of engaging in WFH or HBL. When discussing their participation in these activities with families, most shared it was a good bonding experience. YP12, for example, enjoys cooking, playing computer games, watching TV and drinking alcohol with her family. She wrote:

If there was 1 thing I'll miss studying from home, it'll definitely be the food prepared by my mother. Apart from the usual meals, she would always go the extra mile to bake a cake or brew a cup of coffee for me!

These practices perform and naturalise their social roles as good sons and daughters. Role-consolidating is evident in these family-affirming practices.

Some participants also enhance and transform familial social roles through these activities. For example, helping out with cooking, laundry, housework and dog-walking are common 'new' daily activities. YP3 has become the 'IT-guy' in the home as he is the go-to person to fix VPN issues or teach his parents the use of new software. While his essential digital skills have temporarily elevated him as the 'man' of the house, he actively refuses this role:

[T]here are times when I tell my family members that I have a class (When I actually don't), in a desire to be left alone. I am the 'go to IT-guy' of the family, so it's been quite stressful going around in the midst of lesson / meetings to go fix everyone IT problems ... But of course I do my best to be patient.

YP7 accompanies her mother for grocery runs, and first views this routine as a way for her to get out of the small 3-room flat for a while each day, and soon realises that through helping with grocery shopping, is her chance to know her mother better. Grocery-

shopping time deepened the daughter-mother relationship. She wrote a section entitled 'her mother's experience' to capture her performance of this role:

I essentially hung out with my mum way more than I ever did in my conscious life. She always enjoyed having company when it came to shopping, but also especially enjoyed the fact that she didn't have to carry as many bags home. Hence this was a win-win situation for both of us!

For these participants, doing gendered household chores and performing roles usually consigned to their mothers (or helpers) or fathers resulted in role-switching. This is evident in not just performing and naturalising social and gendered status, but also extending their rank-order in the family structure through undertaking 'adult' chores like technical repair or grocery-shopping. Role-switching is also apparent in how a few others convert new skills into part-time businesses such as investing (e.g. YP3) or baking (e.g. YP6). These creative pathways of income-generation through entrepreneurial labour are significant because holding part-time jobs during full-time study is rare in Singapore, and offers economic sustenance and independence. In these practices, role-switching (transforming old and performing new 'more responsibilised' roles) provides new ways for young people to experience 'adulthood' that can (however temporarily) contribute to reinscribing or resisting their newly maturing status in the family home.

Conclusion

This paper has examined Singaporean young people's practices of 'making do' as they negotiated work, study and play in the home during the C-19 pandemic. Using interdisciplinary approaches and methods from architectural, communication, cultural and youth studies, it has critically documented how WFH and HBL conditions have led to the emergence of the hybrid domestic characterised by mixed publicity, privacy, spatiality, and temporality. In such a reconstituted home, young people have created new practices of 'making do' through various appropriations, namely, poaching any and every domestic surface and space to study and work, repurposing diverse furniture objects, introducing media devices and engaging in time-sharing. Additionally, through role-affirming and role-switching, these practices have both reified and challenged gendered social roles in the family and the norms of work, study, and play. The hybrid domestic has emerged as an ambiguous site of constituting and reconstituting the time-space of home and family.

Key to young people's 'making do' is mobility. From the constant physical movement of objects and bodies, to the social reordering of status and rank, young people are on the move in the home and transitioning to new experiences of adulthood despite being enclosed in the home. Through media's co-presence, they are also out in the world while at home. These immobile mobilities—movements experienced in enclosures and with constraints—extend the field of youth mobilities by recentring the home (rather than the nation or global forces) as an equally significant site of social reproduction and transformation. Such mobilities are also highly dependent on the appropriation of smart mobile devices; the extent of flexible work depends very much on access to technological flexibility. Individuals from low-income households may find themselves lacking in their capacity to participate fully in 'making do', and such challenges exacerbate issues related to digital equity and inclusion.

Our study's main limitation is that fieldwork was conducted during the first emergency phase of the lockdown. This is only a partial analysis and cannot fully capture the full duration of the three-year pandemic and how 'making do' practices have also evolved. Despite these challenges however, we argue that rather than the pandemic creating immobility and stopping youth transitions, their 'making do' practices have allowed them to learn how to grow up and be young adults on their own terms, in their own space and through their own time. Through the mobility of 'making do', they have resisted the stagnation of youth and transformed with the creative resilience of their own adaptations.

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Appendix

This appendix lists the profile of participants.

YP	Gender	Occupation	WFH / HBL	No. of household members (incl. YP)*
YP1	M	Full-time researcher	WFH	5
YP2	F	Full-time Student; currently on an internship as part of curriculum	HBL	7
YP3	M	Full-time Student	HBL	4
YP4	F	Full-time Student	HBL	4
YP5	F	Full-time Student; remote part-time tutor	HBL	6
YP6	F	Full-time worker; runs a side business	WFH	2
YP7	F	Full-time student	HBL	4
YP8	M	Student	HBL	4
YP9	M	Student; probably works part-time	WFH	2
YP10	M	Full-time student	HBL	6
YP11	F	Office worker	WFH	3
YP12	F	Student	HBL	6
YP13	F	Student; also doing an internship	WFH	10
YP14	M	Student; also doing a remote computing internship	WFH	4
YP15	F	Remote worker	WFH	5 or more (no. of 'siblings' not stated)
YP16	M	Student; also does remote work	WFH	5
YP17	F	Full-time student	HBL	4
YP18	F	Full-time student	HBL	3
YP19	F	Student	HBL	4
YP20	M	Full-time student	HBL	3