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SOCIAL ALTERNATIVES

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Beyond Y:
The
experience
of youth
in the
21st century

Cover 32/2, Design: Debra Livingston – University of the Sunshine Coast.

The concept for the cover design of this issue, 'Beyond Y: The experience of youth in the 21 century', developed with the idea of disrupting the popular tendency to label youth with stereotypical generational notions of identification. In her introduction to this issue, the editor Glenda McGregor highlights researchers in the field of youth who 'critique such generational stereotypes and bring to light some of the real-life experiences of young people today' (p. 3). According to Weston (2001), what appears to be 'generational youth' is simply a group of people born in the same general timespan who share some life experiences, such as big historical events, pastimes, heroes, and early work experiences. Blauth, McDaniel, Perrin and Perrin (2011: 2) ask if 'different age groups [are] really that different? Or does the human tendency to generalise paint a distorted picture of entire generations, as it once did of genders and ethnic groups'?

The challenge to generational stereotyping of Gen Y is represented in the cover design by the cutting up and re-joining in a disjointed way an image often associated with a myth about Gen Y – that all Gen Y are techno-savvy technophiles; an interesting observation is that Gen X grew up with evolving technologies and are more tech savvy than Gen Y who are tech dependent. For Gen Y, technology may be an intrinsic part of the world they inhabit, but this does not mean they all have access to, or the funds to purchase or continually upgrade to, the newest and most savvy techno gadgets, for entertainment or education. That is, the seemingly shared generational experience of Gen Y is better characterised as a fractured experience of social and other forms of difference.

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Beyond 'Y' and other stereotypes: Exploring the experience of youth in the 21st Century

GLEND A MCGREGOR

The popular tendency to label whole generations and define subgroups within them became current in the latter half of the twentieth century. As young people attained a growing importance as consumers of goods and educational services, the attentions of sociologists and psychologists, educators and advertisers intensified. For many people, Bodgies and Widgies, Mods and Rockers, Hippies and Punks of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s respectively, often symbolised troublesome/delinquent youth. Group identification enshrined in dress, music and interests was also commonly interpreted as signifying a shared ethos. Depending on when they were born, young people were broadly categorised as 'baby boomers' (1946-64) or 'Generation Xs' (1965-79), although there is no official time span for these loosely constructed 'generations'. Currently, the so-called Generation Y (1980-2000) is stereotyped as being overly pampered, 'tech-savvy', narcissistic, and ambitious but lacking commitment. Young people born since 2000 have been further stereotyped as 'Gen Z', the first generation to be born into a world of unprecedented communicative technology.

This issue of *Social Alternatives* draws upon the academic expertise of a number of researchers in the field of youth studies in order to critique such generational stereotypes and bring to light some of the real-life experiences of young people today. The articles that follow demonstrate clearly that while young people may be connected by the commonality of the decades in which they were born, they are differentiated by the same factors that shape the lives of their elders, for example: race, socio-economic status, geo-location and gender. Young people often have to face exactly the same problems as adults, but because of their age they are routinely castigated as irresponsible and deemed to be less able to respond to life's challenges.

Kerry Vincent and Pat Thomson describe these processes of age discrimination in their article that explores the ways in which teenage mothers are marginalised and stigmatised via discourses of deviance and incompetence. Their research with a small group of young mothers in the UK exposes the pressure these girls feel to 'atone' for their perceived 'failings' as they strive to cope with motherhood, work and study. The unforgiving communities in which these teenage mothers live might well construct the girls'

lives as just as 'wasted' as in the potential of the students attending Grant's Farm in the contribution by Martin Mills, Peter Renshaw and Lew Zipin.

Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's book *Wasted Lives*, these authors explore the ways in which many disadvantaged young people are not only failed by mainstream schools, but are also constructed in ways that suggest they are the expendable 'rubbish' of society. Their research is situated in an economically depressed rural region of Queensland, Australia. The authors note that attending school at Grant's Farm does not require the wearing of a uniform and subordination to the adults who teach the young people. It is a curious thing that in the twenty-first century young people in most high schools in Australia (with some notable exceptions) are still regimented, voiceless and subject to the random application of adult power. The article calls for holistic support structures that start with education authorities and government departments but also extend to regional communities and their local 'funds of knowledge' and resources that are vital to assisting marginalised young people in these areas.

The issue of race and its intersection with youth is taken up by Greg Vass as he critiques the homogenising effects of generational theory, with a particular focus on young Indigenous people. Drawing upon 'positioning theory', he explores the complex discursive interplay among Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and their teachers during classes at his research school. In his article, Vass describes the tensions that ensue as Indigenous students, who by virtue of their minority status and race may feel positionally powerless, struggle to assert personal power via the performance of identity work. Confronted by the racialised nature of the classroom talk the teachers appeared to construct themselves as 'powerless' to take charge of the manner and direction of these discussions; Vass concludes that this needs to change. There is clearly a need for adults to become advocates for young people as they confront issues that challenge society as a whole.

As well as having to contend with age discrimination, young people are targeted by powerful groups with a view to 'sell' them products. Sam Sellar presents a scholarly analysis of the ways in which commercial advertising and

educational authorities similarly attempt to tap into the experiences and 'imaginaries' of young people in order to persuade them to 'buy' what they have to offer – music, drinks, clothing, or, a particular educational pathway to university for example. Drawing on his involvement in research projects examining higher education equity policies promoting aspirations for university among disadvantaged young people in Australia and England, Sellar's contribution highlights the role attributed to the imagination of young people in economic and education discourses. In asking disadvantaged young people to imagine a better future linked to continuing education in order to self-actualise as 'human capital', Sellar wonders whether the 'neoliberal opportunity bargain' actually promotes a form of 'cruel optimism' that never delivers its promise. In this context, one hopes that young people are not simply the unwitting pawns in the neoliberal project of human capital creation.

Many social commentators argue that there is currently a generational *technological* divide between youth and their elders. Catherine Beavis interrogates this assumption as she explores notions of contemporary youth as 'tech-savvy digital natives' as setting them apart from their 'technologically inept' seniors. This pervasive stereotype obscures the many individual differences among young people in respect to (for example) socio-economic status and culture which clearly have implications for their engagement with technology and social media. Beavis calls for more nuanced responses to the individualised needs of young people in terms of their positioning in relation to technological change and globalisation. She criticises the 'conflation of the use of digital technologies with generational divides', and suggests that the so-called 'global youth culture' actually reflects the great disparities in wealth and development among nations. Drawing on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Beavis argues that moral panics in respect to the impact of technological engagement on traditional childhood pastimes are misinformed and misplaced. New media and digital culture have simply become another integrated part of young people's lives. However, while formal education has yet to make the most effective use of new media and digital culture, Beavis explains that they are already being used to great effect by advertising to teach young people a myriad of 'informal' lessons that benefit the market.

The tendency of some commentators to define the characteristics of an entire generation flies in the face of postmodern theories of on-going identity construction involving elements of hybridity and choice enabled by global flows of popular culture, information, music and images. In his article, Stewart Riddle challenges the practice of categorising people according to the era in which they were born, particularly for youth in the interconnected global milieu of the twenty-first century within which there are multiple worlds enabling the creation and reimagining of one's identity. In his analysis,

Riddle utilises Deleuze and Guattari's symbol of the *rhizome*; this is a horizontal, underground stem that often sends out roots and shoots from its nodes. This image suggests 'ways of being' characterised by the principles of multiplicity, connection and heterogeneity. Riddle contends that such an organising metaphor allows for a radical rethinking of the experiences of today's young people as it frees them from the bounded categories of age, race, class, gender and sexuality, and promotes notions of youth-as-*becoming* via a multiplicity of possibilities. One such possibility explored by Riddle is that of 'youth-becoming-musical-becoming-other than would be expressible without music'. Connecting young people across the generations, Riddle claims that youthful practices of 'musicking' underscores 'a *continual becoming* and emergent series of multiplicities, in a perpetual dance of power and desire'. Thus the author charts exciting new spaces for imagining youthful subjectivities.

This is a hopeful note on which to conclude. However, it would be remiss of me as editor of this issue with its focus on contemporary youth, not to include at least one perspective from a member of the generation we have been discussing. I believe that young people are more spoken about than listened to so I have invited one of my former high school students to contribute some thoughts. He does not presume to speak for his generation, but his words stand in opposition to those commentators who continue to construct 'Gen Y' and those who follow them in deficit terms.

Author

Glenda McGregor is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Her research interests include sociology of youth, alternative schools, pedagogy and curriculum and, social justice and education. She is currently working on two major research projects on alternative and democratic models of schooling funded by the Australian Research Council. With Martin Mills, she is co-author of *Re-engaging young people in education: learning from alternative schools* (in press) Routledge, London.

Reflections on being a member of 'Gen Y' Jake Whitehead

I am in the unique position of undertaking two PhDs simultaneously in countries on opposite sides of the world (Sweden and Australia). As a member of the so-called 'Generation Y' I have been privileged to grow up during a time of exponential technological development, that has not only seen the birth of one of our most fundamental social institutions today – the internet – but has also brought about a level of global interconnectivity not ever dreamt of as possible before.

From my experiences so far, I have come to believe that my generation's understanding of how society should be

has been strongly influenced by innovations such as the internet, which have allowed us to gain a greater tolerance and acceptance of all types of humans across this planet, given the simplicity with which we can engage in global communication and connectivity. Although some may argue that, given perceptions of declining nationalism, my generation is less civic-minded than our elders, one could also argue that we now consider ourselves part of something much greater – a global community, rather than just a single city, state or country. This misunderstanding of Gen Y is clearly due to the fact that our views about this world, which have developed through our immersion in technology, have outpaced the ability of our social institutions to evolve in order to live up to these new expectations and conditions.

Given this lag, although there is a segment of Gen Y actively pushing for social reforms, there is another group who are repeatedly misinterpreted as disengaged and indifferent to the state of the world. I would argue, however, that this perceived indifference merely stems from a lack of hope and trust in the ability of our social institutions to transform at the pace required to keep in step with technological developments. Many of my generation are severely concerned about the effects of global warming, climate change and unsustainable resource usage, not only for us, but also for future generations to come.

Now, of course, given that we in Gen Y may post a different photo of ourselves posing, day-after-day across all our various online social networks, it is hard to argue that we are not, just a bit, narcissistic. Given the increasing

trend towards neoliberalism in politics around the world I would, however, argue that this level of self-absorption extends far wider than Gen Y. I believe that it is spurred by our political-economic system that encourages the rights of the individual to be promoted regardless of the costs incurred by others across our society and environment.

I, along with many in my generation, dream of a strong and closely bound global community (economically and politically), which promotes equality for all at sustainable levels, and shifts away from a *profit at all costs* mentality, to a *social profit* ideology; so that everyone on this planet might have equal access to shelter, food, water, health, education and employment.

Taking this all on board, it is very easy for youth to be seen as idealistic and naïve, yet older generations underestimate the true power of technological development. By simply taking a look back on recent decades, it is not unreasonable to expect that over the coming decades, if my generation has the opportunity to take over at the helm sooner than expected (or desired?), that technological innovation will allow our 'idealistic' socio-political ambitions to, in fact, come to fruition.

Author

Jake Whitehead completed Year 12 at Kenmore SHS in 2006 and graduated from Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in 2010 with a Masters of Engineering. He is currently at Kungliga Tekniska högskolan (KTH) completing the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) – Double Ph.D Program (QUT-KTH) Stockholm, Sweden.

Montgomery, Alabama, 1848

I's born a slave in 1830 on the Baxter plantation, Savannah, Georgia. I never knowed my daddy, mama said she never jumbed de broom wid him cause Massa wouldn't let her cause he wasn't one of his niggers. I was a young'un then so only work I could do was cleaning in de big house or tote food and water to the other slaves in de fields. One morning while I's scrubbing dem floors I done heard de Missus telling Massa she wanted to keep me on in de big house cause I works good but he said soon as I was old enough I be in de fields. Mama wanted me in de big house too, told me field work was no good back breaking work and I's to work real hard in de big house for Massa to change his mind and make me stay on. I's bout 5years old when Mama done had another lil gal, my sister, all I recollects about her was she didn't look nothin like us other niggers. Afternoon that de Missus saw her after she was born, well that was the last time I saw my mama, I's to young to understand much then but that lil gal, her daddy was Massa and I done heard later that de Missus got so angry bout him messin about with the slave gals that she told him to punish mama or she would leave him for good. So he sold me off. I remembers men snatching me out of my mamas arms and her trying to hold onto me tight as she could, chasing after de wagon crying and screaming out my name.

*TINASHE PWITIS
KINGSVILLE, VICTORIA*

'Your Age Don't Determine Whether You're A Good Mum': Reframing the discourse of deviance ascribed to teenage mothers

KERRY VINCENT AND PAT THOMSON

Across the developed world, pregnant and mothering teenagers are the subject of public concern and debate. Initiatives which target these young women, such as the UK's ten-year national campaign to reduce teenage conceptions and increase participation in education, employment and training (Social Exclusion Unit [SEU] 1999), has ensured that they have remained high on the policy agenda and consequently, also in public consciousness. Alongside this, sensationalised media coverage of exceptional cases, as illustrated above, also ensures their high visibility. This paper challenges common perceptions about teenage motherhood by highlighting important aspects of young mothers' experiences that are marginalised within dominant representations. Drawing on the experiences of a small group of teenage mothers in England we examine how they responded to dominant discourses about teenage motherhood and what impact it had on their day-to-day lives. We reveal how their motherhood experiences were made more difficult because of these stigmatised representations. We show that they are not the feckless, unmotivated young women that they are portrayed to be but rather, are often doing the best they can in circumstances that are far from ideal. We use the notion of discourse to situate our argument and we begin by briefly outlining how we use this term.

Schoolgirls aged just ten falling pregnant as underage pregnancies continue to rise

By DANIEL MARTIN UPDATED: 18:20, 8 February 2010

Girls as young as ten are falling pregnant, shocking new figures have revealed. Over the past eight years, no fewer than 15 girls found they were expecting when they were aged just ten. A further 39 found out they were pregnant when they were 11. Since 2002 there have been 63,487 pregnancies among under-15s in England and Wales: a total of 23 conceptions every single day among girls too young to legally have sex. Despite millions of pounds of funding, Labour still has not managed to turn round Britain's shameful record at the top of the teenage pregnancy league table in Western Europe. The figures show that despite the numbers of underage pregnancies falling off after 2002, they are now on the rise again. In 2007, the latest figures, the number of pregnant under-16s was 8,200 - higher than the 2002 figure.

Norman Wells, of the Family Education Trust, said: 'We are reaping the bitter consequences of our highly sexualized society. The manufacturers and retailers of goods that encourage children to dress and act in a sexually precocious way must take a share of the blame, but so too must those sex educators who are more interested in getting young people to use contraception than they are in discouraging them from engaging in sexual activity in the first place. There are far too many schools telling children that they are entitled to become sexually active when it is "right for them" and teaching them that they are being very responsible if they use contraception - regardless of their age. As a result of this grossly irresponsible approach, some children are becoming sexually active at an early age when they would not otherwise have done so. Not only is amoral sex education producing more schoolgirl mums and spiraling rates of sexually transmitted infections, but it is also leaving growing numbers of young people carrying emotional baggage into adulthood that will make it more difficult for them to build a truly intimate, trusting and stable marriage later on.'

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1249411/Schoolgirls-aged-just-falling-pregnant-underage-pregnancies-continue-rise.html#ixzz2AlhHwwaW>

Discourse and Young Mothers

We understand the term 'discourse' to be a culturally constructed representation of reality, not an exact copy. Discourse governs, through the production of categories of knowledge and assemblages of texts, what it is possible to talk about and what is not (the taken for granted rules of inclusion/exclusion); as such, it re/produces both power and knowledge simultaneously. Discourse defines subjects, framing and positioning in terms of who it is possible to be and what it is possible to do (Foucault 1977).

The discourse ascribed to young mothers is that of deviance. Within research and policy, teenage pregnancy and motherhood is represented almost exclusively in negative terms. Adverse social, educational and health correlates of teenage pregnancy derived from large-scale epidemiological research construct teenage pregnancy as costly to the individual as well as to the welfare state (see for example SEU 1999). Despite research which highlights clear links between teenage pregnancy and social disadvantage and inequality (Carabine 2007; Wilson and Huntingdon 2005), the 'problem' of teenage pregnancy and motherhood is located with a particular group of girls who are judged to be ignorant about contraception and to have low aspirations (SEU 1999). Teenage mothers are seen as being in the fast-lane to adulthood – beginning a family prior to securing the educational qualifications that will supposedly ensure their economic self-sufficiency (McDermott and Graham 2005; Selman 2003). In not conforming to current norms about the appropriate age to begin childbearing, they have become moral scapegoats who are seen as having the 'wrong' values, the 'wrong' aspirations and making the 'wrong' choices. Media representations that focus exclusively on exceptional cases while ignoring much of young women's actual achievements and everyday experiences do little to challenge these dominant, one-sided constructions of teenage pregnancy and motherhood.

Individualised, pathologised discourses such as these marginalise the part played by wider social structural inequalities and invalidate alternative meaning-makings associated with motherhood for these young women. First, there is little acknowledgement that women are society's child-bearers. In the developed world, 'rational economic man' assumptions prevail and both men and women are expected to be economically active. Childbearing becomes an inconvenience to be fitted around employment which is deemed to be more important. Productive labour is afforded high social status while reproductive labour is not. This creates an invisible source of tension for many working mothers (Lee and Gramotnev 2006). Alongside this, the unpaid domestic and voluntary work undertaken primarily by women is

not socially valued. Like motherhood, these gendered activities are not seen as constituting 'real' work. Second, different perspectives on what constitutes a 'good' mother are also marginalised with discourses of deviance. Views on the relationship between paid work and motherhood vary considerably from one community to another and from one time to another. Edwards and Duncan (1996) explain that while in some communities paid work and motherhood are seen as incompatible and people who do both are frowned upon, other mothers in other communities see financial provision through employment as part of their moral responsibility towards their children – again sustained through local norms.

While the deficit discourse of deviance plays out in material lives, this is not a straightforward case of oppression. This is because power is not simply top down; young women and those who support them may be able to call upon subjugated discourses to offer counter narratives about themselves and their experiences, and to live life differently from that which is assumed about them. The research reported in this paper aims to deepen understandings about the interface between education and young mothers' broader, everyday lives and to provide more nuanced accounts of factors that influence their decision-making, actions and outcomes.

The Research

The data on which this article is based is drawn from a larger doctoral study of the educational experiences of pregnant schoolgirls and schoolgirl mothers. A qualitative interview approach was adopted (Holstein and Gubrium 1997) and in-depth, semi-structured repeat-interviews were undertaken with 14 teenagers in one local authority in the English Midlands during an 18-month period in 2007/8. Most were interviewed three times over the course of the study thus providing insights in to how their perceptions and experiences changed over time (Vincent in press). At the beginning of the study, teenagers ranged in age from 15 to 18 years, with the majority (11) aged 16 or 17 years. Nine were already parents while the remaining five were pregnant. Twelve of the 14 were still of statutory school age when they became pregnant. Professionals who worked with these young women, such as teachers, midwives and post-16 educators, were also interviewed for their perspectives. All names used in this paper are fictitious.

Experiences of Teenage Motherhood

When asked about their mothering experiences, the teenagers in this study spoke about the pleasures and rewards, such as their special mother-child bond and the experience of witnessing their babies achieve important developmental milestones; but it was also clear that they faced a number of challenges. Some of these challenges

were generic and might therefore be experienced by any new mother, such as the physical and emotional demands of caring for a baby. Others, however, were specific to young mothers and related to stigmatised constructions of teenage motherhood.

Whether to do with how they became pregnant in the first place, their decision to continue with their pregnancy despite being so young, or their perceived inability to be a good mother, a focus on age was integral to their stigmatisation. Young women's accounts reveal that age-related challenges included: subtle yet constant questioning of their adequacy as mothers; pressure to 'prove' themselves; and managing the tension between their roles as mothers and students.

Too Young to Mother?

They didn't think I was going to be as good of a mum as I am ... because of my age. (Shae, 15-year-old mother)

The young women were conscious of a prevailing view that teenage mothers are too young and therefore too inexperienced and immature to be good mothers. They were often viewed and treated as inadequate mothers because of their age. Fifteen-year-old Tracy, the mother of a six-month-old child, was still of statutory school age and continuing her education at Phoenix, a specialist education centre for pregnant and mothering teenagers. Although she perceived the many benefits of attending Phoenix, one aspect she found difficult was being told how to be a mother, both by staff through their specially adapted curriculum but also by some of the health professionals who visited the centre. Mirroring the accounts of other teenagers, she explained that it was not just staff at her educational centre but also family members and 'everybody' who treated her as though she did not know what she was doing:

Like when the nurse ... she tries to tell you not to wean your baby till six months. Being told how to be a parent, it does annoy me, and my family does it as well, it's not just this school, it's everybody.

She disliked this because:

It seems like they're trying to say that we don't know what we're doing because we're young. ... I do know when she wants something ... she's got all different cries for different things. She's got the playful one, the tired one, the poorly one, the 'I want food' one ... loads of different ones.

Receiving unsolicited advice may be a common

experience for many new mothers, but perhaps one that is accentuated with these young women whose transition into motherhood occurs earlier than current norms dictate is appropriate. Given prevailing discourses about 'children having children', the implications of receiving such advice might be more keenly felt.

Pressure to Prove Yourself

Without exception the teenagers expressed a strong desire and motivation to prove something: 'to prove that I can do it' (Megan); to prove that 'I can be a good mum and that I can get my life back on track' (Clare); and 'to prove everybody wrong' (Rebecca). Resonating with other research (Hanna 2001; Jewell et al. 2000) the young women felt that they had a number of things to prove: that they were good mothers (by taking considerable care over how their babies were presented); that they were responsible citizens (by being in education, employment or training); and that their lives had not ended (by developing more socially acceptable career aspirations). For some teenagers, this meant taking on gruelling schedules of study and mothering.

The following excerpt from Megan was recounted in the context of the stereotype about teenage mothers not being good mothers. It highlights the pressure to 'prove everyone wrong' by which she meant being a good mother and simultaneously continuing with her education:

At first it used to upset me [other people's negative attitudes] but not any more 'cause I think I've been a great mum and I've coped really well, so I think a 17 year old can do just as good as a 27 or a 37 year old. The best thing about it is proving everyone wrong ... proving that you can do it and just because you're young, it don't mean your life's ending.

Along similar lines, when asked what she was looking forward to about motherhood Clare replied 'proving that I can be a good mum and I can get my life back on track'. By that she meant, 'getting myself a career ... and getting myself into a routine'. She wanted to regain the public approval and acceptance that she felt was lost when she became pregnant at 16. Like Megan, she was determined not to be a benefit recipient as this was associated with being a failure and therefore a less worthy citizen. Clare also explained that on discovering she was pregnant, she felt a pressure to succeed at college and 'be a good mum' that she had not felt before:

When I first found out I was pregnant I was happy ... I was on a work placement ... and nothing really bothered me then, but as soon as I had Luke I knew

I had to do something, 'cause I didn't want people to look down on me. But then ... later, I just felt like it was all too much.

She recounted how she continued with her part-time job during her pregnancy and after her baby was born, and then six weeks after giving birth, began a full-time college course as well. Her work and study activities were only possible because her mother was able to look after her son during the day while she attended college and in the evenings while she went to work:

So I was getting up at seven, getting him dressed, getting to college for nine, coming home at about half three, seeing him for like two hours, starting work at 6.00 till midnight and then waking up with him at five, and then back at college for 9.00. I lasted doing that for a month and then I was just absolutely shattered.

Accounts such as these challenge common perceptions about the feckless, unmotivated pregnant teenager and connect with a third challenge identified by the young women.

Tensions in Managing the Dual Role of Mother and Student

Even for those with considerable family support, juggling the dual roles of mother and student presented difficulties. Clare's description of her initial post-birth daily schedule noted above gives a flavour of this. While she subsequently ceased work, she maintained her college course:

I have Monday all day with him [her baby], and then Tuesday his grandma has him ... I drop him off at nine and pick him up at four and then take him home, bath him and get him into bed for about half seven. Wednesday he's at nursery. I'm only at college till half past twelve but I leave him at nursery till five just so I can go to ASDA and do my shopping or go home and clean up ... or stay at college and do my assignments. Thursday I'm at college in the afternoon ... one till eight ... he's in nursery one till six and then his dad has him on a Thursday night.

Clare retrospectively expressed mixed feelings about this. She thought that although continuing education was a good thing and the public funding of childcare was helpful, it might have been better to wait a bit before rushing back to study. She had been too keen to challenge stereotypes about teenage motherhood and prove that she could 'get my life back on track':

It is hard ... but how I feel at the minute, with everything ... coming to the end of the course, Luke being all over the place, I just wish I had not gone back so early. I think I needed more time. I mean just as soon as I had him, after six weeks, I was at college. I just rushed. I had no time off at all.

In contrast, Lisa decided to stay at home with her children until they were one year old. She explained that she was only happy putting her children in nursery or day-care after that. This stance was not because she was uninterested in college. As she said, 'I can't wait to start college'. When asked why, she said, 'because it's 'me' time'. As noted in other research (see for example Harris et al. 2005; MacDonald and Marsh) young mothers like Lisa valued the social aspects of college as well as the academic outcomes that would support future employment. On the other hand, she also valued her motherhood role and felt it was important for her to have time with her children.

Interestingly, Lisa was one of the few teenagers who questioned the idea that motherhood should come after gaining educational credentials and establishing a career:

To me it don't make a difference whether you're old or young ... it's just something that happens in life so why not do it early and get on with your life. I think it is ok to have it when you are young because if you are older and you've got a really good job and if you do find out that you are pregnant you might not want to leave.

The accounts of other teenagers revealed similar tensions and mixed and conflicting desires. The decision that each teenager took was the result of a complex interaction of factors including the age of her child relative to the start date of a given course, desires for social contact, the acceptability of available childcare options, local community norms about caring for your own child and wider societal expectations to be in education, employment or training. Common to their experiences, however, were the contradictory pressures of two important and demanding roles.

The Effect of Discourses of Deviance

There was some evidence that being viewed and treated as 'too young to mother' had a detrimental impact on the young women. This occurred at a psychological level, through internalising feelings of shame and inadequacy, as well as at a behavioural level in their efforts to 'prove everybody wrong' by presenting themselves and their babies in particular ways, not asking for help when they wanted it, and avoiding public places and services where they feared being judged as inadequate because they were young.

Clare, for example, found that popular representations of teenage mothers as bad mothers 'still don't come out of your head', even in the face of clear evidence to the contrary:

... and people always say to me, 'why do you give yourself such a hard time, you're doing a good job, you've got a happy little boy' ... I never seem to praise myself.

The teenagers seemed to accept negativity from members of the public as just one of those things young women in their position learn to cope with. As illustrated by Megan below, they spoke about ignoring comments and looks and adopting an 'I'm not bothered' attitude:

The looks you get down town and the comments that you hear off older people, in the end you just get cool about it ... stuff like, 'they're too young' and 'they won't cope'.

However, they also took steps to distance themselves from negative stereotypes. Sarina, for example, was very mindful of how she presented herself, explaining that respect is gained not just through being well dressed, but also by ensuring that the same is true for one's baby. Other young women confirmed the importance of presenting themselves in particular ways. This often included the purchasing of designer gear – not for themselves but for their babies. Being able to provide for a child in this way was equated with good parenting:

And you see some young mums with maybe the worst pram, like budget prams and then they [the general public] think why would you do it [have a baby], cause they ain't got a lot of money.

These views and interpretations were repeated by professionals. The two teachers at Stepping Stones, a post-16 educational facility for pregnant and mothering teenagers, noted young women's awareness of negative public attitudes about them and felt protective of their students when they went out in public as a group because of the hostile stares and comments that were frequently directed at them. They confirmed that the 'too young to be a good mother' sentiment was a public belief about which their students were acutely aware. They highlighted the importance to their students of dressing their babies in particular ways and how they sometimes refused to ask for or accept help because they did not want to be perceived as lacking in knowledge or skills:

Teacher J: They over-compensate. They won't allow anybody to help them with anything because

they have to be seen as coping with it all and they don't need help.

Teacher A: You know, they have to have the babies in the best designer gear and the best pushchair.

J: And it's just because when they walk out on that street they don't want anybody saying that

A: They can't look after them.

J: They might not have food for themselves but they will make sure their baby's got the best gear that they can afford.

They suggested that the fear of negative judgment meant that their students were often reluctant to use public spaces, even ones that were designed to support families, such as government-funded Children's Centres. Interestingly, they also allude to a class-related issue:

A: If you go into the children's centre, that's not really accessible to teenage mums because of the stigma ... because of what other people might say.

J: Most of the ones here wouldn't consider going to mothers and toddlers. If it was a specific teenage mothers and toddlers, then possibly ... but it's seen as a middle-class thing.

A: Something that posh people do ... 'they're all stuck up'. And that's how they feel going to a family centre ... 'oh God, it'll be full of social workers and all the other mums are going to look at me'.

Limited use of public services and spaces because of a fear of being negatively judged also extended to childcare services. Most of the young women were initially reluctant to use childcare services, but in order to stay in education, this was necessary. One factor that contributed to their reluctance to use childcare was anxiety about being judged to be lacking parenting skills. Mirroring other research (Daycare Trust 2002; Phoenix 1991), some of them thought that they were presumed 'guilty' (inadequate) until having proven themselves 'innocent' (capable) as parents. As Mia explained:

I think some people, especially if they're single parents, get that attached to it being them and their baby, and they don't want to leave their baby [with others] because in the back of their mind, they don't want any judgment passed or anything...

Access to a potentially valuable source of support is thus restricted, illustrating Wilkinson's (2007) point that more unequal societies are characterised by less trust and less community involvement. He argues that social status differentials, such as those indicated by large income differentials, have a considerable impact on whether people feel valued or looked down on.

Alternative Constructions

The above examples illustrate how stigmatised representations, the discourse of deviance as we have dubbed it, create a stressful experience of motherhood which can have an impact on young women's identities and how they think, feel and behave. However, the young women in this study did not accept this ascription. Seventeen-year-old Megan, the mother of a 14-month old, was continuing her education at Stepping Stones. She recounted how over time, her initial lack of belief in her ability to be a good mother was gradually replaced by a growing confidence:

I did feel like that at first [judged by others] but as I got further along I just thought a young mum can do just as good a job as what an older mum can do.

She attributed this to staff treating her as a capable and loving mother. Similarly, in speaking of her positive experiences with the teenage-pregnancy midwives at Phoenix, Tracy described how they conveyed an expectation that of course she would be a good and capable mother. This experience was memorable to her because it contrasted starkly with her experiences with other professionals and members of the public where the prevailing message was one of 'you are going to be a disaster as a mum and not going to cope'. Tracy explained of her midwives:

They were just looking at it [my pregnancy] as, like, another life that is being brought into this world. It's not like I was not knowing what I'm doing and leave it when it's poorly or something. And [other] people were looking at you like you are going to be a disaster as a mum and not going to cope.

Clare recounted feeling too anxious to attend ante-natal classes because she was afraid of negative reactions from the other (older) women. However, after attending Young Mums to Be, a government-funded course for pregnant teenagers, she became not only more confident about her ability to cope with the birth of her baby and the challenges of motherhood but also much less critical of herself and her situation. Contact with adults and other young women who affirmed her choices and conveyed assumptions of competence helped negate the internalisation of shame that had dominated her experience. This contributed to her willingness to attend post-natal classes. She explained:

I came out with a different attitude ... [before] I was so embarrassed ... I just completely degraded myself when I found out I was pregnant ... and it made me feel a lot better [about myself] being there.

That teenage pregnancy and motherhood is recognised without stigmatising young women is important for their self-esteem and confidence and enables them to take more responsibility and control in their lives. This in turn leads to better outcomes.

Conclusion

We have suggested in this paper that our participants' experiences of motherhood were made more difficult because of the focus on age. Others often looked upon them as being too young to mother. For many teenagers, this resulted in internalising feelings of shame, losing confidence in their mothering ability, being reluctant to use public services or ask for help through fear of being judged as inadequate; and taking on gruelling schedules of work or study alongside motherhood to 'prove everybody wrong'. However, many also resisted the discourse of deviance and over time, came to see themselves as loving and capable mothers. This process was supported by contact with professionals who did not stigmatise their other ways of thinking/being/doing, but rather, affirmed them in their choices.

In conclusion, we contend that the stories that we have told also have something to say about possible future policy options. While the young women did not have uniformly positive things to say about the alternative provisions that were on offer, they did recognise and respond to the ways in which the professionals who worked with them saw them as already possessed of some knowledge, capable of learning more and genuinely concerned about their children and their futures. In the alternative provisions there was a starting assumption not of immorality and deviance, but of positive possibility. We think that this is important. It is clearly not advisable to advocate simply for a removal of the discourse of deviance, nor to suggest that it will be easy for all the young women who find themselves managing mothering and education at the same time. However, beginning from a position of positive regard, realistic optimism seems a much better prospect than starting from a stereotypical position of dismissive negativity.

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The poms dance like maidens

Australia is dying
at the MCG on Boxing Day,
five down for seventy.
He sits on the back verandah
among the fizzing kids and pool galoopings
big screen sound off
facing each ball on its merits.
He could have played for Australia
but for the demands
of family, faith and retail management –
Woolworths and Opus Dei.
Now he's forty eight. The tremor in his hand is worsening
since the diagnosis.

From the Five Hundred game she watches him,
takes a trick, leads trumps, gets the seven
hearts she called.
Christmas is communion. "Who dealt this rubbish?"
The daughters-in-law laugh.
She checks the time. Quietly he takes a capsule
as the Poms go up.
So does the umpire's finger –
the Poms dance like maidens.
He turns off the TV, angry, disgusted.
She watches him, misses nothing, angry too –
though never one
to dispute the umpire, she feels
God moves in mysterious ways.

JOHN UPTON,
BURWOOD, NSW

Alternative Education Provision: A dumping ground for 'wasted lives' or a challenge to the mainstream?

MARTIN MILLS, PETER RENSHAW AND LEW ZIPIN

This paper draws on Zygmunt Bauman's Wasted Lives to explore the ways in which young people are constructed in an alternative education site in a regional Queensland (Australian) city. It draws heavily on interview data collected from the school principal to document the ways in which the school resists constructions of the 'rubbish student'. This resistance, we suggest, provides an indication of how mainstream schools can better serve the needs of some of their most marginalised students.

Introduction

The ethical concern of this paper has emerged from a number of research projects. In one instance we were told by a number of people in a regional town about a high school where the principal had stated an intention to keep 'the rubbish out' of his school. In another instance, teachers and youth workers in a school for young people who were struggling within the mainstream complained that many high schools were using them as a 'dumping ground' for unwanted students. In yet one more case, students who attended an alternative program were likened to the rubbish that collects in the corner of a tip. In considering these various descriptions of young people we were drawn to the work of Zygmunt Bauman, particularly his (2004) conception of 'wasted lives'.

Bauman provides a graphic account of the ways in which some of the most disadvantaged people are constructed as the 'refuse of society'. He provides one anecdote about two types of lorry leaving a factory. One departs in the middle of the day with pride, emblazoned with the factory name or product. The other, leaving at night and without signage, carries the waste. In providing this anecdote Bauman notes: 'Waste is the dark shameful secret of all production' (2004: 27). In an environment where less advantaged students are constructed as 'rubbish', the parallels with schools are not difficult to see. There is pride in the 'high quality products': they are on display in the official stories of the school, in office reception areas, on speech nights, on school billboards, and in school newsletters. By contrast, those who might significantly lower school averages on standardised tests – or disrupt the orderly environment supposedly needed for good outcomes on such tests – are often hidden from view, encouraged to find a 'more suitable school', or excluded or suspended to the point where they do not bother to come back. These 'rubbish students' become, as Roger

Slee (2011) suggests, the 'disappeared' ones. In this paper we explore the background of one school, Grant's Farm, catering to those who have been 'disappeared' from mainstream schooling in a depressed rural area in the Australian State of Queensland. Drawing upon interview data obtained from the school principal, Grant, we use the work of Bauman to consider how the mainstream schooling sector may function to produce 'wasted lives'.

Policy context

The current education movement is framed within a neo-liberal politics that valorises the market as a mechanism for promoting quality. Much has been written about this global phenomenon and how it creates inequality (rather than quality) by debilitating the most vulnerable populations in schools (Ball 2012; Rizvi and Lingard 2011). It is worth noting this trend in Australia's obsession with outcomes as determined by the following: the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) scores derived from national tests taken by all students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9; a focus on accountability as evidenced by the Commonwealth government's 'MySchool' website which went live in 2010, and now lists a school's results on NAPLAN against national averages along with the school's performance measured against 60 'statistically similar schools' across the nation on a socio-economic scale developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA); notions of teacher 'quality' as suggested by advocacy for merit-based pay for teachers; and, a fixation on positionings on global league tables, demonstrated by constant political and media reference to international testing comparisons. However, at the same time as human capital theory and neo-liberal policies are driving school agendas, another more socially democratic agenda related to school retention appears to be at play. Like human capital theory, this agenda argues that the economy needs an

educated populace that includes currently marginalised young people who leave school without qualifications. The challenge is to develop policies that provide educational opportunities at key moments in a young person's life. This trend is reflected in a number of government initiatives to keep young people in school and able to attain some form of meaningful qualification. In Australia a target of 90% retention by 2015 has been set by Commonwealth and State governments (COAG 2009) – a significant increase from the 2011 level of 78% (ABS 2011). A Commonwealth funded support program to the States, referred to as National Partnerships, has focused on schools in high poverty locations in order to achieve such targets (see Lingard and Sellar 2013).

Whilst attempts to improve school retention suggest policy support for marginalised young people, some are sceptical of such attempts. For instance, Wyn and Woodman (2006: 505) argue that various retention measures have been designed 'to coerce young people into remaining in education and training and to limit the proportion of young people who are eligible for government income support'. Whatever the motivation, setting targets necessitates schools having to construct, or indeed fabricate (Ball 2003), an account of effort and success against performance indicators. Consequently, as Bauman (2004: 21) reminds us, any construction always produces unwanted waste materials to be discarded from the main story. Citing Michelangelo, Bauman notes how when he was asked how he made such beautiful sculptures, Michelangelo replied: 'Simple. You just take a slab of marble and cut out all the superfluous bits.' Young people who 'end up' in places like Grant's Farm are often those seen as superfluous or threatening to images that schools feel compelled to manufacture. In this paper we argue that students who have been failed by the school system should not be seen as a 'technical problem' (Bauman 2004: 40) to be shunted off to 'more suitable venues'. However, we also contend that such places sometimes have lessons to offer the mainstream (Mills and McGregor 2013).

An alternative education sector, catering to students who have not been well served by mainstream schooling, is rapidly developing in Australia (te Riele 2012). This growth has been fuelled not only by a well-meaning intention to retain young people in education, but also by various school exclusion policies. For example, the 2010 extension of school principals' powers in Queensland to suspend or expel students without department involvement may well have been instrumental in the 50% increase in exclusions from government schools in 2011-12 (Fraser and Chilcott 2013: 1). Questions about the quality of curricula and pedagogies across the alternative sector have been raised by a number of researchers (e.g. Thomson and Russell 2010). However, other research

(e.g. McGregor and Mills 2012) makes clear that many young people attending these schools would not be in any form of education without their access to these sites. In this paper we suggest further that Grant's Farm, in being experienced positively by many young people, holds a mirror to how the mainstream education system fails those young people. We add a word of warning that the availability of schools such as Grant's Farm can be manipulated by mainstream schools to avoid having to confront what it takes to make their schools inclusive of the most 'difficult' — that is, the most disenfranchised — students. We also argue that ensuring all young people receive a meaningful education cannot involve schools alone.

Elderton

We interviewed Grant within a research project jointly funded by the Australian Research Council and Education Queensland, the State's department of education¹. Our purpose is to explore 'rich' forms of accountability, arguing that, while accountability is important, the narrow and punitive forms that dominate current educational policy yield impoverished stories about schools. In seeking 'richer accounts', we also explore ways in which schools could build local 'funds of knowledge' into curriculum as a means to engage students (see for example, Gonzalez et al. 2005; Zipin et al. 2012). We thus invite school staff, students, parents and community members to provide accounts of constraints and possibilities for advancing the needs and hopes of young people in such a high-poverty rural region. In the process, we have interviewed community organisation workers and city council officers responsible for programs that connect with young people in the region. Through these interviews we became aware of Grant's Farm in the Elderton area.

Elderton is among the poorest regions in Australia, and in recent times has been savaged by natural disasters that have exacerbated struggles for many households lacking insurance. There is a significant Indigenous population in the area, and a very high transient population, but also long-standing non-Indigenous families with histories going back to the establishment of the area as a major sugar growing and processing centre. A Queensland State Department Treasury and Trade profile of the region, based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011 Census data, gives a sense of the extent of poverty: among people aged 15 years and over, 39.1% had a highest level of schooling of Years 11 or 12 (or equivalent) compared with 55.3% across Queensland; labourers constituted the largest occupational group at 15.4% of the employed workforce, compared with 10.6% across Queensland (interestingly, Health Care and Social Assistance was the largest employing industry for usual residents); the unemployment rate was 8.4% compared with 5.5% across the State; 44.4%, compared with 34.6%

across the State, had a weekly wage less than \$400.

Grant's Farm

Burgan Youth Centre is a registered school established in the middle of 2006 to provide educational opportunities for young people who had left mainstream schooling. It is colloquially known as Grant's Farm. Students are referred by schools, the juvenile justice system and various youth support organisations in the region. At the time of our visit, there were 35 enrolled students aged approximately 15-16 years old, roughly 25% Indigenous, and primarily boys: only 10% of the cohort were girls. However, at that time the school was applying for funding to build a 'parenting and pregnant teens centre' as they often had applications from pregnant or parenting girls.

Students are able to enrol in the school at the start of Year 8 or any point after, although there are no official year levels, so, as Grant noted: 'a 13 year old and an 18 year old might be in Level 1 together'. Grant told us that students tended to have literacy and numeracy levels about five years below age-level expectations. Some students had been out of the education system for a while. Whilst in the State of Queensland, and Australia generally, there is a 'learning or earning' agenda which supposedly tracks students who had left education and were not in any form of employment, Grant said, 'There would be six – five or six students here, that have had periods longer than six months out of the structure. We have a couple of 18 months.'

The school provides food for students, runs its own bus service to ensure they are able to get to the school, and supports them in various ways, for example by attending community conferencing programs with those in the juvenile justice system. The school also works with support personnel such as speech therapists and psychologists, and has partnerships with organisations such as Lifeline, Adolescent Support Service, Bush Children's Association and the Indigenous Wellbeing Centre. Grant told us: 'We'll work with anyone and everyone, because we know we can't do it ourselves.'

Grant became interested in creating a separate school whilst working as chaplain in a large high school. He spent much time with some of the most 'difficult' students, felt they were being denied a meaningful education, and became an advocate for them. He said many teachers used him inappropriately: 'at that stage there was a lot of babysitting-type of mentality that, well, "Just get them out of our hair. We don't care what you do with them. Just get them out of the classroom".' He said further that, as he got to know these students through various programs like canoeing, and work related activities such as fixing lawn mowers, 'it became obvious to me that there's nothing

wrong with these kids, individually. There was angst with a system and requirements of that system'.

In recognising that mainstream schooling had systematically failed these young people, Grant said: 'We don't pretend that we're a normal school. In fact, we deliberately have taken the school system, as they know it, out of what we do.' In addition to avoiding many trappings of mainstream schools — for example, uniforms and addressing teachers by titles rather than first names — the school avoids testing regimes such as NAPLAN. In consequence, every year they must apply for an exemption:

We tried it the first year, and it just crashed and burnt... So the NAPLAN would just ... there's no point for us. So we're prepared to argue our point when we're asked to.

The school aims for students to gain a Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement, which, Grant noted, 'is competency driven, if you like, similar to a VET [Vocational Education and Training] system'. Indeed, a key goal of the school is to prepare students for work through curriculum that works significantly on 'attitudes' tied to the school's three 'operating principles':

Our operating principles are fairly strong, so they respect participation in community. Respect for self, others and things. Participation is being willing to make a contribution, whether you want to or not. But just being willing to give it a go, whether you're up or down, and seeing yourself as a player in building a healthy community. Not as an add-on or an after-thought, but as a key player. So all of our behaviour management structures revolve around those three principles.

The school also seeks to provide students with 'enterprise learning opportunities', explained as 'the opportunity to leave here with authentic learnings that are valid in the workplace'. This involved forming a number of partnerships with local businesses and farms. For instance, students planted 700 nut trees and were partnering with large producers to borrow machinery for harvesting the crop. They also grew mangoes and citrus fruit and maintained a herd of cows.

Many crops had been there when the school was set up: it had originally been a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) training farm, but had not been used for five years. They had had to clear noxious weeds and grass from the area. The nut trees had been nursed back to good health with support from local growers. They were told the mangoes would have to be bulldozed; however, a local farm that produced large quantities of small crops

showed them how to prune the mango trees appropriately and how to graft more productive forms of mango onto existing trees. We had commented on these trees to Grant as they had been decoratively and impressively painted. Grant said the trees had needed treatment with a white paint-like substance to stop them becoming diseased, and the art teacher then embarked on a project with the students to make them more attractive. Grant told us: 'The kids love it. Like, how good are we? The only mango orchard in the State like it!'

In addition to the above activities, the school runs a business making packing crates for a local company that produces small fibreglass planes. They are paid for this and the school employs students, who must undergo a job interview. If successful, they work on their regular Wednesdays off school. We were told:

So we have a number of little enterprises like that, that produce a little carrot. So they have training; they have work experience; they have supported work experience. But they do the work experience by themselves, and then they can be employed. That will go on their resume. So it's valid learning. It's just not mainstream learning.... We use all of these things, as enterprise learning projects. So it's rich task learning. This is how we get our curriculum. If we're questioned, we can draw on science and maths and [other learnings].

The school is not just aspiring to 'capacitate' (Appadurai, 2004) students' possibilities; it also invests in local community development. Beyond extending the school's material resources, the school regularly advertises working bees at the school and 'we put it out to the community. We'll get 20 to 40 people turn up, and mow and paint and do – it's just amazing. I love it.' They also try to support the students' families, recognising that many are under great financial stress, which brings with it a range of other problems. Grant noted how sometimes financial problems provoked short-term decisions that dug people into bigger financial holes: for example, to contract unaffordable phone plans, defaulting three months afterwards when unable to pay bills, and, when chased by debt collectors, moving suburbs and therefore schools. Similar problems occurred with car loans and rents. According to Grant, many did not know where to turn for help. Said Grant:

That's why we have a desire to work very strongly with the parents. So that we can put them in contact with people, who can help with that bigger picture. Once that starts to settle down, we have seen the students settle with them. So that gives us the ability to work with them individually, with their particular issues.

It is difficult to determine 'success' working in such an environment. Barry gave examples of 'gut feeling' indicators: for instance, parents who expressed amazement at how their children seemed engaged and brought home things they had made at school, such as metal candle holders, displaying pride in their work by showing it to neighbours. For some, this was the first time that they had ever wanted to go to school. Said Grant: 'That's a success to me.' He provided an illustrative anecdote:

We had a young fellow – he's still here now. He's 16 years old, and reads at around about a Grade 3 level. That's been his cause of unsettlement. Very physical, very angry, very aggressive – particularly if you say, let's do some literacy. But we got him to the point where he came in for four hours on a Saturday morning and a Sunday morning, to sit down with a speech language therapist. He went from the Grade 3 to mid-Grade 7 in the space of a weekend. So his goal was to be able to read storybooks to his younger brother, not the other way around, and he achieved that.... Now that's a success. If we were to sit him down in front of NAPLAN, the structure of the test would freak him out. As well as the depth of the test. The content of the test.

One of the concerns at the school was that mainstream schools were too quick to get rid of their 'problems', before potentially fruitful avenues were explored. Grant indicated that in many cases the schools saw opportunities to remove their 'naughty kids'. He said it had taken him and his staff six months to work that out, and now they spend time with the schools talking about what the schools have done, and who they have involved, to try to re-engage students and get them 'back on track'. He also argued it was not just 'naughty' students they often saw fit to remove, observing that mainstream schools accept '1 per cent, 2 per cent, or 3 per cent of our youth would fail'. Thus, schools could claim, said Grant: 'Now we've referred them to the farm, so it's not our failure. We've engaged the disengaged in this way. So I believe we make them look good.'

Significance

Grant's Farm caters to young people who have had difficult relationships with mainstream schools, and in many ways were conditioned by poverty and other compounding forms of disadvantage. In an uncanny paraphrasing of Bauman's *Wasted Lives*, Grant noted that the school is sometimes perceived as like a 'garbage dump' with 'the rubbish collecting in the corner'. We would add, analytically, that this 'rubbish' is an inevitable by-product of a system that primarily focuses on academic outcomes, regards young people as human capital

and valorises market competitiveness as a means of promoting excellence.

Bauman (2004) refers to situations of 'overpopulation', that is, contexts in which there become too many of them. In relation to schools, the 'them' are those likely to weaken the 'image' of a school either by behaviour or performance on standardised tests. In an era where schools are constructed as markets (Ball 2012) and students (and their parents) as consumers, young people who are far from embodying ideal forms and amounts of capital become constructed as 'flawed consumers' (Bauman 2004: 39). These 'poorly performing consumers [become a school's] most irksome and costly liabilities [and so are often unthinkingly treated as] unintended and unplanned *collateral causalities*' (Bauman 2004: 39) of the drive for 'quality performance'. Bauman (2004: 40) would not suggest that there is conscious intention to construct some students as 'rubbish'; rather, 'the production of human waste has all the markings of an impersonal, purely technical issue'.

At one level, then, Grant's Farm presents the 'technical solution' of a disposal option for problems of 'waste', taking students who are highly problematic consumers of education in mainstream schools. However, unlike some means of removing problematic students – for example, sending them to behaviour management units which in effect act as 're-education' camps, leaving intact the legitimising discourses of contemporary schooling – Grant's Farm challenges mainstream legitimising logics. Whilst banished to the Farm as 'disengaged failures', their Farm-based degrees of engagement and success via alternative educational pathways suggest otherwise. Such success shifts the attribution of failure onto the schools that failed to engage their needs and potential.

Indeed, Grant's Farm provides lessons on how other schools might be more successful with these highly disadvantaged young people. The Farm poses high expectations, both for behaviour and engagement with the school, but communicates expectations in a non-authoritarian manner. Symbolic impositions of systemic power to subordinate students – uniforms, timetables, year levels, standardised testing – have been removed. Instead, there is recognition that many students' lives are challenged, and so flexibility must be built into their schooling to enable them to stay committed to learning projects. This recognition is evident in the view that the school cannot do it alone. The Farm draws heavily on the resources of the community to provide meaningful, 'authentic' learning and ensures that students can attend school, for example through provision of transport, meals and access to various social services. At the same time the school works to enable students to see themselves as 'key players' in their local communities. The codes of

respect promoted in the school are not based on punitive discourses, but on rich reciprocity – a getting and giving of respect as social actors engaged positively with/in community. The school thus seeks to ensure young people have opportunities to understand and practise active citizenship in ways and degrees that exceed 'citizenship education' in most mainstream schools (Hayes et al. 2006). We suggest that such approaches are not difficult for schools to take up. However, it would involve a significant change of attitudes – underpinned by a contestation of the selection-for-scarce-capital functions historically embedded in mainstream schooling – such that students are seen as capable (not 'rubbish'), their communities as harbouring integral assets (not disturbing deficits) for curriculum enrichment, and where learning is made challenging, meaningful and accessible. Looking in the mirror provided by Grant's Farm suggests real possibilities for other schools to tell better stories about themselves, and so cease relying upon places like the Farm to cast off young people who do not come to them embodying 'exchange values' for narrow market-driven performance narratives.

We conclude with a cautionary recognition that solely blaming the schools that funnel students towards Grant's Farm would be unfair. These schools themselves are located in a high poverty area where many families from which their students come face massive economic hardships including unemployment and welfare dependency. Staff in these schools attest to the ways in which they are chronically ignored by regional and state education offices, and so collectively operate on the fringes of a system concerned with rankings on national and international league tables. It is perhaps telling that Grant described the Farm's students not as the 'rubbish' of the system – this term may represent a common construction of students across the region (and, indeed, the region itself) – but in more extreme terms as 'the rubbish collecting on the corner of a rubbish dump', perhaps suggesting that Elderton itself is the 'rubbish dump'. Our view is that Elderton as a community faces severe hardships and inequalities compared with other regions in Queensland and Australia. We thus suggest that education reforms alone, while important, are insufficient for addressing the needs of the young people who attend Grant's Farm. Broader social and economic policies concerned with addressing resource distribution, valuing diversity within communities, and listening to voices are also critical to creating a more just education system in the region.

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Footnotes

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Vance Palmer Dines with Boarders, September 1958

He told them; when he was last here, Australia
Wasn't even its own country. Diggers were dying
Under the Union Jack, as the Boer gave the Brits
What for. But as advances go; we'd helped invent
Concentration camps, drawn a roadmap for Hitler's
Grand adventure. Added a new word to the lingo –
Commando. And we believed no one lived here
Before us, no one of any worth that is; terra nullius
He told them. Do they still teach Latin? Greek?
We were ignorant of the larger world. So no one
Had problems with possessing this small land, for
We ourselves were possessed. He told them; the year
He enrolled, a teacher –Wilson was sacked & later
Killed a boy near Darra. He often quoted Cicero.

B.R. DIONYSIUS
WOODEND, QLD

Hear No Race, See No Race, Speak No Race: Teacher silence, Indigenous youth, and race talk in the classroom

GREG VASS

Indigenous learners are typically positioned in deficit ways within educationally focused conversations, an extension of efforts that seek to 'fix' the 'problems' attached to 'Indigenous education'. In this sense, there is little difference, be they X, Y, or Z generation; part and parcel of being Indigenous and in school, requires responding to the challenges of being positioned as 'Indigenous' whilst concurrently working out what it means to be subjectively Indigenous. This article draws on my research in high school classrooms, where the teachers' inability or unwillingness to hear, see or speak of, or within, the racialised discourses that periodically erupt, create both possibilities and challenges for all students, but particularly for those who are Indigenous. In the following discussion I utilise the post-structuralist understanding of 'positioning' to help explore the discursive practices taken up by Indigenous students as they negotiate being positioned as powerless alongside their efforts at taking up powerful positions.

Research Reflections 1: 'He is a Real Aboriginal'¹

I watched Steven [the teacher] try to engage the Year 12 class in a conversation about aspirations, 'What do you want to achieve by the time you are 30? ... What obstacles might prevent you from reaching your dreams?' The students seemed reluctant to share their thoughts, and Steven asked them to put pen to paper. He then invited Joey back into the classroom. Joey stood in the doorway and loudly informed Steven – and his classmates – that he didn't have any paper or a pen, laughingly adding, 'Centrelink² didn't come in this week!'

I didn't know if Steven was aware that Joey was Aboriginal, but I strongly suspected that Joey was playing on the fact that his peers certainly knew that he was. Supporting this suspicion, the laughter and encouragement around the room indicated the wide acceptance of this self-deprecating joke playing on the stereotype of linking Indigeneity with being on welfare.³ Ignoring the interruption, Steven organised a pen and paper for Joey, and then proceeded with his plan for the lesson. He wanted to show the class a video clip about an 'inspirational' person, telling the students, 'This guy was categorised as a blind Aboriginal from a low socio-economic community ...' but before he could finish the sentence a student was yelling out, 'How did he buy a guitar?' In response another student echoed the earlier comment from Joey, answering, 'Centrelink!'

Steven ignored the renewed laughter and went on to announce the name of the person, blind singer Gurrumul Yunupingu, which induced an even louder and exaggerated round of laughter that was most raucously led by Aboriginal student Mark. A point picked up on by Susan, who accusingly admonished him saying, 'You are Aboriginal!' This comment appeared to have very little impact on Mark's ongoing laughter, and by way of explanation, Milly gestured towards the image of Gurrumul on YouTube and said, 'He is a real Aboriginal.'
[Based on classroom observations, June, 2011]

Generational Theory – Bypassing Indigenous Youth?

The opening narrative has been derived from a classroom observation undertaken as part of my doctoral research investigating pedagogies of race in the classroom. It is an anecdote that draws attention to some of the challenges and complexities (a) for Indigenous youth navigating the performative aspects of identity discourses within educational settings (Cooks and Simpson 2007); (b)

for educators negotiating and engaging with racialised identity talk in the classroom (Leonardo 2009); and (c) for educational researchers (such as myself) understanding, analysing and representing 'youth' in the work we do (Pillow 2003). Additionally, given the focus of this special issue, the encounter in the classroom helps to illustrate the inadequacies of generational theory for exploring youth discourses; especially with regards to experiences and perspectives of marginalised and

stereotyped groups such as Indigenous youth. From this, the verbal exchange illustrates that for Susan and Milly, their Indigenous classmates Joey and Mark were neither 'real' Aborigines nor part of the 'real' White, dominant, Gen Y⁴ group that Susan and Milly identify with — that they were an other, Other. However, what should we understand of Joey and Mark? Were they powerless within this sequence of exchanges? Can their actions be viewed as attempting to enact power-making discursive manoeuvres that perhaps require more careful consideration?

In addressing such concerns, there are two interlinked aims of this paper. Firstly, I will explore some of the potential pitfalls that underscore generational theory, with particular attention given to those that contribute to misinterpreting and misrepresenting Indigenous youth. This has already been indicated, but central to this is my concern that discourses on Gen Y and 'Indigenous youth' tend to be exclusive, leading to a questioning of whether one can be simultaneously Gen Y and Indigenous. It is a line of inquiry that raises concerns about the homogenising effects of generational theory, as well as the deficit assumptions that underpin much of the discourse related to Indigenous-focused topics. Secondly, I will illustrate the usefulness of 'positioning theory' (Davies and Harré 1990) for revealing the complex discursive interplay that is navigated by Indigenous students as the tension between being powerless and powerful is simultaneously performed during identity work in the classroom (Cooks and Simpson 2007). This has also been hinted at, as clearly the anecdote above does not represent, and is never going to be able to communicate, any understanding of Joey or Mark's sense of self as young, Indigenous people that are making their way through the White-washed Australian setting in which they live. Concerns with knowing, representing, and the gaze of the researcher are a significant undercurrent for this discussion, and this will briefly be explored next.

Power, Perspectives and Purpose

[A] transitional moment to adulthood, they ['youth'] are 'at-risk' for deviations from proper development for adult work and family roles: they serve as barometers of societies' and nations' social and economic well-being and future potential: they are enmeshed in peer culture, yet developable through adult administration in formal and informal institutions, such as schooling, scouting, sports, and families (Talbur and Lesko 2012: 11-12).

As I sat down to start writing this paper, questions about the very nature of 'youth studies' returned to disrupt my thoughts on each attempt. Central to my discomfort were concerns with how to respond to or engage with what appears to be the foundations of youth studies, namely, its emergence as a discursive field through which adults become better equipped (with 'knowledge'), as

a result of research on youth, to subsequently monitor and intervene in the 'development' of future cohorts of youth. As suggested by Talbur and Lesko (2012), youth studies is thus positioned as a positive contributor to social understanding and practices; it is framed as helping to curb the dangers of being 'at risk' by better meeting the needs of youth so that they in turn, can become happy, healthy and productive citizens of the future. This seems banal on the surface, but it is an observation that readily elides the 'fabrication' of youth as a 'subject and object of research' (Popkewitz 2012: 59), and hence, with broader concerns regarding issues of power, relationships, and representation. By extension, youth is a further problematic construct that has a tendency to essentialise, despite the acknowledgment that there are different subcultures (or neo-tribes) within the 'youth' terrain.

It is a line of thinking that I am uncertain about, because as a former high-school teacher, and now education researcher, concerns with power, relationships and representation have been central to the work that I do across these settings. My attentiveness to these issues has been additionally heightened by my research interests concerning Indigenous youth in educational settings, problematically, as a non-Indigenous researcher. Within the researcher's gaze, all too often it seems, Indigenous youth are seemingly struck by the double misfortune of being exposed to the 'risks' generally associated with youth, coupled with the 'problems' yoked to being Indigenous. Wary of this, in this article, I aspire to tread carefully as I move within the 'youth studies' terrain, but particularly in regards to discursively contributing to the construction of 'Indigenous youth'. The reader is also invited to move cautiously with me, mindful of the dangers of (mis)representing the youth, that are Indigenous, within the discussion that unfolds; mindful that relationships entail both privileges and responsibilities, and the reader is entering a relationship with the author and 'Indigenous youth'; and mindful that power (and/or knowledge) remains diffuse, discursive and productive.

Generational Theory

Idealists-in-the-making, Millennials are powerfully shaped by parental reaction to the perceived laxness of the Sixties and Seventies (Wilson and Gerber 2008: 30).

In brief, generational theory is premised on the idea that, by sharing a proximity of birth years, such as between 1980 and 2000 for Gen Ys⁵, a generation shares collective experiences, perspectives, opportunities, skills and knowledges to such an extent that the generation can be characterised by a set of qualities and/or dispositions. As such, it can be viewed as an expedient and 'popular' form of discursive shorthand that refers to a group of similarly aged people en masse. In recent years its appeal has returned according to Woodman (2011),

who, while conceding the dangers of homogenisation and displacing concerns with diversity and inequality, is a strong advocate for a 'social generations' approach to youth studies. Woodman (2011: 31) posits that a sociologically informed generational reading of youth is warranted because it provides a lens through which to better understand the 'changing social conditions on young people's lives'. Casting a more critical eye on this, Patton (2012: 125) explains that, 'much research deploying the idea of generations seems content to draw hazy lines based on dates relevant within its particular research domain ... without worrying too much if the concept of a generation can stand the strain of its many uses'. This is a concern I share.

With regards to Gen Y (and now Gen Z), the introduction of mass produced, interactive, computerised technologies that are used daily is thought to have contributed to the creation of a generation that represents a distinct break (intellectually and socially) from prior generations. It is a theory that appears to be built upon what may prove to be very shaky foundations, as apparent in comments such as those from Wilson and Gerber (above) – claiming that (all!) 'millennials' are idealists as a (mass?) reaction to a [perception of] parental generational *laissez faire*, not only assumes a homogenising cause and effect inter-generational relationship, it also very problematically essentialises those linked with the generation. Even a cursory consideration of Australia raises serious questions about the viability of suggesting that adolescents in Sydney, Cunnamulla, Alice Springs or Arnhem Land (for example) share an 'idealist-in-the-making' outlook in response to their perception of a previous generation. While there may be a surface level appeal to aspects of generational theory, critiques regarding the logic and explanatory use of generational theory seem to be growing fast (see Bennett et al. 2008; Selwyn 2009; Helsper and Eynon 2010; Jones 2011).

The explanatory potential of generational theory is further eroded when considering the circumstances of particular groups, such as Indigenous youth, growing up and attending schools in contexts as varied as those mentioned above. In many respects, being 'Indigenous' appears to supplant generational association, be they Xs, Ys or Zs, as being an Indigenous youth in educational settings remains synonymous with being 'at risk'. This is a point reiterated recently by Kral (2010), who argues that many Indigenous youth in remote settings are positioned within a transitional and inter-generational space that remains primarily shaped by their Indigenous heritage; yet they are expected to fit in with non-Indigenous institutions and discourses, thus placing them 'at risk'. According to Kickett-Tucker (2009: 121) there is little research or discussion of the racialised identity of 'Indigenous youth' per se. However, she does go on to explain that while studies have emphasised the importance of positive racial identity being linked with encouraging outcomes and engagement in education, many Indigenous youth (and particularly those in urban

settings) remain 'at risk for developing problems with their social and emotional well-being'.

To be 'at risk' in Australian schooling requires one to be viewed as unlikely to complete school through to Year 12 (te Riele 2006: 131). With the retention and completion rate for Indigenous learners being 43% in 2007⁶, there are indeed grounds for grave concerns, inviting (if not demanding) the education sector should undergo serious soul-searching. However, this appears a long way off. Instead of asking and listening to Indigenous youth (or parents and communities) regarding why many youth may not be continuing in schooling, there remains an assumed association of 'risk' factors with deficit perspectives that direct attention to the individual, family, community, and in some instances, the mismatch with the school (te Riele 2006: 134; see also Gray and Beresford 2008). This results in Indigenous youth being the 'prime target for the "at risk" label in Australia' (te Riele 2006: 138). Returning to the question asked earlier about whether one can be both a Gen Y'er and Indigenous within educational discourses, it appears at this stage that there is little possibility. However, this is not the primary focus of my concerns; while greater scrutiny of generational theory is warranted, in this paper I argue that there is an urgent need for a critical understanding of the discourses involved in constructing and representing Indigenous youth.

Discursive 'positioning'

In this anecdote – from a different classroom, on a different day, but still involving Joey and Milly – we see a very different type of exchange. Instead of deploying self-deprecating humour, Joey is asserting boundaries regarding the acceptable use of racialised humour (if there is such a thing?), while Milly appears to be deflecting attention away from her Whiteness⁸ (see Research Reflections over page). How are we — the researcher, reader, adult observer 'we' — to make sense of the difference between this encounter and the earlier one? Is there a fluidity that enables the two interactions to be viewed and understood as linked? In exploring these types of questions, the conceptualisation of 'positioning', as put forward by Davies and Harré (1990), is particularly useful. Offering an account of their approach, Davies and Harré (1990: 48) explain:

Positioning ... is the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself. However it would be a mistake to assume that, in either case, positioning is necessarily intentional. One lives one's life in terms of one's ongoingly produced self, whoever might be responsible for its production.

Research Reflections 2: 'There Is No Funny Racism'.

As I entered the classroom and received my regular ironic cheers of welcome, I took up my position towards the back and readied myself with pen and paper. It didn't take long for an intriguing chat to be initiated by Milly, when she turned in my direction and loudly asked if I had watched Angry Boys⁷ the previous evening. When I indicated that I had, but didn't add any further detail, Milly went on to explain that she thought it was very funny, and she was then a little disappointed when I didn't reciprocate. In response to me, she enthusiastically continued, saying 'It was so racist though ... like when he was talking about coco puffs when talking about Aborigines.'

I knew the scene that she was talking about and was horrified when I had seen it, as it was exactly the sort of comment that I feared would surface in school. I responded by pointing out that racism wasn't funny and that I thought Chris Lilley had gone too far and the program was dangerous. In some sort of effort to justify her perspective she responded in a pleading voice that it was 'funny racism', an appeal that took my breath away and left me with a very uncomfortable feeling about my researcher role and being involved in the conversation. However, without missing a beat, Joey entered the exchange and firmly stated, 'There is no funny racism.' Joey had no fear of voicing his opinion or challenging the views of others, and the quick exchange of words with Milly, who was still trying to defend her position, quickly escalated in volume.

The encounter ultimately took a very strange turn though. Joey had just finished saying that, 'Aboriginals are a people that experience racism in Australia every day', when Milly abandoned defending herself and chose to correct Joey's grammar. She stated resolutely, 'It is Aborigine, not Aboriginal. There is only one of you.' Now I don't know if I was more shocked that she redirected the conversation in this way or that she understood the grammatical difference – but I did pause and think that her English teacher would be strangely proud of her. It was water off a duck's back for Joey as he continued talking about the widespread racist practices evident in Australia, and that this negatively impacts on the experiences and perspectives of 'Aborigines'. As was often the case, a lot had been squeezed into a very short space of time, it was hard to keep up, and while I was transfixed by the cross-room banter, I wanted to know what Sam [the teacher] was up to and why he had remained silent throughout the exchange. When I looked in his direction I received a quizzical look; he then shrugged his shoulders and said, 'I don't know, what is the plural of Aborigine?' [Based on classroom observations, June 2011]

From within this theoretical framework, the exchanges in the classroom illustrate discursive positioning taking place, with the speakers drawing on known/knowable 'stories' (or in this case, stereotyped and cultural assumptions) in an effort to locate both the speaker and listener through a process of confirming and/or challenging one's position relationally.

This is perhaps most clearly evident in Milly's deflection from being positioned by Joey (and myself) as a potential racist because she expressed the view that there was an available 'funny' form of racism to which she had positional access. Her deflecting strategy was to position Joey as being grammatically inept, however, problematically the assertion of her position also attempted to reclaim some form of racialised 'high ground', as she drew on the grammatical use of his racialised identity. Davies and Harré (1990) may be inclined to suggest that aspects of positioning practices here were 'unintentional', and having personally known both students since they were in Year 8, the banter does indeed require more careful examination beyond the scope of this discussion. Irrespective of this point, the encounter gestures towards the ways that people negotiate positioning by drawing on social scripts that are already shared in some way, and

in the examples explored here, they can be described as racially infused social scripts. This opens up space for a deeper understanding of the treacherous terrain navigated by Indigenous learners within a White-washed educational landscape. It is an approach that provides a way forward by acknowledging the use of positioning strategies that aim to resist or disrupt the experience of being positionally subjugated, as Joey was within this encounter in response to Milly.

In the first classroom encounter, Joey positioned himself through humour, drawing on the stereotyped and disparaging script that associates Indigenous people with being on welfare. This seems contrary to his comment to Milly in the second encounter, that there is 'no funny racism'. Are we therefore to think that there is a set of racialised rules for him that are distinct from Milly (for example)? Was he oppressively positioned by Whiteness in both encounters? Or was he, in instances, pushing back in some way against being positioned as powerless, and hence seeking to establish himself in a powerful way, within the social milieu that is his daily life? For Davies and Harré (1990), the contradictory choices deployed by Joey are unsurprising, as there need only be a sense of consistency from the perspective of the

person within the storyline itself – in this case, for Joey, the seemingly contradictory positioning may not actually be contradictory. It is this capacity within discursive practices, for positioning to be a resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate ‘new’ positions (Davies and Harré 1990: 62) that is significant, as this is a productive, not inherently constraining, practice. This offers an important reminder that students’ ‘identities and therefore subject positions as speakers are being continuously reconstructed and open to redefinition through discourse, not outside it’ (Baxter 2002: 830). It is not my place or intention to speculate here about Joey’s sense of self in relation to his Indigenous identity; however, I do believe that in both cases he was actively engaged in discursive practices through which he was moving towards a position that retained or asserted a sense of power. This comment is tentatively offered in acknowledgment of Kickett-Tucker’s (2009) concerns about the links between racial identity, Indigenous mental health, and schooling, with the urgent need for further research in this area.

Conclusion: Calling on Teachers, Researchers and those Working with Youth, to Talk About Race

In shifting attention away from the positioning strategies of Joey and Milly, of additional interest here are the positioning responses of the teachers, as both Steven and Sam demonstrated an unwillingness to see, hear or purposefully engage in the race talk that unfolded around them. That the exchanges occurred is less surprising, as I would agree with Cooks and Simpson (2007: 2) in arguing that ‘our classrooms are shot through with the presence of race.’ In both cases, despite occupying ‘powerful’ positions as teachers in the classroom, they positioned themselves as ‘powerless’ in their capacity to purposefully contribute to, or productively lead, the race talk that unexpectedly erupted (Baxter 2002). By extension, in both examples explored here, Joey was positioned by others as the ‘powerless’ objectified and subjugated ‘Indigenous’ presence in the classroom, whilst in response, he sought to utilise the options available to him to disrupt this and position himself as a ‘powerful’ member of the class, one who was also Indigenous. The silence of the teachers left him little other choice it would seem. This is a crucial point, as I would strongly argue that teachers need to be better prepared to be positioned as powerful and productive contributors to race talk in the classroom.

This paper began with a critique of generational theory, pointing out limitations with regards to the inclusivity and explanatory potential of the approach in relation to ‘Indigenous youth’. The anecdotes involving Joey and Milly further illustrate this point: to assume that because they share a proximity of birth years, school setting, similar socio-economic status, access to and use of technologies (for example), that they share a generational outlook, skill/knowledge base, or opportunities, reductively belies the significance of racialisation processes. In contrast

to this, positioning theory (Davies and Harré 1990) has helped with illustrating the discursive identity work that youth undertake in school settings.

It is important to consider then, that subject positions are made possible in and through discursive exchanges that rely on, what is known/knowable and shared, and hence indicates the dangers of relying on stereotyped narratives (Davies and Hunt 1994). In the examples explored here, the teachers seemingly relied on the assumed de-racialised status of Whiteness to position themselves as unable/unwilling to contribute to the racialised exchange, despite being powerfully positioned as authorities in the class (Leonardo 2009). Thus, the teachers’ reticence to hear, see or to become discursively involved and introduce potential and productive positions for those in the conversation to draw upon meant that the students undertook this identity work themselves. From this, I would suggest that positioning theory is a useful approach for deepening ‘our’ understanding of the treacherous terrain that ‘youth’ traverse as they work out their sense of self, and importantly, in potentially assisting them to resist and disrupt their burgeoning awareness of how the world perceives and positions them.

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Footnotes

1. The construction, use and defining of the terms Indigenous and Aborigine, are caught up in the violent historical present. While acknowledging this, in the absence of a widely accepted alternative, I will use the term Indigenous to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
2. Centrelink is the government agency that provides welfare benefits.
3. Matthews and Aberdeen's (2004) research revealed non-Indigenous school students stereotypical perceptions of Indigenous people as receiving more financial assistance and legal leniency within that law.
4. Generation Y, or Gen Y, are also known in the literature as 'Millennials', the 'Net Generation' and 'Digital Natives': while there may be subtle variations between why one term is preferred over others, they are also often used interchangeably.
5. The start and end dates for generational cycles varies depending on the author: for example Wilson and Gerber (2008), refer to the Millennials as starting in 1982 and ending in 2003; Bennet et al. (2007) refer to the Digital Natives as starting in 1980 and ending in 1994; and Leung (2004) is concerned with the Net Generation that started in 1977 and ended in 1997.
6. Australian Human Rights Commission, see http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/statistics/index.html.
7. *Angry Boys* first screened on the National Broadcasting free to air network the ABC, 11th May 2011. The program follows the interweaving lives of six characters, all played by creator and writer Chris Lilley. Problematically, the characters involve Lilley, who is White, taking on the role of an African-American aspiring musician, a Japanese mother of an aspiring skate

- boarder, and the matriarch of a youth detention centre.
8. Explaining this, Cooks and Simpson (2007: 3-4) argue that, 'Any time that whites exercise the authority to speak generally about any racial group while simultaneously ignoring or rejecting the perspectives of an individual in the classroom who is part of that racial group, they are practicing whiteness'.

Author

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Touching The Names

This memorial a kind of graveyard
The New York Times

First silence, a moment to reflect
then in twos and threes or more they
tread stone paths to the memorial.

Awaiting them sunken pools shadowed
by ghosts of the twin towers. Black water
tumbles under a blue September sky.

Niagara Falls someone murmurs.
They have come this Sabbath morning
to lay hands on the names of loved ones

incised in bronze. For over a thousand
families this touching is all they have.
A girl holding a baby finds the name

of her father, a fire fighter reduced
to ash. She caresses cold metal, fingers
letters, the edges precise as grief.

Rubbings are taken on scrap paper,
any memento is cherished. Others
tuck notes, photographs into cracks

or cast flowers into the dark pools.
Our own Wailing Wall a man says.
As the girl places a tiny flag to mark

being there, her infant son pulls
at her blouse, will not be soothed.
This is her moment to move away.

LORRAINE McGUIGAN,
BALLARAT, VICTORIA

The Middle Years of Schooling Association's Representations of Young Adolescents: Particularising the adolescent

DONNA PENDERGAST AND KATHERINE MAIN

The middle years of education are of significant interest to educators in upper Primary and Junior Secondary settings. Identifiable in national policy documents, the separation of young adolescent education, typically represented as middle years education, marks a relatively new category for Australian school students. As the peak national professional association, the Middle Years of Schooling Association (MYSA) is of interest when considering the ways in which young adolescence is formed into categories, most typically aligned with age and stage. This research explores how MYSA, as an organisation that promotes itself as an advocate of young adolescents, has represented these young people through its website, quarterly newsletters, and bi-annual journal over the last 10 years.

Introduction

The Middle Years of Schooling Association (MYSA) is the national peak body organisation 'dedicated exclusively to the education, development and growth of young adolescents' (MYSA 2008: 1). MYSA was established in June 1999 on the wave of renewed energy to address perceived shortcomings in the education of young adolescents in Australia. Cormack and Cumming's (1996) key reform paper, with the now widely recognised abbreviated title *From alienation to engagement* and Barratt's (1998) *The shape of middle schooling in Australia*, fuelled the passion of a group of Queensland based educators to establish the national association (Hearfield 2013). The group commenced with a membership of 36 and has grown to an average membership of 600, including institutional memberships.

The aims of MYSA include (a) informing relevant stakeholders about the nature of middle school education; (b) promoting the achievements and efforts of those involved with young adolescents; (c) providing a voice for those interested and involved in the education and development of young adolescents; and (d) identifying and encouraging research in the areas of the middle years of schooling (MYSA 2008). As a professional organisation, it has as its focus the education of young adolescent learners. Yet, by its very existence the organisation may unwittingly contribute to reinforcing negative stereotypes and assumptions about the nature of young adolescent learners which work against these aims. Saltman (2005), Chadbourne (2001) and others have cautioned advocates of middle schooling practices and middle school students against inadvertently reinforcing

deficit social and educational apprehensions associated with young adolescents. More recently, Vagle (2012) has made a plea to researchers, educators and policy makers to break free of dominant discourses, such as developmentalism, and in particular the developmental stage of young adolescence, arguing that educators 'run the risk of not achieving their primary goal – creating the best schools possible for young adolescents' (Vagle 2012: 11) because of a tendency to reinforce dominant discourses that carry negative associations. Pendergast and Bahr (2012: 242) agree, arguing the repeated failure of 'long standing initiatives for middle years reform ... that is limited to broad generalisations of adolescence that do not particularise effectively for those learners in the middle years of schooling'.

To that end, this paper explores how MYSA, as an organisation that promotes itself as an advocate of young adolescents, has represented these young people through its website, quarterly newsletters, and bi-annual journal over the last 10 years. The questions posed were: Does MYSA reflect what it promotes as its aims as an advocate for young adolescents; and Does it reinforce the popular tendency to label and define subgroups, usually in deficit ways?

Labels as categories: Young adolescents, middle years students and the middle years

In Australia in recent times there has been a growing interest in student learning roughly equating to the age group 10 – 15 years and year levels 5 – 9. Although there is no definitive age or year level, this interest area is generally captured by the terminology of the 'middle years'.

A range of terms are used, seemingly interchangeably, to describe the age and stage of the students, along with the teaching practices argued to be most effective. For stage, 'young adolescence' is typically used in conjunction with the use of 'middle years' to capture the approximate age, with the composite 'middle years learner' or 'middle years student' the commonly used phrases to focus on the student in an educational context. By way of example, in 2009 the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008: 10) identified one of its eight inter-related action areas as 'enhancing middle years' development'. For the first time on a national scale, this policy document identified the category of 'middle years students', and the reason for this inclusion is evident in the following excerpt:

[T]he middle years are an important period of learning, in which knowledge of fundamental disciplines are developed, yet this is also a time when students are at the greatest risk of disengagement from learning. Student motivation and engagement in these years is critical, and can be influenced by tailoring approaches to teaching with learning activities and learning environments that specifically consider the needs of middle years' students (MCEETYA 2008: 10).

In this policy document, the middle years and middle years students are the terms used to establish a category of interest in this paper. Also evident in this commentary is a deficit model of middle years students – being at their greatest risk of disengagement and the identification of particular 'needs' of middle years students. The educational imperative from the middle years specifically links to developmentalism, stating that:

... Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to ensure that schools provide programs that are responsive to students' developmental and learning needs in the middle years, and which are challenging, engaging and rewarding. (Melbourne Declaration 2008: 12)

Pendergast and Bahr (2012: 235) argue that this statement situates the policy as 'developmentally responsive rather than contingently and recursively relational; characterising young adolescence rather than particularising young adolescents; and aligned to a sameness curriculum rather than a difference curriculum'. In this way the policy document demonstrates how to effectively categorise middle years learners in ways that are representational of a sameness and are generally deficit in nature. This is not a new trend. In fact, Patel Stevens et al. (2007) explore four paradigms – developmentalism; pathologising; critical; and postmodern perspectives – available to understand young people drawing upon the meta-discourses of age

and stage. These paradigms are neither exclusive nor exhaustive, but typify the ways in which categories may be built and reinforced and create dominant discourses held to be truths, each of which brings a deficit view to the fore. Each of these paradigms presents a discourse of transition and becoming. However, Bishop (2012: 166) urged all people in the field of middle years education to make a shift 'from viewing each student as a person who is in the here and now, rather than a person who is becoming'. Again, this privileging of age/stage and hence transition and becoming, produces a deficit model of young adolescents.

In a further example of the use of labels as categories and the apparently interchangeable nature of the age/stage discourses associated with the middle years, the MYSA Position Paper *Middle Schooling: People, Practices and Places* defined middle schooling as 'an intentional approach to teaching and learning that is responsive and appropriate to the full range of needs, interests and achievements of middle years students in formal and informal schooling contexts' (MYSA 2008:1). The position paper has the following to say about young adolescents:

[Y]oung adolescents in the middle years experience a range of significant physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and moral changes. During puberty, young adolescents experience more rapid and dramatic hormonal and structural changes than at any other period in their life. The sequence of physical change is generally similar from one person to another, although the onset, rate, and timing of these changes are highly individual, often creating stress and feelings of insecurity for the adolescent. ... Apart from the first five years of life, at no other time does the capacity and functioning of the brain undergo such an overhaul. This affects the learning ability of young adolescents and their success in managing the emotional, social and moral challenges of this stage. Disengagement, alienation and boredom in school often peak in the middle years and this may lead to a decline in achievement (MYSA 2008: 1).

Pendergast and Bahr (2012) have argued that this statement provides a clear alignment with the notion that young adolescents should be regarded as individuals (adolescents) and not collectively defined (adolescence). However, there is a strong association between young adolescents, middle years, alienation and a decline in achievement. Again, a broad story line across the policy document suggests a deficit model is the dominant discourse.

In *Not a stage! A critical re-conception of young adolescent education*, Vagle (2012) brings together a range of authors

who challenge the dominant discourses of adolescence and particularly discourses of developmentalism that are traditionally used as a basis for much of the advocacy in the field of young adolescent education. Vagle's argument is that when developmentalism is elevated to fact and truth 'the young adolescent gets obscured by the developmental stage of adolescence' (2012: 12). Vagle and his contributing authors call for a variety of critical perspectives to be incorporated into middle years theorising, arguing that it is 'noticeably absent in mainstream middle grades education scholarship' (2012: 14). Bishop (2012) similarly concludes that there is a relative lack of critical perspectives in the field of middle years education in general, and that this has created something of a deficit for educators. Garrick et al. (2012: 261) concur with this view, revealing in their analysis of texts from students in a longitudinal study of a middle years teacher education program in Australia that particular discourses are produced and reproduced and appear to be 'locked into place as the pre-service teachers learn and develop within and through text available to them'. This text is consistent with the four dominant paradigms offered by Patel Stevens et al. (2007). Of interest in this paper are the discourses offered by the Middle Years of Schooling Association, as the lead professional institution involved with the education of young adolescent learners in Australia.

Methodology

This study explored how MYSA, as an organisation that promotes itself as an advocate of young adolescents, has represented these young people through its website, quarterly newsletters, and bi-annual journal over the last 10 years. The questions posed were: Does MYSA reflect what it promotes as its aims as an advocate for young adolescents?

Literature search strategy

A strategic review was undertaken with the intent of establishing the focus on and discourse relating to the 'education and development' of young adolescents (MYSA 2008: 1). The review included the MYSA website, all downloadable documents available on the website including the MYSA position paper, MYSA Curriculum rubric, available quarterly newsletters from 2006-2012 and articles in the *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling* from the last 10 years (2003-2012). All of the material was categorised according to the four aims of MYSA (i.e., informing, promoting, providing a voice, and research) and whether the material was positively (positive view) or negatively (deficit view) framed. The purpose of the page, item or article was determined by the researcher asking the questions: (i) What is the aim of the article? and (ii) How are young adolescents represented in each item, page or article? Although division into the

four categories was not always clear cut and there was considerable overlap across categories, raw numbers are not particularly relevant, but rather, the general pattern that was discerned. The framing position of the page, item or article (how young adolescents were represented) however, was more clear-cut.

Further, all electronic text (web pages, downloadable documents and newsletters) were analysed by the automated text analysis software Leximancer (Smith 2005). Leximancer identifies 'concepts' or clusters of related and defining terms determined by the researcher and then displays the concepts showing their interconnectedness and co-occurrence. Concepts are also clustered into themes (a collection of related concepts). This text analysis provided a clear view of the most frequent themes and related concepts being presented by MYSA. It also provided a visual representation of what and how MYSA was representing young adolescents.

Results and discussion

There was evidence of all four aims of MYSA being achieved through their online and published material. The overwhelming majority of material presented was positively framed and represented young adolescents as capable, resourceful and engaged in learning. However, a definite emphasis on particular aims could be seen within each type of publication (e.g., newsletters and journal) depending on the target authorship audience, target readership audience and criteria for publication.

MYSA position paper and Curriculum Rubric

The static documents (i.e., the MYSA Position Paper and Curriculum Rubric) were reviewed both in sections and holistically and classified as entirely informing documents aimed at providing a baseline of the organisation's position on the middle years in terms of people, practices and places. The position paper is positively framed and positions young adolescents as young people experiencing a wide range of physical, social, emotional and cognitive changes with certain educational needs including the promotion of creativity, curiosity, higher order thinking and life-long learning. The Curriculum Rubric was also classified as an informing document with its sole purpose being to provide a guide for evaluating the development of a curriculum in line with middle years principles. This document was also positively framed.

The MYSA Quarterly Newsletters

The MYSA newsletters, published quarterly, were analysed by classifying each article or segment within the newsletter into categories according to the four main aims of the organisation. However, after an initial review of the newsletters, three additional categories, namely, 'announcements', 'teaching resources' and 'student

Table 1. Analysis of MYSA newsletter content

	Informing	Promoting	Voice	Research	Student Voice	Resources	Announcements
%	16	23	2	0	5	4	50

voice' were added. The MYSA newsletter is structured with regular sections including a message from MYSA's president aimed at keeping members updated with the work of MYSA as well as national trends and policies, date claimers for regional activities and contact information for regional representatives and the MYSA executive. It was found that 50% of each newsletter could be attributed to 'announcements' (see Table 1, above) – that is, keeping members up-to-date with the organisation's national and regional activities and executive.

The decision to have a separate category for teaching resources was due to the number of articles that were published that did not promote achievements but, rather, were specifically included to provide ideas and examples of practice that were more generalised and not placed within a specific context. Examples include a review of recommended reading texts and suggestions for use for middle years students; ideas for reciprocal teaching providing a balance between theory (research literature) and practice of this pedagogical strategy; and the value of using puppets to enhance literacy. Although not placed within a specific context, some 'in-class' examples were provided in most articles.

Earlier editions of the newsletter also had feature articles informing the readership on areas of adolescent development including the brain, the importance of sleep and the use of technology. It was noted that a significant number of these articles were written by the same author and that only a limited number of articles of this nature continue to be included in the newsletter. Throughout the history of the newsletters there were also some more generic articles covering topics that, although not unique to middle years, were of significance to the readership. Topics such as standardised testing and the introduction of the Australian curriculum both have implications for practice across a much broader age-group than just the middle years but were discussed in terms of their impact on curriculum, assessment and reporting in the context of the middle years. In general, the newsletter articles reflect a shift from the developmental paradigm to focus on the adolescent and issues and contexts relevant to particular adolescents rather than adolescence. A small number of articles written by middle years students were also published on a regular basis providing a 'student voice' within this publication. These 'student' articles involved young people expressing their views on particular projects or activities such as the Year 9 Leadership Project and community engagement projects and their value to them as middle year students.

Each newsletter featured at least one article from schools and/or individuals promoting the achievements and efforts of individuals, classes, schools and communities in meeting the needs of young adolescents. Articles celebrating successful student leadership programs, community and parent programs and learning through service programs were included. Articles within the newsletter also served as an opportunity for teaching professionals to disseminate effective practice and, as such, also provided a voice for those who are committed and enthusiastic about teaching young adolescents. Articles in this category included examples in context using critical questions, pioneering the arts and sustainable education. These articles were typically positively framed and could be argued to be at the core of the business of MYSA as an advocate organisation. There was no evidence of research and the promotion of research within the newsletters.

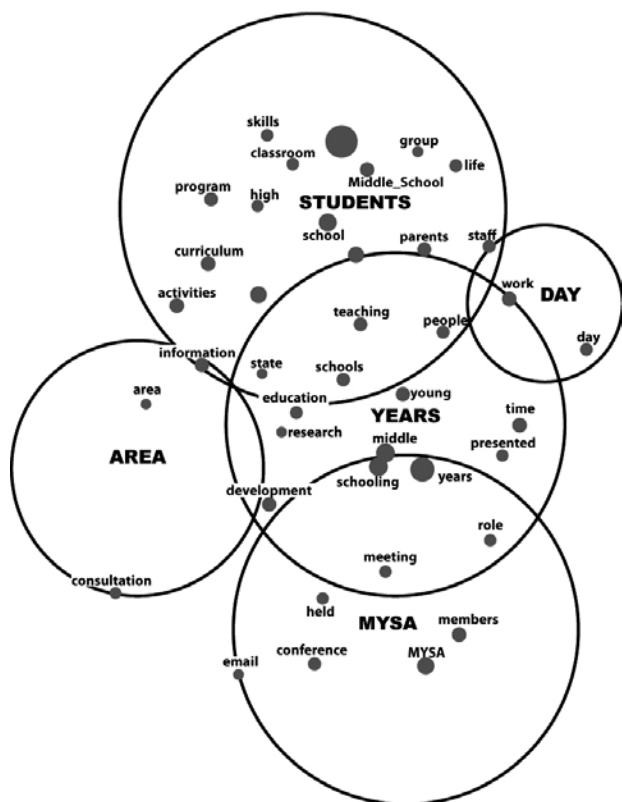
Leximancer analysis of electronic documents (Position Paper, Curriculum Rubric and Newsletters)

The main themes to emerge through this automated analysis were MYSA, Students and Middle Years with smaller themes of Area and Day, see Figure 1. The theme MYSA contains the *concepts members, meeting, development, role, conference and email*. The smaller theme Area with the concepts of consultation and area sits beside the themes of Middle Years and MYSA indicating a close connection in the text with the concepts within the MYSA theme. This inter-relatedness of concepts under the MYSA theme concurs with the findings in the hand coding of articles throughout these documents. That is, MYSA newsletters are the primary source for the dissemination of information of MYSA's activities and executive membership.

Within the theme Students, the main concept was students. This concept had its closest links (within text inter-relatedness) to the concepts of *middle-school, school, teachers, program, curriculum, learning and parents*. Other concepts closely linked were middle school, young, education, middle years and time. The concept *young* refers to both young people and young adolescents within the text. The inter-relatedness and co-occurrence of these concepts within these themes supports the overall analysis of individual sections within each document. That is, the nature of the articles is primarily concerned with informing and promoting the achievements and activities around middle years education. This finding is also supported through the

theme Students which contains the concepts *curriculum, learning, activities, program, classroom, skills, students, teachers, high-school, parents and group*. The clustering and inter-relatedness of these concepts highlights the organisation's focus on young adolescents and their education and the partnerships between students, parents and teachers. This aligns with the hand categorisation of articles within the texts.

Figure 1. Leximancer analysis of electronic documents (Position Paper, Curriculum Rubric and Newsletters)



The Australian Journal of Middle Schooling

The *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling* (AJMS) has been published bi-annually since 2001. The AJMS is divided into three basic sections. The first section is the refereed section which aims to publish current Australian and New Zealand research in middle years education. The main themes for research have focused on curriculum planning and pedagogy. Curriculum areas most researched are mathematics, literacy, science and ICTs [Information and Communication Technologies]. There were very few articles (5 out of 67 articles) that focused on adolescent 'development'. Three of these articles were focused on brain development and the implications for classroom practice with another two focused on 'physicality' and integrating physical activity into the classroom. Other research articles could be classified as a blend of research and promotion as most of these articles focused on reporting effective middle years pedagogy and practice. Recent articles have included research on classroom pedagogy, integrated curriculum, teacher identity and quality teaching.

The second section is the non-refereed section which includes articles that have a theoretical basis but do not meet the research depth and rigour to qualify as a refereed article. Some recent topics have included thinking skills in the middle school classroom and articles on gender issues around boys and education. Gender has been a repetitive theme throughout the history of the journal with at least one article on gender every two years.

The third section is a focus on schools that aim to promote the achievements of individuals and groups in middle years education as well as providing a voice to facilitate the sharing of examples of effective practice. Some recent articles in this section have focused on the implications of the introduction of a national curriculum, using Google, and managing transitions. There has also been a regular section on Book Reviews, which has included reviews of books and materials focused on middle years education and young adolescents. Earlier editions (2001-2004) also included articles written by students and State by State updates on the implementation of and policy around middle schooling across Australia.

The overwhelming majority of the work published in this journal is positively framed and is aimed at supporting and educating those involved and with an interest in young adolescents. The MYSA journal as a whole particularises the adolescent within a differentiated curriculum and acknowledges the importance of catering for individuals. This positive position is well supported with the range of photographs included in each edition of the journal giving a positive pictorial history that promotes and celebrates students' diversity and achievements.

Conclusion

This ten year retrospective analysis of the artefacts of MYSA provides insight into the ways the association has characterised the focus of its professional work. Importantly, the analysis reveals that while there is a tendency to utilise developmental discourses of adolescence, and to employ 'middle years' as a catch-all phrase, the understandings associated with these terms are not typically deficit in nature. Furthermore, these dominant discourses are balanced by individual adolescents contributing to the journals and newsletters, and there is typically a positive framing surrounding the categories employed. Our findings reveal that MYSA, unlike many other sources of information about young adolescents, does indeed serve as an advocate for young people in the middle years of schooling; and furthermore, when generalisations do occur, they construct young adolescents in positively affirming ways rather than subscribing to developmental notions of 'deficit youth'.

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Deserting

The Kelly's next door hadn't brought
corn bread for almost two weeks,
and Da hadn't caught a bird
for days. No-one said
what we were all thinkin', we'd noticed
the curtains at the Kelly's
and the other houses drawn
like we were the last to know. There
wasn't much said about anythin'. Nothin'
to pack: the pot and stool
were not needed where we were goin',
the shoe from ol' Dan the donkey
proved as worthless as our spare
clothes, thinner than the rags
we wore, which would be burned. Ma
held an arm around each of us
and as Da made the fire, we looked away,
took our first steps toward the aid
of the workhouse, where we'd be fed,
and worked so hard, there'd not be time
for anything or anyone else.
No one said anythin'.

TIGGY JOHNSON
FLAGSTONE, QLD

Hoping For The Best in Education: Globalisation, social imaginaries and young people

SAM SELLAR

The growth of knowledge-based economies is now presupposed by education policies globally and increasing the quantity and quality of education is considered essential for the economic prosperity of individuals and nations. In this context, promises that better futures await those who succeed in education exert increasing force on imaginations in the present, including through education policies that promote aspiration-raising agendas. Aspiration, optimism and motivation involve 'affects' (emotions) that education seeks to foster and through which contemporary governance and control is exercised. This paper contrasts Margaret Mead's analysis of the generation gap that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s with contemporary marketing industry descriptions of Generation Y and iGeneration. Mead presents an optimistic view of the experiences and imaginations of young people as forces of cultural reinvention, while the latter provides an instrumental perspective on the experiences of young people as an access point through which marketers can modulate social imaginaries. Drawing on Scott Lash's argument that social imaginaries are increasingly constituted as topological objects, the paper examines some similarities between contemporary marketing and educational strategies that target the imaginations of young people.

Introduction

Over seventy years ago Alfred North Whitehead (1968: 171) proclaimed that 'the task of a university is the creation of the future'. The future, as both a tacit sense of anticipation in the present and more conscious ideas about a time to come, animates the imaginations of many educators and educational researchers; we are generally sustained in our work by hopes for a better future through the enlargement of knowledge. This paper provides a critical reflection on contemporary education policies that attribute to education the function of creating the future and which seek intervention in young people's imaginaries. Optimistic attachment to the future has become a potentially self-defeating disposition for educators and educational researchers who seek to promote better futures for disadvantaged young people through their work. It can be hard to distinguish between injunctions to motivation, aspiration and innovation in contemporary governmentalities (Rose 1999) and critically-oriented educational approaches that appeal to hope, imagination and creativity. While sympathetic to the importance Whitehead ascribes to the nexus between thought and creation, I argue that, in our present historical moment, the future, in the name of which economically-rationalised education policies now promote creation, is a problematic site of optimism.

Central to my argument is the notion that conceptions and perceptions of the future are cultural and have changed

over the past few decades. Berardi (2012: 24) argues that the 'idea of the future [was] central in the ideology and energy of the twentieth century', which he characterises as 'the century that trusted in the future'. For Berardi, this faith in the future was inaugurated by the publication of Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto in 1909, and waned with the punk movement in the late seventies, soon after the end of the Bretton Woods system and the 1970s energy crises had paved the way for the emergence of a new economic orthodoxy and period of political reaction. Berardi provocatively asserts that the present generation of young people has no future. However, this is not a prophecy that we are amid the final events of history. Rather, Berardi argues that we are witnessing a spreading disinvestment in promises attached to a particular ideal of the future: 'Of course, we know that a time after the present is going to come, but we don't expect that it will fulfil the promises of the present' (Berardi 2012: 25). Yet, an intensification of future-oriented promise-making is now evident in the current nexus of economic and education policy, even as expectations for the future appear to be waning, and indeed perhaps because they are.

Understanding this intensification requires consideration of the cultural and economic effects of globalisation. Appadurai (1996) has famously argued that cultural globalisation gives new prominence to the practice of imagination in everyday life. The proliferation of transnational media technologies and dramatic increases in migration now expose us to vastly richer archives of

experience that increase the life possibilities we perceive as being available to us: 'More persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before' (Appadurai 1996: 53). For Appadurai, the imagination has broken free from the restricted spaces of art and religion and its new prevalence as an everyday practice, as well as the collective nature of this practice, has resulted in a deterritorialisation of cultural formations.

This deterritorialisation produces a sense of agency, a sense that the future can be different from the past, which can result in a reterritorialisation of imagination onto popular ideals of the 'good life'. This dynamic is captured in Appadurai's (1996: 55) assertion that 'ordinary lives today are more often powered not by the "givenness" of things but by the possibilities that the media (either directly or indirectly) suggest are available'. Social mobility through education is one such possibility, promoted in what Brown et al. (2010) have dubbed the 'neoliberal opportunity bargain': that is, the promise that more learning will result in more earning. This bargain apportions to the state the responsibility to increase educational opportunities and to the individual the responsibility to take advantage of these opportunities, in order to increase their value as human capital and their attractiveness to global labour markets. As Brown et al. (2010) argue, this opportunity bargain is sustained by faith in a future of inexhaustible, knowledge-based economic growth and prosperity, and in the creative, innovative and imaginative potential of young people to fuel this growth. However, this faith also produces 'opportunity traps' as educational expansion and widening reliance on human capital self-investment as a 'best bet' life-strategy intensifies positional conflict for promised jobs.

This paper focuses on changes during the past few decades in the role attributed to the imagination of young people in economic and education discourses. It extends from a series of recent research projects that have examined higher education equity policies that promote aspirations for university among disadvantaged young people in Australia and England (see Sellar 2013; Sellar et al. 2011). These policies have been widely critiqued for embedding class-based deficit views of the educational aspirations of people from low socio-economic status backgrounds and for individualising aspiration and ignoring economic and cultural barriers to educational success (e.g. Archer and Yamashita 2003; Burke 2012; Sellar and Gale 2012). The response has often been to rebut the view that people 'lack' aspiration and to promote the role of education in strengthening people's capacities to articulate and realise aspirations (e.g. Appadurai 2004; Zipin et al. 2012). This paper takes a different approach by examining changing conceptions of young people's imaginaries over time and develops a critical reflection on similarities between aspiration-focused educational

strategies that have an equity rationale and contemporary marketing strategies that target imagination and desire for more explicitly economic purposes.

The paper is in three main parts. The first section develops a reading of Margaret Mead's (1978) description of the generation gap in the 1960s and 1970s and her notion of prefigurative culture, where imagination-fuelled cultural transformation occurs in response to a break with past and present cultural formations. The second section briefly explicates Scott Lash's (2012) notion of the social imaginary as a topological object, in which the role of the imaginary in cultural de-formation and the production of contemporary subjectivity is emphasised. The third section develops a reading of two recent columns from the marketing trade publication, *Advertising Age*, to illustrate a shift from Mead's optimistic constructions of the imagination as a countercultural force to its instrumental representation as a site through which to modulate consumer desire. In conclusion, the paper argues that aspiration-focused education policies and programs and the contemporary marketing industry now share certain strategies for modulating social imaginaries to spur optimism about the future.

The Emergence of a Generation Gap and Prefigurative Culture in the 1960s and 1970s

Reflecting on a period of burgeoning youth counterculture on a global scale during the 1960s, Margaret Mead (1978) argued that a new generation gap was opening up, heralding a qualitative shift in cultural transmission and cultural change. Mead outlines a typology of cultural styles which include postfigurative, cofigurative and prefigurative cultures. In postfigurative cultures, which have prevailed for much of human history, a relatively stable archive of experience is passed down to younger generations and the future unfolds according to the image of the past. Cofigurative cultures emerge when cultural learning, or the imposition of cultural forms, occurs due to migration, conquest, intercultural exchange, technological change or other events that interrupt the transmission of culture from past to present. In cofigurative culture, learning from the experiences of contemporaries takes precedence over learning from older generations, giving rise to a generation gap. However, this is often short-lived and is likely to result in the institution of new post-figurative lineages.

Prefigurative culture, according to Mead, is the result of a qualitative change from post and cofigurative cultures. In the context of an emerging consciousness of a shared global space – 'planetary culture' – and increasing mobility, intercultural communication and technological development, Mead argued that the generation gap which emerged in the 1960s was unlike any before and created the conditions for a shift to prefigurative culture. Young people in the 1960s were best conceived as pioneers,

migrants in time exploring an unknown future:

Today, suddenly, because all the peoples of the world are part of one electronically based, intercommunicating network, young people everywhere share a kind of experience that none of the elders ever had or ever will have. Conversely, the older generation will never see repeated in the lives of young people their own unprecedented experience of sequentially emerging change. This break between generations is wholly new: it is planetary and universal (Mead 1978: 64).

In this situation, intergenerational communication was perceived by Mead to hold possibilities for a deterritorialisation of the imagination:

[T]he freeing of the human imagination from the past depends, I believe, on the development of a new kind of communication with those who are most deeply involved with the future ... That is, it depends on the direct participation of those who, up to now, have not had access to power and *whose nature those in power cannot fully imagine* (Mead 1978: 88).

Two aspects of this argument are important here: first, the notion that the extension of communication across global space speeds up cultural change and projects young people into an unknown future; second, that if the older generation can share power with the younger generation their explorations in time can exert a deterritorialising force on the human imagination more broadly.

Mead is optimistic about possibilities for the deterritorialisation of imagination and the emergence of prefigurative cultures. This generation felt as though they could, and ought to, imagine the world anew. This was a moral project. However, revisiting her analysis in the final years of the 1970s, Mead described a domestication of the imagination which had occurred as this generation of young people entered the workforce, during a period of economic crisis, and 'the grim business of making a living intruded for the first time on the children of the upper middle class who had felt free to choose whatever course they wished' (Mead 1978: 106). She also lamented that by the end of the 1970s 'we [were] without an image of the future that can rally our loyalties' (Mead 1978: 130).

To illustrate this change Mead contrasted two essays written by a young person: one penned in the 1960s and another 10 years later. The first essay expresses the collectively felt need to re-imagine the world, which is a defining feature of prefigurative culture: 'There is a mass of confusion in the minds of my generation in trying to find a solution for ourselves and the world around us. ... there

must be a better way and we have to find it' (Dickson, cited in Mead 1978: 74). In the later essay, this young person describes the individualisation and domestication of their generation's idealism: '[T]he visible display of our collective emotions quietly transformed into a personal conflict of moulding these ideals into successful and fulfilling individual lives' (Dickson cited in Mead 1978: 108). This process of domestication was not simply an ahistorical transition from youthful rebellion to adult responsibility experienced by individuals as they 'grew up'; it needs to be understood as part of a broader process of political, economic and cultural change.

It was during this period that neoliberalism was emerging as the newly dominant political economy (Harvey 2005) and with it came new forms of subjectivity, which Feher (2009) argues were conditioned by the reactions to the Keynesian welfare state of radical political movements and neoliberal ideologies. According to Feher, this new subjective form is that of human capital, in which the individual becomes focused upon increasing their economic value:

[F]or both neoliberal and radical critics of the 1960s and 1970s, the relationship that individuals establish with themselves — how they care about and take care of themselves — emerged as the privileged framework for political reflection ... In a way, they both hold on to the notion that "the personal is (the) political" — that the contest for the definition of the conditions under which we may appreciate ourselves is politically decisive (Feher 2009: 37).

However, while it might be possible to trace this process of individualisation to a shared dimension of countercultural politics and emergent neoliberalism, Feher (2009: 38) argues that the latter has since been thoroughly successful in defining this self-appreciation in human capital terms, while its critics have been largely unsuccessful in their efforts either to resist or moderate this definition. As a result, we find ourselves in a historical moment when the social imaginary of neoliberal globalisation has become dominant, particularly within global communities of politicians, economists and policy makers (Rizvi and Lingard 2010).

Prefigurative Culture and the Topological Social Imaginary

The concept of the imaginary has been prominent in the literature examining cultural change under conditions of modernity and globalisation (e.g. Castoriadis 1987; Appadurai 1996; Gaonkar 2002; Taylor 2004; Rizvi 2006). Rizvi and Lingard (2010: 34) define a social imaginary as:

[A] way of thinking shared in a society by ordinary people, the common understandings that make everyday practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy. It is largely implicit, embedded in ideas and practices, carrying with it deeper normative notions and images, constitutive of a society.

Here I want to extend from Mead's emphasis on figuration in cultural expression by drawing on recent theorisation of the social imaginary as a topological system. This approach rests on a broader argument that topological thinking, which has emerged from fields of mathematics concerned with describing connectedness and continuity, now provides an important lens for cultural analysis as culture itself becomes topological in its expression (Lury, Parisi and Terranova 2012). I want to suggest that Mead anticipated this development in her concept of prefigurative culture as an open-ended process; a shift from the reproduction of culture according to forms from the past, or from other contemporary cultures, to the deformation and open-ended becoming of culture. However, rather than the imagination acting as collective force of cultural deterritorialisation, effecting the decisive temporal break described by Mead, the topological imaginary functions as a site of modulation and control through continual de- and reterritorialisations.

Lury et al. (2012) argue that topological ideas are influencing cultural theory at the same time that contemporary culture is becoming topological. Globalisation, in the form of increasing mediation and mobility that compress time and space, and enables increasing comparison and alignment across time and space, is producing 'a continuum that not only enacts the scalar entities of the "local", the "national" and the "global" but also puts them in multiple relations to each other' (Lury et al. 2012: 13). We are moving from topographical understandings of culture as expressed in fixed spaces and through linear time, to a topological understanding and practice of culture as a multiplicity of spaces-times in relational self-transformation. For example, topological ideas provide a useful lens for understanding Sassen's (2000) argument that global cities in different nations are more culturally and economically proximate to one another than they are to other regions within the nation: topology enables us to conceive of connections and proximity between points that appear differently within Euclidean geometries. This distinction is perhaps best illustrated by the difference between a standard above-ground map of London and a map of the London underground system. The former shows the location of and distance between points, while the latter emphasises their connectivity without accurately representing distance or location.

Scott Lash (2012: 262) suggests that topology provides us with 'a new paradigm of figure and object that is beyond form: a process of figuration, an object that is

constantly in deformation.' Postfigurative and cofigurative cultures involve the transmission of established cultural forms, whereas topology provides a way of thinking about culture as figuration without form. Echoing the arguments of Mead and Feher, Lash also describes the fragmentation of modern subjectivities and the emergence of new subjective formations in which capital now accrues intensively as human capital:

This is the ... cultural world of our increasingly topological modernity. It is a world in which capital itself operates increasingly not through the linearity of the symbolic and the commodity, but through the logic of the self-organizing social imaginary and intellectual property. This is a world in which capital accumulates through the sort of individualization that is constituted when ... the topographical universal mind and topographical subjectivity, shatters into a million fragments like the exploding heads in David Cronenberg's *Scanners*. After which each of these heads in its capsule, in its individualized atmosphere, is integrated into now self-organizing micro-circuits of capital (Lash 2012: 278).

Drawing on the work of Peter Sloterdijk, Lash describes the fragmentation of a unified subjectivity constituted in relation to a horizon – the phenomenological perspective – and the pluralisation of subjectivities as atmospheres – a systems perspective. The topographical conception of the globe as a single fixed surface across which unified individual agencies are connected gives way to a thicker topological conception of proliferating, coupled, nonlinear systems. Lash argues that '[i]n our topological modernity [the] horizon of our finitude exploded: it is shattered into an infinity of atmospheres, in which we must constitute our fragile and plural meanings. In these atmospheres we both breathe and constitute meaning' (Lash 2012: 270). Collectively shared perspectives on an unknown yet optimistically anticipated future beyond spatial and temporal horizons collapse into more claustrophobic internally-oriented atmospheres, coupled together in nonlinear systems that are continually (de)formed by processes of semiotic exchange.

Linked to this transition is an evolution in the functioning of capital as it exhausts its extensive growth globally and becomes 'atmospheric': '[I]f capital has for centuries effectively accumulated extensively ... now it must accumulate intensively. ... Here capital accumulates as atmospheres themselves' (Lash 2012: 279). Following Feher, this atmospheric accumulation of capital can be understood analogously to the process of one's self-appreciation as human capital, in which one must now strive to cultivate valuable 'atmospheres' of talent, creativity and connectivity (e.g. Brown and Tannock 2009)

to enhance more basic dimensions of human capital that are acquired as specific skills and knowledge.

This topological conception of the social imaginary provides a useful perspective from which to reflect on the domestication of prefigurative culture as public spheres are replaced by interconnected, individual atmospheres. Postfigurative and cofigurative cultures operate according to a topographical model: cultural forms from elsewhere or else-when provide the template for cultural (re)production. Prefigurative culture is more topological insofar as it is characterised by continual de-deformation. However, the collectively felt imperative to imagine the world anew, which is at the centre of Mead's argument, has fragmented into personal projects of self-imagining and self-capitalisation, a proliferation of what Appadurai (1996: 33) describes as imagined worlds: 'multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe'. Following Lash, we can understand these worlds as atmospheres in a topological system fuelled by social imaginaries constituted through their connection.

The Modulation of Social Imaginaries through Contemporary Marketing Strategies

Current perspectives on generational cultural change in the fields of marketing and advertising provide an interesting contrast with Mead's reflections on the generation gap three decades ago. The description of subsequent generations of young people as Generation X, Generation Y, and now iGeneration, has been popularised by marketers keen to identify the defining cultural traits of these groups. Indeed, Howe and Strauss's (1991) influential generational theory underpins the work of the consultancy firm they founded to sell advice to a range of users, including marketers. Selling to a particular generation is presented as requiring knowledge of 'who' they are and this knowledge is a highly saleable commodity. Through a discussion of two recent articles published in the marketing trade publication *Advertising Age*, this section of the paper considers how marketers target the experiences of young people as sites through which to access and modulate social imaginaries.

The pages of *Advertising Age* have dedicated substantial attention to Generation Y since the publication of an editorial article in 1993 (*Advertising Age* 1993), which celebrated the greater openness of this generation to advertising and brand loyalty in comparison with Generation X. Generation Y is generally considered to include people born anytime from 1980 to the early 2000s. A search of the *Advertising Age* website for 'Generation Y' now returns more than nine hundred hits, providing some indication of the currency this concept has in the industry. A recent 2011 column, titled 'Summer Lovin': Four ways to connect with Gen Y this season, advocated for

the effectiveness of event-based, experiential marketing as a means to establish brand loyalty with this group of young people:

94% of Gen Y consumers say they would be more likely to buy a product as a result of a good experience at an event. ... But creating that "good experience" is no easy task. Gen Y'ers are the first generation that has grown up with the internet as a normal part of everyday life. In fact, almost half of those we surveyed have posted something (a photo, a status update, a Tweet) from or during an event. ... Marketers in all brand categories need to plan campaigns that connect with consumers ... and the experiences have to reach consumers' minds. Brand managers now need to think of themselves as "brain managers" (Horsey 2011).

This experiential marketing strategy provides a suggestive illustration of the way in which 'atmospheres' have become the site of marketing, as advertisers aim to connect a brand image with the general 'feel' produced by participation in an event. The columnist cautions against over-determining this association between brand and experience; rather, the aim is to facilitate an indeterminate and polysemic association that allows 'the consumer room to construct his or her personal meaning from your product or experience' (Horsey 2011).

Communicating effectively with Generation Y is presented here as a matter of carefully structuring events that propagate series of images across psychic and technological media. As Lash (2012: 278) argues, brands now operate as topological objects that couple 'with a range and succession of psychic and social imaginaries. These subjectivities, as topological spaces, are atmospheres'. Experiential marketing aims to strategically intervene at the level of the social imaginary, creating atmospheres rich with potential meanings that can be individualised as a personal relationship to a brand. One prominent example of this approach is the strategy employed by energy drink company Red Bull, which sponsors and creates extreme sports events in which its brand can be linked with the direct or vicarious experience of an adrenaline-rush.

While marketing to a particular generation is based on an understanding of the traits that supposedly define them, marketers clearly contribute to the identification and description of these traits. Just as *Advertising Age* announced the arrival of Generation Y, thus helping to define it in the process, another recent column from 2011 heralds the emergence of their successors – iGeneration (Carmichael 2011). The specific characteristics of this generation are designated by the 'i', but the 'i' is a floating signifier:

The "i" can stand for many things. Interactive, naturally: these kids were born after the rise of the internet. They're not just accustomed to it, like [Generation Y], they know no world without it. They're immersed in more media than any generation before them. ... The "i" can also grow with them. It could stand for their self-reliance (all about "I") or their independence ... Perhaps they'll be iconoclasts or idealists. Maybe they'll all just seem like idiots. It could stand for, well, something we haven't thought to apply to them yet. But however you want to fill in the variable, they're here. And now they're identified (Carmichael 2011).

Two points demand attention here. First, the 'i' is embraced for its rich association with a zeitgeist thoroughly permeated by the Apple brand. Indeed, this association precedes the identification of specific traits that differentiate this generation from its predecessors. Establishing the identity of a generation is most important, while the identity itself can remain variable. Indeed, the algebraic labelling of generations as X, Y or i implies this variability. Second, the columnist assumes that it is the role of advertisers to define these variables, to imagine who young people are. This assumption illustrates Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) point that marketing and communication industries are increasingly proprietary in relation to the creative and conceptual labour of contemporary societies. Not only do these industries seek intervention in the atmospheres that couple to produce social imaginaries, they also insert themselves into the recursive process of imagining who young people are, an instance of the 'looping effects' (Hacking 1995) that occur when the classification of people actively shapes who they become.

In both of these columns the experiences of young people are presented as sites of intervention through which marketing can connect with and modulate social imaginaries. In what Deleuze (1995) described as control societies, the disciplinary formation of culture according to past or present forms is augmented by the continual modulation of open systems. As Mead predicted, we have witnessed a certain freeing of the human imagination, and as Appadurai (1996: 6) has observed, this has moved 'the glacial force of the habitus into the quickened beat of improvisation for large groups of people'. However, this improvisation occurs in connection with new forms of modulating control, which combine easily with renewed senses of agency and possibility produced by cultural deterritorialisation, while redirecting desires through the juxtaposition of images and experiences across human-technological circuits and the ubiquitous promotion of strategies for accumulating capital intensively in order to create 'successful and fulfilling individual lives'.

Discussion and Conclusion

The preceding sections have contrasted Mead's analysis of the generation gap that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s with contemporary marketing industry perspectives on Generation Y and iGeneration, emphasising changing conceptions and operations of the imagination associated with the becoming topological of culture and the emergence of control societies. While Mead's initial view of the deterritorialising force that the new experiences of young people could exert on the imagination, spurring a process of cultural reinvention, the domestication she observed during the 1970s foreshadowed the more instrumental perspective of the marketing industry today, which views the experiences of young people as an access point through which to modulate social imaginaries. This concluding section of the paper reflects on similarities between this perspective and the approach of education policies and programs that seek to intervene in young people's aspirations for education.

A recent study of university outreach activities conducted across the Australian higher education sector (Gale et al. 2010: 98-101) found that the most prevalent aim of these activities was to build aspirations for university, just ahead of the aim to familiarise students with university and that on-campus visits (both extended programs and one-off visits) are the most prevalent types of interventions. The provision of such experiences, often during carefully planned events in which students attend lectures, engage in hands-on activities and receive complimentary sample bags or other materials, is a widely employed strategy for encouraging young people to imagine themselves studying at university. These activities share at least two characteristics with contemporary marketing strategies. First, the aim of the on-campus visit is to provide a 'good experience' that can be associated with the image and 'feel' of the university, and with a particular imaginary object to which a series of promises about education and the 'good life' may begin to attach. Second, the imagination of young people is considered to be a variable that governments and institutions have a responsibility to define. The experiences and imaginaries of young people do not function, in the logic of these approaches, as a site from which the older generation might learn or as a de-formatational force on culture; rather, experience and imagination are brought together in a process of modulation that aims to shape how young people view themselves and who they ought to become.

This is not to suggest that interventions of this kind are cynical attempts to sell young people an educational ideal. These interventions can be effective in making the idea of university study tangible and thus imaginable as a possibility, which is especially important for young people from family backgrounds where there is little or no previous experience with higher education. Without

such interventions, these young people may feel that higher education is not for them (Archer, Hollingworth and Halsall 2007), perpetuating inequalities of access to, and participation in, higher education. As such, interventions of this kind have a role to play in equity agendas that aim to increase the participation of young people from under-represented groups in higher education.

These types of interventions are referred to here simply because they provide a very explicit example of how equity agendas in education now seek to increase educational motivation and aspiration among disadvantaged groups as a means to stimulate social mobility and increase social wellbeing. Educational policy settings, promoted by influential international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), explicitly link these equity agendas to economic objectives. Fairer education is now associated with a better economic future for individuals and for nations. Governments increasingly consider educational equity to be an important contributor to a growing economy and this creates a certain consensus, for very different interests, around the convergent goal of increasing and widening educational participation. In practice, human capital rationales for education and equity agendas are both served by programs that modulate the imaginaries of young people with the aim to promote optimistic attachment to promised educational and economic futures.

There is reason not to be optimistic about these promised futures. As Brown et al. (2010) demonstrate, we can no longer assume the link between education and social mobility that made a difference for generations of young people who benefited from previous moments of educational expansion. In this respect, Berlant's (2011) recent work provides a useful diagnosis of the 'cruel optimism' that characterises hopeful investment in the 'neoliberal opportunity bargain' (Brown, Lauder and Ashton 2010). Cruel optimism arises, Berlant argues, as 'a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility' (Berlant 2011: 24). That is, optimism becomes cruel when the object or state of affairs that we hopefully aim toward prevents us from enjoying the good life that it promises. Cruel optimism may help people to persist in hope for a better future while their circumstances stagnate or even worsen. This situation is likely to arise for many as more and more people buy into promises that learning will equal earning, leading to conditions of credential inflation and reductions in wages paid for high skill work. It is important to reflect carefully on the extent to which the optimism that animates much equity-focused work in education – for educators, young people and educational researchers – is at risk of becoming 'cruel'.

In his brief comments on control societies, Deleuze (1995: 182) suggests that '[m]any young people have a

strange craving to be "motivated," they're always asking for special courses and continuing education; it's their job to discover whose ends these serve'. The argument of this paper is that this motivation is now crucial to the intensive accumulation of human capital and is driven by the social imaginaries in which equity-focused educational policies now seek to intervene. Those concerned with producing change in and through education must carefully assess the extent to which, in our contemporary condition, the future-oriented experiences and imaginations of young people are capable of bringing about social change, in the manner that Mead hoped they might, and whether alternatives to 'the future' and the human capital promises attached to it are required. This latter task might begin by embracing atmospheres of exhaustion (Berardi 2012) rather than aspiration, following Deleuze's (1995: 178) suggestion that politics in control societies is 'not a question of ... hoping for the best'.

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Blackburn – 1947

A simple place: blank walls, oak beams, no statues or stained glass to distract the faithful.

A confession: I am only here for a glimpse of my friend's brother, ten years older, aching handsome.

On the platform a Minister in striped suit, black tie, claps his hands then men appear, bend, lift, remove a lid

and a tank is revealed. A girl of fifteen, my age, is led forward angelic in a white shift.

The Suit bestows a disquieting grin, embraces her and takes them into the water. Grasping

waist-length hair he plunges her not once but thrice. The last time, overlong.

Rising she seems lost to us, mouth open, eyes closed, her dress a winding sheet.

Shouts of Hallelujah.
The child has repented,
her soul has been saved.

I'm left with nothing more
than her footprints on bare
boards and the dark water

shifting, settling.

LORRAINE MCGUIGAN,
BALLARAT, VICTORIA

Young People, New Media and Education: Participation and Possibilities

CATHERINE BEAVIS

The image of young people as tech-savvy 'digital natives' at ease in the digital world in sharp contrast to older generations has become almost something of a cliché, and characterises much public discourse around 'young people today'. However, in practice there is a wide diversity of interest, knowledge, access and opportunities amongst young people themselves, and amongst older generations. Yet it is also the case that technological innovation, globalisation and new media have profoundly changed the current social landscape, with implications at a number of levels. In education, there is a keen awareness of the need to respond to what Kress (2003: 9) describes as 'the revolution in the landscape of communication' of the present day, to young people's experiences of living in this world, and the ways in which their involvement in digital culture and technology may shape their approach to learning in school. While schools explore the potential of Web2 sites and technologies, and a range of digital cultural forms for formal teaching and learning, online commercial and public interest campaigns such as 'McCann's Dumb Ways to Die' (Australian Creative 2012) effectively capitalise on the potential of new media to promote powerful informal learning and appropriation in telling and effective ways.

Generational Difference and Identity

One of the most enduring ways of representing young people in contemporary times, in popular media and formal circles alike, is to characterise them as tech-savvy 'digital natives' (Prensky 2001), by contrast with a technologically clumsy or uncomfortable older generation. This pervasive dichotomy assumes a distinct and clear cut difference, 'equating generational difference with technological identity' (Ito et al. 2010), with 'a growing public discourse (both hopeful and fearful) declaring that young people's use of digital media and communications technologies defines a generational identity distinct from their elders' (Ito et al. 2010: 2).

In some ways this is understandable, given a context of rapid and unprecedented technological innovation, globalisation and change. Technology and globalisation do have material impact on the ways in which young people live their lives. They introduce new and different sites for play and new versions of the forms play might take. They reconstitute the nature of knowledge, and familiar forms of communication, and provide access to a wide range of information, connections, and opportunities available in on-line and off-line worlds. In Australia, digital culture and new media are interwoven into many aspects of young people's lives. Participation in online culture, whether through social networking sites, computer games, chat sites or whatever, provides a context for the construction of relationships and community, for explorations of identity

and the exploration and representation of self, with online spaces providing everyday 'arena[s] of action in which to manifest and organize displays of social competence' (Hutchby and Moran-Ellis 2001: 2).

It is not the case, however, that all young people are necessarily tech-savvy or digital natives or, if they are, that they are so in the same ways and to the same degree. Similarly, it is not the case that 'older' people are necessarily less technologically capable, knowledgeable or inclined. What is clear is that the experience of those who have never known a world without ICT [Information and Communication Technologies] and 'new media', and the technological nature of current times, means that much that has previously taken place using traditional forms now needs to be done differently. In educational contexts, this is particularly so. Challenges include the need to respond to the orientations and expectations of those growing up in this world, to reconceptualise pedagogy and curriculum to reflect changes to the organisation of knowledge, culture and society brought about by globalisation and ICT, and to find ways to proactively use ICTs – their qualities or 'affordances', and digital forms, spaces and cultures they enable – to support teaching and learning effectively.

Caution is also needed however, in generalising about location, access and availability. While there is a strong impulse to identify and categorise the kinds of experiences, skills, knowledge and understanding developed through

engagement with digital culture and technologies, and the cognitive re-orientations and literacy practices entailed, it is important to resist globalising claims about 'all' young people, and to develop more nuanced understandings of the nature of participation for different people, in different places, at different times. Technological access, or the lack of it, shapes educational and economic futures and possibilities (OECD 2009; UNESCO 2013). While globalisation, digital culture and ICT affect global youth culture across the world, the conflation of the use of digital technologies with generational divides, and the vision of young people as media saturated and savvy digital natives is more a feature of discussions in 'developed' countries than countries classified as 'developing' and outside the OECD. There is increasing emphasis on the use of technology for educational purposes, including interest in using mobile phones rather than other forms of digital technology in countries where high levels of technological provision and internet access may not be a reality. Significant disparities, nonetheless, continue to severely limit educational opportunities (UNESCO 2013: 12). In OECD countries, too, access to ICT, skills and opportunities are not evenly distributed. Existing patterns of inequality linked with gender, class and ethnicity tend to be perpetuated in the world online.

Young People and ICTs in Australia

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2012a) paints an interesting picture of young people's online engagement. For children and young people aged 5-14 in the 12 months preceding April 2012, findings include the following:

90% of young people accessed the internet, up from 65% in 2006 and 79% in 2009.

Of these, 79% of children aged 5-8, 96% of children aged 9-11, and 98% of children aged 12-14 accessed the internet during this period.

91% of children living in major cities and 88% of children living in remote and very remote areas of Australia accessed the internet during this period.

Internet access was as likely to take place at school as at home, with 'educational purposes' the largest reason given for use at home. Large numbers of children are using the internet in both locations – 2.3 million at home and 2.2 million at school in the period of the survey. 'Screen-based activities' comprised a significant component of their leisure time. Watching TV, DVDs or video remains the most popular activity, with 96% of children engaging in this activity. Other forms of screen-based activity, however, were also highly popular:

- In comparison with 2009, the proportion of children participating in screen-based activities other than watching TV, DVDs or videos (e.g. the use of a computer, the internet and games consoles) rose from 83% in 2009 to 85% in 2012.
- In the two weeks preceding the survey, children had spent an average of 15 hours outside of school watching TV, DVDs or videos, and 10 hours on other screen-based activities (ABS 2012a).

At the same time, participation in 'more active' recreational activities increased – skateboarding, rollerblading or riding a scooter up from 49% to 54%, bike riding up from 60% to 64%. Reading (print text) for pleasure dropped from 75% to 71% but still remained the third most popular leisure time activity (ABS 2012b).

This suggests a picture of growing familiarity with internet usage, but not a massive displacement of other activities or hyperbolic patterns of growth. Online activities undertaken at home identified in further breakdowns include, in order of popularity after 'educational activities' (2 million): playing online games (1.47 million); listening to music or watching videos or movies (1.43 million); downloading videos, movies or music (800,000); visiting or using social networking sites (700,000); and emailing (675,000). Significantly smaller numbers were recorded for using chat rooms, forums or instant messaging (281,000); creating online content (164,000); and using eBay, auction sites or internet shopping (163,000). Of particular interest here are the figures for 'creating online content'. While relatively fewer children engaged in this activity than in most of the others, this was also the area with the highest percentage increase in activity since 2009 (apart from undifferentiated 'other activities') for all age groups – up 21% for children aged 5-8, 14.5% for children aged 9-11 and 5% for children aged 12-14 (ABS 2012c). This increase adds weight to the view of online activity as enabling and participatory, while also serving as a reminder that not all young people are equally able or inclined to create such content actively.

Just as this data suggests that traditional leisure time pursuits such as bike riding and reading have not been significantly displaced, it also shows that, for most children, internet-based activities are an important component of their lives, integrated alongside other activities. The amount of time devoted to online activities, and the kind of activities undertaken, varies considerably. Panics about vanishing childhoods or the demise of book culture and print literacy seem overstated in the light of figures such as these. Rather, the majority of young people weave these technologies and their engagement with them into other aspects of their everyday lives, adapting and using them for their own purposes.

Similarly, as extreme distinctions between past and present childhoods become blurred, so too do sharp generational distinctions between 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' – between 'them' and 'us'. A parallel set of data on young Australians' involvement with video (computer) games – the *Digital Australia12 survey* (Interactive Games and Entertainment Association 2012) – found that in 2011, 94% of children aged 6-15 surveyed were regular games players, with 95% of Australian homes having at least one device for playing games. At the same time, 75% of games players were 18 or older, with the average age of a game player now 32. For children aged 6-15, playing habits were 'moderate', with 59% playing for up to an hour at one sitting. Eighty-three per cent of parents played videogames themselves, and of these, 88% played with their children. The picture to emerge, then, is one of considerable ease and familiarity with the internet and new media, but not one showing a strong 'digital divide' along generational lines.

Educational Implications

ICT and digital culture are widely recognised to have implications for education, and to raise both challenges and possibilities. Concerted efforts are made to anticipate trends and promises in the ways in which ICT might be utilised (New Media Consortium 2012; OEDC 2009) and to increase access and provision in both 'developed' and 'developing' worlds (UNESCO 2013). Interest focuses on a number of areas. First and most obviously, is the technology itself, and the range of hardware and devices available – laptops, mobile phones, tablets and the like. Second are the diverse platforms and spaces where activity takes place – sites such as Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, and games related forums and chat sites. A third addresses the ways digital culture is experienced, a fourth the ways in which knowledge and authority may be transformed, and a fifth, the dispositions towards learning that might be fostered through participation online.

Considerable research has been undertaken in education into ways of utilising the characteristics and possibilities offered by digital media. A particular focus is on harnessing the affordances of Web 2 technologies, and the dispositions and skills developed by young people through their engagement with online technologies and digital culture out of school. Another focus is on reconceptualising pedagogy and curriculum in the light of the ways knowledge and communication are reconfigured through globalisation and technology. The orientations argument is interesting. Access to technology, and immersion in digital culture, it is argued, develop new expectations and orientations towards learning – new dispositions and new views of matters as diverse as authorship, knowledge and authority; and of ownership and autonomy (Lankshear and Knobel 2006; Kress 2003).

Some (e.g. Prensky 2001) argue that computer-game playing, for example, has changed the ways students learn, with orientations and expectations to do with speed, consequences and feedback differently structuring the ways young people approach work in school.

Studies of young people's out-of-school engagement with new media provide an important source of insight and information about both new media forms and the kinds of literacies and learning they foster and entail. Studies of Web 2 'spaces', for example, foreground characteristics of presence, modification, user-generated content and social participation (Davies and Merchant 2009), with Lankshear and Knobel (2006) arguing that Web 2.0 'is best described as a developing trend and attitude' (Davies and Merchant 2009: 5). Studies of social networking sites and the ways they are used foreground qualities of presence, connection and community (Livingston 2008; Merchant 2012; Boyd and Ellison 2008).

Taking a different tack, Gee (2003/2007) looked at what might be learnt from observing young people's computer-game play in relation to the organisation and resourcing of education, proposing 36 principles derived from observations of videogame play. Examples include the *active critical learning principle*: 'all aspects of the learning environment, including ways in which the semiotic domain is designed and presented, are set up to encourage active and critical, not passive, learning' (Gee 2003/2007: 41); the *semiotic principle*: 'learning about and coming to appreciate interrelations within and across multiple sign systems, including images, words, actions, symbols, and artefacts, as a complex system is core to the learning experience' (Gee 2003/2007: 41); the *psychosocial moratorium principle*: 'learners can take risks in a space where real-world consequences are lowered' (Gee 2003/2007: 64); and the *committed learning principle*: 'learners participate in an extended engagement as an extension of their real-world identities in relation to a virtual identity to which they feel some commitment and a virtual world that they find compelling' (Gee 2003/2007: 64). Using Gee's notion of 'Big D' Discourse – 'a distinctive way of using language integrated with other "stuff" so as to enact a particular type of (however negotiable and contestable) socially-situated identity' (2009: 44), Steinkuehler traces the ways in which players of massively multiplayer online games such as *World of Warcraft* are engaged in 'a constellation of literacy practices', use language and other multimodal forms to demonstrate and enact their roles as fully fledged members of the communities within the game, and are engaged in high-level cognitive processing (Steinkuehler 2006, 2007, 2008).

A number of studies have explored the adaptation of such sites and cultural forms for use in school: as ways

to engage learners; utilise the affordances of these technologies to bring about 'deep learning'; teach with and about new media and multimodal literacies; and foster critical and creative understandings and opportunities with these media forms (e.g. Corio et al. 2008; Alvermann 2010; Willett et al. 2009). The current enthusiasm for games-based learning reflects increasing interest in the possibilities of using games engines and the capacity of video games to support learning in the curriculum areas.

As with all popular culture and engagement with textual forms, however, bringing leisure time uses of digital culture and ICT into the classroom does not translate easily or readily. Game play and the other digital cultural platforms and forms are socially situated and socially specific, shaped by the context in which they are played and linked in to a variety of individual and communal purposes that may have little to do with school. Further, in addition to the constraints imposed on the use of ICT and technology in the classroom by access and availability, and the need for such usage to be incorporated into existing curriculum and pedagogical and assessment regimes (or at least, to be congruent with them), it is also important to avoid assuming that out-of-school practices and values will be unproblematically transferred into the classroom. Effective use of digital forms and platforms such as these require teachers and education bodies to be sensitive to the widely varying levels of skill, interest, experience and investment different students will bring to the use of ICT and digital culture within schools.

Dumb Ways to Die...

Meanwhile, unconstrained by the formal parameters of schooling, the potential of new media and digital culture for informal learning has been actively utilised in advertising and marketing. One of the most striking examples of this in recent times has been the 'Dumb Ways to Die' campaign (McCann 2012), commissioned by Metro Trains in Melbourne, to promote rail safety – 'be safe around trains'. Launched in November 2012, the campaign appeared in a variety of contexts – newspapers, radio, outdoor advertising, train stations and Tumblr (Australian Creative 2012). The campaign centrepiece was a three-minute music video, in which 21 simple, stylised characters die through increasingly humorous and bizarre activities. The video has an infectious tune, witty lyrics, clean and streamlined animation, and a cute and appealing karaoke-style dance and chorus. It begins with a dandelion slowly releasing its seeds into the sky, then pulls back to show a round blue character rushing down the road towards you, its hair on fire, waving stick figure arms, eyes and mouth agog. One 'dumb way' follows another: 'Set fire to your hair/ poke a stick at a grizzly bear/ eat medicine that's out of date/ use your private parts as piranha bait'. Only the last three scenarios involve trains – standing too close to

the edge of the platform, driving through level crossings when the boom gates are down, and running across the tracks when a train is coming.

What is interesting about this campaign was its extraordinary popularity and visibility – the YouTube video 'went viral' with over 27 million hits in the first week of its release (B & T Weekly 2012) – and the use of new media to reach the target audience. 'The aim of the campaign is to engage an audience that really doesn't want to hear any kind of safety message,' said Mescall, executive creative director at the advertising agency McCann, and writer of the lyrics for Dumb Ways (Australian Creative 2012). The use of digital media to reach this audience was central to the overall concept, according to Head of Digital, Marino:

Our digital strategy leveraged the platforms most relevant to the target audience – teenagers and young adults – from the start of the campaign. The Tumblr page was actually created pre-launch to ensure the campaign made it to the front page of Reddit, in order to generate a strong viral impact extremely quickly. The website (DumbWaysToDie.com), YouTube and Tumblr formed the three main campaign platforms, with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest used to generate viral effect. We also turned iTunes and Soundcloud into media vehicles for the campaign (B & T Weekly 2012).

McCann released a karaoke version of the song, which was followed almost instantly by a mushrooming of DIY versions and spoofs, with users encouraged to create their own versions as part of the marketing strategy. 'We're now allowing users to create their own renditions of the song and thereby their own social currency, while further pushing Metro's rail safety message virally,' Mills of McCann explained (B & T Weekly 2012). The online campaign was supplemented by a range of resources, including posters and a booklet, to support the speakers sent out to schools by Metro. The campaign and its resources, however, rapidly gained a life of its own. A game application for mobile phones is currently under development. Requests for resources have come from Australian schools and internationally, with requests also coming from universities, television programs, other companies and railway companies overseas (Cauchi 2013).

Old Ways and New

While it is difficult to specify all elements of the campaign that have contributed to its extraordinary popularity (it has won a number of advertising industry awards for creativity [Australian Creative Excellence Showcase], radio advertising [the March round of the Sirens, in all three

award categories] and is the only Australian YouTube video to have been nominated as one of TED's Top 10 Ads Worth Spreading), it exemplifies the imaginative and creative possibilities of new media and digital culture for informal learning.

Web 2 characteristics such as presence, modification, user-generated content and social participation are all effectively used, as are connectedness and community. The pitch is intentionally laconic and low-key – young people are never told what not to do, rather, they are told that these ways to die are 'dumb'. The 'message' is left till the end of the video, rather than running all through, as is normally the case with mainstream advertising. The song was produced by Ollie McGill from the band Cat Empire, and sung by Emily Lubitz ('Tangerine Kitty') from Melbourne band Tinpan Orange. Modification, social participation and the invitation to create user-generated content are explicitly built in. 'People want to control the content and they want to view it through their own social media pages and non-commercial platforms,' claims Mescall:

You've got to go to them. Create a really interesting set of GIFs for Tumblr, and they will use that. They won't go to campaign microsite dot com slash whatever. You go into the places they're going and they will [interact with it] – because they want to take it, own it, put it on their Facebook page and share it with everyone they know, and say 'Look at what I did. Look at what I found'.

They want to bastardise it. They want to change it. They want to share it. They don't want to go to a place. And again, it's not an age thing, it's a psychographic. Everyone is different. There are 60 year olds who are living their entire lives online and there are 20 year olds who are closing their Facebook pages now and deliberately moving offline. Everyone is different. But it's important for brands... if they're not seriously looking at how to do this now, they need to very soon, because the old ways will be taken off them (Mescall 2013).

It's not just important for brands. In education, too, the need to address contemporary lives, contemporary media, and to build connections between education's traditional priorities and concerns is pressing. Doing so, however, requires an open and exploratory frame of mind, an awareness of the situated and contextual nature of learning, and a detailed and nuanced picture of the diversity of young learners, and of their needs.

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Doing the 'white rabbit'

The woman on the tram
 Sitting in the disabled seats
 Said 'I've done the white rabbit,'
 And I, thought she meant
 Something to do with sadomasochism...
 But realised soon enough
 That she was trying to say
 She'd been experimented on
 Again and again,
 In a cage,
 Subjected to treatments,
 For cosmetic cures
 That fashion dictates
 And she had to say,
 In her tone,
 That this was
 Not really okay,
 Not really necessary,
 'But you know, that's what
 Is done to bunnies like me.'
 On the tram, other commuters,
 Listened vaguely, but feel,
 That she talks too loudly
 About things the population
 Doesn't want to know.
 She is too passionate,
 Like a protester
 On parliament's steps
 Speaking through a megaphone
 To hostile police
 And parsimonious pedestrians.
 Speaking about how laws must change,
 That there's injustice that must be stopped
 And how she once hopped
 Like a white rabbit
 Into the hospital
 No one wanted to admit
 Was really a laboratory.

INITIALLY NO,
 ST KILDA EAST, VICTORIA

Youth as Rhizome: Music, Machines, and Multiplicities

STEWART RIDDLE

Sociological categories of youth widely used in political rhetoric and educational policy making are limited by the neoliberal discourses and humanist tradition within which they are constructed. Utilising a Deleuzian approach in order to trouble the very concept of youth itself affords opportunities to rethink youth as rhizome; unlinked from the traditional categories of age, class, race and gender. Instead, youth becomes an assemblage of multiplicities combining in radical and different ways to form a becoming-youth that is particular to this time.

Introduction

Categories of youth used in sociology have traditionally been predicated on the assumption of a stable rational human subject, which is the foundation stone of humanist rationalism. However, it could be argued that we live in post-humanist times (Braidotti 2008), where technology and our historicity require schemes of thought and figurations that might better address the complexities of our age, for both classical humanism and liberal individualism have been disrupted by the postmodern condition. As such, Butler (2004) describes how those terms we use to categorise and recognise ourselves as being human are not only socially articulated, but also that they might become (ex)changeable for other, perhaps hitherto un-thought of terms.

Perhaps at one point it was deemed useful to classify youth by over-coded categories such as age, race, class, gender and sexuality. As an example, the construction of 'generations' as a technique of labelling certain groups of people born within particular time-spans became a popular method for describing whole groups of the population in the second half of the twentieth century. Certain social, behavioural, emotional and cognitive attributes were allocated to each subsequent generation in an attempt to distinguish them from previous generations, and in the process the 'generation gap' was constructed as a social truth. However, such categorising often works to reinforce existing deficit views of youth, for example the assumed selfishness of Generation X or the supposed laziness of Generation Y. It seems that such overly simplified categories of youth such as grouping them into generations are no longer relevant – if indeed they ever were – for making sense of youth in the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, there is a need to trouble the very notion of youth itself in order to expose the category as a limiting

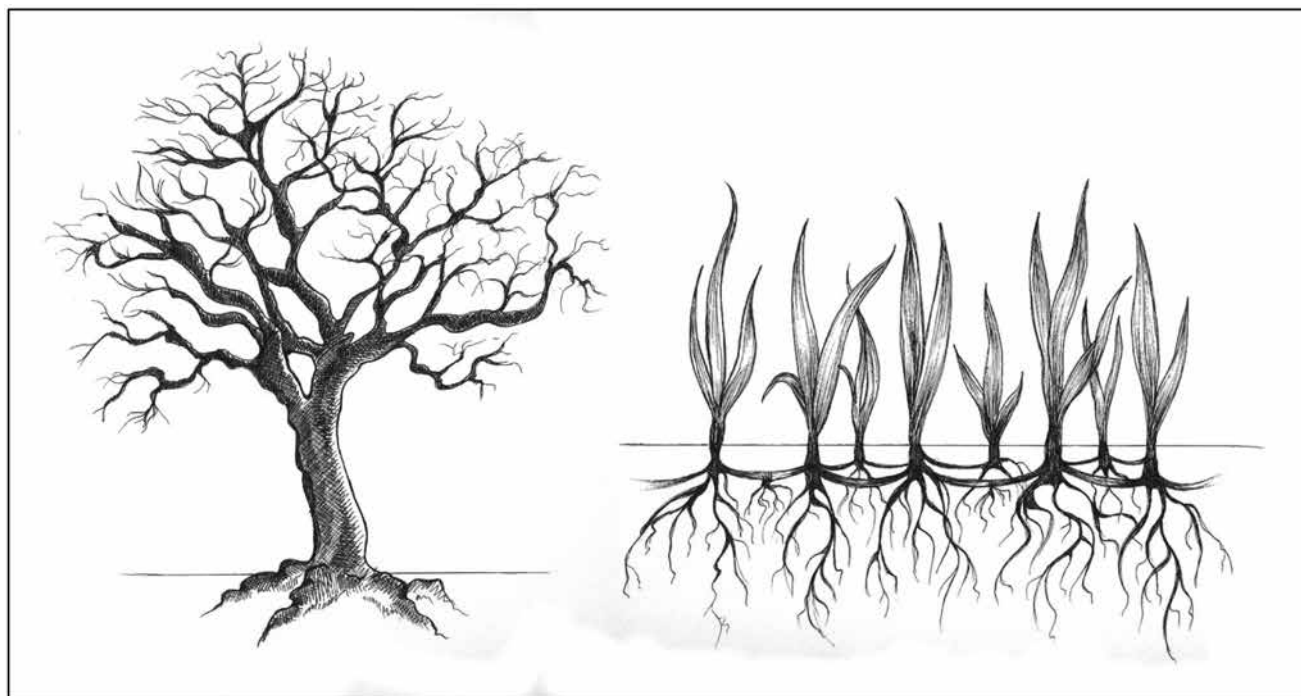
social construct. For example, one particular version of youth – adolescence – is a relatively recent invention, created by industrialising societies in the eighteenth century. Prior to the factory-production developments of industry, education and the family, there was no distinct stage between childhood and adulthood. The adolescent youth was a creation of the particular historicity of those societies. Coming into the mid-to-late twentieth century, with the rise of mass consumer culture and disposable income of increasing numbers of teenagers who were working in part time employment, a whole new series of categories of youth began to form around subcultures linked to music, fashion, delinquency and deviance from the modes of behaviour previously ascribed to youth. However, such categories do not rest easily in the heterogeneous and noisy milieu of the life-worlds inhabited by youth in the twenty-first century. A new figuration of youth is needed here, one which provides the capacity for radically reforming youth as a social truth.

Rhizome as a Figuration of Youth

One figuration that might potentially afford a radical rethinking of youth in the social sciences is that of the rhizome, proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) in response to the humanist arborescent model of thought that has dominated Western scientific thinking since the Enlightenment. The image of the tree is central to arborescent thought; characterised by totalising dualisms, both hierarchical and unidirectional. Such a model limits the capacity for stepping outside the binaries it creates as the overarching drive is for unity and reaching towards a particular endpoint, while simultaneously relying on a stable core of truth in the central trunk.

Contrasted against this image of the tree, the rhizome has multiple possible entry points, connecting and rupturing in endlessly changing and dynamic ways. The image of the rhizome is characterised by the principles of multiplicity,

Figure 1: The arborescent tree and rhizomatic grass



connection and heterogeneity. The rhizome offers no stable points of reference, as no particular entry or line is privileged as the truth or the reality as 'there are always many possible truths and realities that can all be viewed as social constructs. The existence of multiple entryways automatically implies multiplicity' (Sermijn et al. 2008: 637). The appeal of the rhizome is in its multiplicities, where there are no points or positions, only lines (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). The tree fixes a point, whereas the rhizome forms assemblages; inventing connections and ruptures that do not fix to any presupposed direction or uniformity.

In attempting to address how we understand experiences of youth, rhizomatic thinking allows for unbounding the subject from subjectivity, unlinking the self from traditional categories of age, race, class, gender and sexuality. Through this disentanglement of the subject from subjectivity, what we think of as the subject is seen as a series of relationships of 'affect' (feeling or emotion) that always exist in a process of becoming, where stability and rationality is given over to invention, movement and synthesis (Deleuze 1991). It is in both the repetition and difference of movement and affect where meaning can be made. The power of the rhizome is in its refusal to become over-coded, where categories and classifications restrain the boundaries of the rhizome. Instead, the rhizome is able to form a plane of unbounded multiplicities that are referred to as assemblages.

One assemblage that might provide more useful outcomes for realising contemporary social truths is that of youth

as machine. As a becoming-youth, an interconnected series of forces, relations and flows are created, forming particular effects of the self, where the machine of youth privileges certain flows while denying others. In this process, affect leads to effect; youth as cyborg-other, more than human, although the project of becoming is linked to the particular social forces and plays that inhabit the spaces where young people interact with their worlds.

Youth Becoming-Machine, Becoming-Musical, Becoming-Other

One particular aspect of youth-becoming that offers interesting possibilities for imagining youth as other than over-coded categories is that of youth becoming-machine-becoming-musical. Kielian-Gilbert (2010:199) describes the 'in-between and ever-changing/metamorphic differentiations of music becoming', where music offers a milieu for becoming that is expressive, productive and affirmative as flows of difference. There is power in musical affects, particularly given the importance of music in the lives of young people. Young people 'music' together, or as Small (1998) coined the term, musicking, the performative act of music – whether by playing, listening, thinking, speaking or seeing music – is one 'machinic assemblage' (Tamboukou 2009) that might provide useful insights into the lived experiences of youth in the twenty-first century.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) speak of the power of music as a creative and active force for deterritorialisation, in order to express what Tamboukou (2009) refers to as the self as threshold, a continual becoming and emergent

series of multiplicities, in a perpetual dance of power and desire. Musicking – the productive act of music, whether by performing, listening or through any other musical desire – can deterritorialise striated spaces, folding and smoothing and refolding, which provides its seductive and inimitable power in the lives of young people. Taking such thinking to its boundaries, Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 248) claim that 'the properly musical content of music is plied by becomings-woman, becomings-child, becomings-animal'. These 'machinic assemblages' form in endless arrays, territorialising and deterritorialising again, ever changing and always becoming-other. In this way, young people musicking allows for their becoming-musical, becoming-other than what would be expressible without music.

Musicking is performative, social, ritual, embodied, spontaneous and transitory, complex and dynamic. 'Machinic assemblages' of musicking take particular lines of flight, where various musicking experiences and events 'become ever-changing, interconnecting with other groups, and partaking of indeterminate borders, overlapping interests, multiple points of connection with one another, in an always open relation with an outside that deterritorialises and de-defines them' (Kielian-Gilbert 2010: 207). Take, for instance, the image of a teenager sitting on a bus or train, listening to music through headphones and a portable player or mobile phone. There is a physical connection between ears, headphones and the music machine. Lines blur and overlap; where does the human end and the machine begin? There is an actual immersion of ear buds into the outer ear, forming an unbroken relationship between ear-music-electric signal-cable-processor-brain-emotion; a complex assemblage of affect. Music and teenager combine together to form something other. The question thus becomes – what can youth becoming-machine, becoming-musical, becoming-other tell us about the life-worlds of young people in the twenty-first century that over-coded sociological categories cannot? The musicking teenager becomes much more than an over-coded category; an immanence that transcends arbitrary and arborescent boundaries placed upon them.

Musicking on the Edge: Becoming-always-Other

Szekely (2003: 114) explains that musicking 'like the "I", the cogito, the transcendental subject, the abstract individual, is riddled with fear, preoccupied with intention, consumed with context. It must, in turn, either psychologise itself into a motivation toward aesthetic value structures or become dissolved, albeit with discontinuous agitations, into a smooth surface – that is, releasing into, surrendering to, being seduced by the moment of the musical space'. In other words, such musical spaces form the possibility of musical becoming through musicking. This fits with

the Deleuzian approach to understanding the project of becoming as formations of planes of immanence, which musicking allows, in order to map hybrid assemblages that weave together to form life-worlds.

Hybrid assemblages allow for what Reynolds (2009: xiii) refers to as 'getting it wrong', where 'no one can grasp the full content of another's utterances, register or absorb all of its submerged resonances. So how much more is this so when entire cultures tune in to each other's transmissions?' Bringing the noise is part of the complex materiality of bodies where modes of performative expression, including music, allow for a transgressive (re)imagining of experience. Or mayhap, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 121) ponder, 'if a musician tells us that music does not attest to active and conquering forces, but to reactive forces, to reactions to daddy-mommy, we have only to play again on a paradox dear to Nietzsche, while barely modifying it: "Freud-as-musician"'. Musicking is becoming-other, post-human and otherwise.

One example of musicking as becoming-other is provided by Nancy (2007), focusing on listening as a philosophic act; the resonances of performance as made other through the musicking experience. Nancy questions what listening means and how the performative act of listening may create new assemblages of multiple particularities of the music performance. Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 6) assert that 'language is not life; it gives life orders. Life does not speak; it listens and waits'. Musicking requires the same, as the resonance of music form differences and repetitions akin to the expressive modes of multiplicities. The codes and modes of musical expression create new machines and mutations, diverse and resonant with the discursive materiality of difference. Thus musicking is becoming-other.

Braidotti (2008: 27) claims that we need to 'learn to think differently about ourselves and our systems of values, starting with the accounts of our embodied and embedded subjectivity'. There seems to be a need to challenge the image of lived lives as unified narratives by rational and autonomous subjects. Instead, there are possibilities for breaking up metanarratives to better understand processes of becoming, where subjects are never truly formed in any meaningful or territorialised and striated way. Tamboukou (2009) builds upon this, by describing how moving between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation provides opportunities to reposition though in new regimes, where the striations of categories are (re)made in ways that are more useful. It is through the deterritorialisation of the subject that subjectivities can be understood as the relational constitutions that they are. In the transforming poststructuralist youthful subject, messiness and vulnerability are understood as

processes through which subjectivities are made possible (Davies et al. 2006) both in terms of subjugation and governance, while also becoming liberated from the neoliberal version of humanism that continue to permeate education research, policy making and practice. Youth becoming-machine-musical is but one assemblage that might afford new spaces for imagining youthful subjects.

Youth in the twenty-first century are nomadic subjects; cartographic figurations, where the subject is co-produced in spatial and temporal interactions and exchanges (Braidotti 2008). The affective interactions of flows and forces work to form 'machinic assemblages', whether through music, the body, or anything other. Thus, the body becomes an assemblage that interacts with other bodies, assemblages and affects (Kofoed and Ringrose 2012), where (dis)connections and relationships between bodies form particular assemblages. As a result, the subject becomes radically immanent and intensive; 'an assemblage of forces, or flows, intensities and passions that solidify – in space – and consolidate – in time – within the singular configuration commonly known as the individual self' (Braidotti 2008: 35). Through the processes of becoming-musical-'machinic'-other, youth can be imagined in ways that move beyond the limiting boundaries of thought, opening up space to think youth anew. Given the tensions and urgencies of our particular historicity, it is about time that we look for ways to better understand the complex life-worlds of youth if we are to more carefully provide them with opportunities through the social strata of our educational and other institutions where we work.

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Last will and testament

He left her
the right to live
on his property
with his possessions
for the remainder
of her life.

TIGGY JOHNSON
FLAGSTONE, QLD

I Will Wear My Heart Upon My Sleeve

JOSHUA LOBB

Nathan stares back at his teacher. She's handing out the usual frayed school-copy books. A bland cover done in black and white: a man's profile in black, a woman's in white. Othello. Nathan didn't know it was a book: he only remembers it as a board game. He used to play it in primary school with his best friend, Andrew. You flip the white discs over to reveal the black. The game can change in an instant: white discs can dominate the board but then a careful placement from your opponent means they can all flip to black. They seemed to play it every weekend, Weekend afternoons were spent splayed out on Nathan's bedroom floor, playing game after game: best of three, best of five, champion tournament. Andrew would always win. He was a master of it, turning the tables with ease, transforming the whole board into rows and rows of black discs. Nathan's mother coming in and saying Why don't you boys go outside? It's such a lovely day. Nathan watching Andrew's wrists flipping disc after disc.

Miss Longhurst is trying to organise them all into reading the text. It's a difficult task: the row of students by the dusty windows are watching the PE classes jogging ploddingly round the oval and the girls along the back wall are focused on surreptitiously finishing the packet of Twisties smuggled into the classroom in Emma Scobie's bag. Beckie Hart, sitting next to Nathan, is contributing to the pencil graffiti on her desk: half-sketches of sunsets and oceans and other, more abstract squiggles. Eventually, though, Miss Longhurst is able to get everyone to all turned to the cast list. She asks for volunteers to read. Good luck with that, Beckie murmurs to Nathan, not looking up from her free-form rendition of the Southern Cross. To say that there's a lack of enthusiasm in the room would be an understatement. Everyone stares out the window or up at the clacking fans. Even Rachelle McCosker—usually so keen—seems reticent. When Miss Longhurst asked if anyone had read the play before, Rachelle was the only one who raised her hand. Trent Newling said Good on ya Rachelle, and Rachelle went all red. Nathan thinks she's probably decided not to open her mouth for the rest of the class. Nathan doesn't blame her: there's no way he's ever going to say anything.

Well, at the very least we need a—Rodrigo and a—Brabantio—the teacher is saying.

Brabantio, Craig Fitzpatrick guffaws. Those paying attention laugh along with him.

And an Iago. Come on, guys—he's the villain. He's a—a—really good character.

At that moment, Jason Moore stumbles into the classroom. Little runty Jason, late as usual.

Sorry I'm late, Miss, but Mr Agnew got me on an errand and he said I don't care what class you have, I—

And we have our Iago, the teacher says. The class laughs. Good old good-natured Jason takes it in his stride. I've never actually learned how to read, Miss, but I'll give it a go, he says. There's a bit less blank-facedness from the class. Monique Camillo—the American exchange student—says she'll do Rodrigo. Rachelle can't help herself and says she'll play Brabantio. Brabantio, Craig says again, but only he laughs this time.

The reading begins. No one knows what's going on. Nobody knows what 'Sblood means, or bombast, or epithet. Monique lisps over Thou told'st me thou didst hold him in thy hate. Nathan vagues out for a while, thinking about other things, but tunes back in when the class laughs over Jason's joke. Jason has to say Judge yourself whether I in any just term am affined to love the Moor, but also ad-libs Who wouldn't love the Moore?

It's a pun, Miss, Rachelle says. His surname is Moore.

Who wouldn't love the Moore? Jason repeats.

I can think of several reasons, Beckie says.

Nathan looks at Beckie's doodles: Beckie has obviously been thinking of the board game, too, because the stars have morphed into black and white discs. Nathan vagues out again.

Andrew was one of those right-place-in-the-right-time friends. By pure chance they happened to be placed next to each other in Mrs Hulbert's class at the beginning of Year Five. Andrew was new: his dad had been transferred from Dubbo. They had the same kind of pencil case: the one where you can slip in letters in

little plastic sleeves to form your name. N-A-T-H-A-N. A-N-D-R-E-W. And then they discovered they walked home in the same direction: cutting through the infants' school oval and jumping the metal fence. And then they discovered they both loooooooved *Dr Who*. And then they were best friends.

There's more laughter in the room. Jason has had to say his master's ass and Miss Longhurst has tried to placate the riot by explaining that an ass is a donkey, which just seems to make matters worse. Nathan, out of force of habit, doesn't laugh: he's learned to keep a neutral face on these kinds of topic. But he does remember watching *Dr Who* one night with Andrew and talking about Harry Sullivan's bum. Andrew was staying over and they were both in their pyjamas and dressing gowns, eating dinner. Nathan's mum had put down the special eating mat and they'd only got a little bit of mashed potato on it. They were sitting as close to the TV as possible for maximum scare factor. It was a repeat, of course. The Doctor and Sarah Jane and Harry for some reason or other had to crawl down a tunnel and Harry was wearing these grey slacks and Nathan said—without thinking about it—Look at Harry's big bum. And Andrew said Do you think he's wearing underpants? And then they kept watching.

Miss Longhurst has taken this opportunity to try and summarise the plot so far. She rubs clean a space on the board. As always, the duster doesn't quite do the trick and it leaves a cloudy residue. Into the cloud she scribbles, messily, Scene 1: Rodrigo/Iago.

So, what's going on? she asks. What are these men talking about?

Each other's arses, Miss, Trent replies. Nathan's face does not move a muscle.

They're talking about Othello, Monique says, adjusting her blonde fringe.

They're talking about duplicity, Rachele says.

Everyone says Oooooooooo at Rachele's big word. Even the Twistie-eating girls join in, spraying a little.

Exactly right, Miss Longhurst says. Iago says *I am not what I am*. He says—read ahead, Jason?—yep, just over to the next page—he says—just read the bottom of that speech, Jason?

Jason, scratching a pimple at the back of his neck, says *I will wear my heart upon my sleeve for daws to peck at*.

Into the cloud on the board, Miss Longhurst adds DAW. No one bothers to write it down.

Anyone know what a daw is?

It's pretty obvious, says Beckie. If it pecks, it's a bird.

Miss Longhurst starts to come over to Beckie and Nathan's desk. Beckie leans over the desk to cover her artwork.

Miss Longhurst says: Exactly right—um—sorry, I don't remember your name.

Murgatroyd, says Beckie.

It's Beckie, says Rachele.

I was being duplicitous, says Beckie.

I told you it was a good play, the teacher says.

On one of the nights Andrew stayed over, Nathan couldn't sleep. He lay in his bed, looking up at the glow-in-the-dark stars on his ceiling. Andrew was lying on the trundle bed. Nathan was thinking about crawling down a tunnel with Andrew. He was thinking about underwear. About lying on top of Andrew.

The class settles down a bit. Jason, now really going for it, playing up the duplicity of Iago, says, with ironic gusto, *I must show out a flag and sign of love*.

I'll write too, said Nathan.

He sits in the classroom, not thinking of anything.

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The Watchdog

JERI KROLL

Brett's mother washes a dish and shakes off the water, flinging drops onto the window. The fading sun makes them flare like a sparkler before a cloud shoulders past the sun, darkening the room. Brett tilts back in his chair and closes his eyes. He hears the dog lumber up the back steps, push against the screen door and shuffle into the kitchen. There is a scraping of nails on lino, then a plop.

Brett's mother turns to wipe her hands on a tea towel and trips over the dog. 'Jesus Christ! Get up, you lazy bugger.' She prods him with a toe. The dog lifts his head but doesn't budge. He wags his tail, sweeping breakfast crumbs across the floor.

She keeps her toe in his side until the dog puts his weight on his front legs, trying to lever up his rear end.

'Jeez, Mum, why don't you do something about Barney?'

'He's all right. God knows, he must be the way he eats.'

The Labrador's tail sways uncertainly at the raised voices. At fourteen, his muzzle is white, his eyes gummy, as if he were just coming out of deep sleep.

The front door whacks against its frame and footsteps tramp towards the kitchen. You can always tell when the old man's home, Brett thinks.

'What's for tea?' Brett's father dumps his lunch box on the table.

'Lamb's fry,' his wife answers without looking up from inside the refrigerator.

'Bloody organs!' Brett slouches in his chair.

'You'll eat it and like it,' his father says, pushing past his wife into the fridge.

'Bad day, Len?' she asks, backing out with a packet. She carries it to the table, unwraps it and slices the liver into strips. Then she nods at Brett. 'When you start paying the bills, maybe I'll ask what you want.'

His stomach quivers. On the yellow plastic the red wine-coloured mess looks like sick streaked with

blood. 'Crayfish for me,' Brett says as he lays his head on his hands.

'I'm home two minutes and all I hear are complaints. Go get a job after school if you want to eat like the high flyers.' His father reaches the table, puts down a beer, lights a smoke and inhales.

'I've tried. There aren't any.'

'You should be out looking now instead of getting in your mum's way.'

'I'll get a job. It just takes time.' Brett raises his head and then realises he's been sucked in again.

'Eleven years of school and what does he have to show for it?' His father props his weight against the sink and surveys his son.

'Don't worry about me. I'll finish the year, and then I'm off.'

'I still haven't heard what you're gonna do, let alone how you'll pay room and board.'

'Anything I can get. I told you.' Brett's words sound unreal, as if he's debating in school. Three reasons capital punishment is a good idea. Or a bad idea. Or a 'Maybe in some cases' idea. Hell, that's easy. Someone murders someone, they die. But it isn't so easy when the scenario is about you. 'Besides, I can always go on Job Search.'

'Your cousin Ray's on that. It's not much,' his mum says as she lifts a frying pan out of a cupboard.

'Government bullshit.' Her husband swigs the last of the beer and grabs another. The top clicks off like an exclamation point. 'You'd better listen, lad. Handouts won't keep you forever.'

'I'm gonna watch the box.' Brett scrapes back his chair and retreats to the lounge.

His younger brother Andy is watching cartoons, lying in the half-dark room on the floor, his head close to the electric fire. Brett reaches past him for the remote on the coffee table.

'Hey, leave it.'

'Come on, Andy. Let's have some music.' Brett wants to lose himself in a hypnotising beat.

'I was here first.'

Brett keeps his hand on the remote as his brother pushes himself onto his elbows and yells, 'Mum, Brett's hassling me.'

'Leave your brother alone, Brett. I don't have time for that silliness,' she calls from the kitchen.

'Jeez,' Brett blows out as he backs away to the couch. 'A bunch of mindless mutants in this house.'

Barney wanders in and stumbles past Andy to collapse in front of the heater. Brett stretches and shuts his eyes. After a moment, he turns on his side and drags a pillow over his ear. The television babbles on, its squeals rising above the drone of the rain. Rain? Brett hears it hitting the gutters. It's another sodden winter evening. He can't go out. There's nowhere to go. The lounge's stale air makes him feel as if he's trapped in the school sick room.

'God, that dog pongs,' Brett says to no one in particular.

'He can't help it.' Andy's voice whines above the soundtrack.

'He's old, Andy, he stinks of death.'

'You're weird, you know that? Anyway, he isn't that old,' Andy says, his eyes never leaving the screen.

'And how would you know that, dickhead? In dog years, he's about a hundred. If we were living in England, he'd get a letter from the Queen.'

'Shut up. I wanna watch.' Andy flicks his brother the finger.

'He should be in a home,' Brett goes on. 'Look how he drools – and all over you.' He slides down from the couch and pushes Andy into the dog.

'Get off!' Andy flings his arm back as his brother clutches his foot. In a moment, they're wrestling on the carpet, half laughing, half grunting. Someone kicks Barney in the jaw. He yelps as he clatters against the electric fire. Then he scoots back, wobbles up and slinks behind the couch.

'Stop it, you!' Their father storms in and hauls Brett away by an arm. 'You'll wreck the place. Don't you have anything to do? Like from school?' he says, facing him.

Brett pulls against his father without actually disengaging his arm. He knows not to do anything that

asks for a real fight. 'We don't get much homework. Anyway, it's Friday.'

Barney's head appears from behind the couch. He surveys the scene, takes three steps and stops, his tail asking: Good dog? Bad dog? Good dog? Bad dog? No one notices, so he creeps back to collapse by the heater.

'No homework? You're not doing it, more like. Get to your room.' He tosses Brett's arm away.

Brett retreats now that an order has been given but stops as he reaches the doorway. 'Why don't you get rid of the mouldy carpet?' He points at the dog.

'What on earth's going on?' His mother stands in the doorway, pointing a greasy spatula.

'Brett says we should get rid of Barney.' Andy raises his face to her.

'Why don't you put him out of his misery, Mum? He's almost blind. All he does is eat and sleep.' Brett tries to sound reasonable.

'We've had him since you were a toddler,' she answers, glancing down. 'And we love him.'

'I know, I know.' He's heard the story umpteen times. How his mum and dad took him to the Central Market in the city. They'd parked Brett's pusher in front of the pet store window so he could watch the puppies. When his parents tried to move on Brett screamed as if he were being skinned alive. Then the owner came out and put a furry ball into Brett's lap – bloody clever if you ask me, his father said – because they ended up buying the golden sook. Brett wouldn't let go. And after all, a Labrador would be good protection where they lived.

'Remember when we got him, Len?' Brett's mum asks.

'You'll never let me forget,' he shakes his head, but smiles.

'He's bloody worse than Pop,' Brett breaks in, 'and you put him in a home.'

'Who are you to talk about Pop?' Len wheels around. 'I didn't see you do much with him when he lived here.'

'Was I supposed to stay home from school to keep him company? Anyway, Barney was here. He's the watchdog.'

His father's hand shoots out and knocks Brett in the chest, making him gasp and topple against the wall.

'A real job would teach you a thing or two, lad.'

Brett narrows his eyes. He almost enjoys this

feeling of powerlessness, when he isn't responsible any more, when his father blows out of control.

The jab throbs, but Brett isn't going to let his father know. 'I'm still in school, remember?'

'I'm not the one forgetting that, mate.' His father takes a step forward.

'If I can't get a job at the end of the year, I'll kill myself. Okay? I won't cost you a dollar.'

Brett braces for the reaction, but his father stops as he's about to take another step and just stands, inhaling. Then he realises he needs a cigarette and rummages in his pockets.

Taking advantage of the lull, Brett pushes off the wall, but he can't resist saying, 'Some day that dog is gonna catch on fire. He'll probably burn the whole house down. Then we'd all be dead.'

He slams the door of his room, his heart vibrating with it. The streetlight's glow illuminates a poster of Challenger over his brother's bed. Brett wonders why astronauts don't go crazy cramped inside a capsule. What do they know that the rest of us left here don't?

Brett throws himself onto his bed. He doesn't want to think. He can't think anyway. His English teacher said as much. 'You can't think, can you? Don't answer that,' he'd snapped before Brett could counter with some smart remark. He'd said that the lot of them had no...What was it? Vision. Jeez, they could all see well enough. The school was a dump. His Maths room had a hole in the blackboard that had been there since first term. And they were on their third Maths teacher. The last one had gone on stress leave. Can't blame him, Brett thought. I'd get out of the place if I could. God, would he ever earn any money? He'd been to the local supermarkets. Nothing but night fill jobs left. And Maccas wanted real juniors, who'd work for next to nothing. But when he left school, he wouldn't end up like his dad. How long had he slogged his guts out at the factory and now he might be stood down. 'Cut off our balls and then shrink what's left,' his father complained before drinking beer all night.

Brett isn't going to live on handouts either. He'll kill himself first.

He sits up and sniffs. The room smells of dog. He's told Andy not to let Barney climb on his bed. He'll kill the little shit. Just his luck to be sharing a room with a ten-year-old.

The phone rings during tea. 'You can look after Andy,' his mother says, 'We're going for drinks at your aunt's. Okay?'

He shrugs. He isn't doing anything anyway. His

girlfriend, Kristie, dropped him for a bloke with a car. Friday night. Friday again. Rain. Rain. And more rain.

Later, while Brett is scrounging around for sweets, his mother comes into the kitchen. In a black skirt and blue jumper, she almost looks pretty again, he thinks. She inspects her hair in a smudged mirror on the wall.

Brett's father hustles in, wearing a flannel shirt and clean jeans. 'We're late, come on,' he urges, 'you look good enough. We're only going to your sister's.' Then he turns to Brett. 'Try to stay out of trouble, okay? Your mum and I need a night off.'

'Don't let Andy stay up past ten. He has Kanga Cricket tomorrow,' his mum says as she brushes Brett's cheek.

After his parents leave, Brett scoops the last of the vanilla ice cream into bowls, slices in a banana and crushes peanuts over the top.

Andy is delighted. 'Hey, it's like a party. Can I have a cherry on top?'

'Sorry, mate. No cherries. We'll just have to...Wait a minute.' Brett dashes to the kitchen and finds a jar of pickled pearl onions at the back of the fridge. He spoons two into a dish, grabs a bottle of red food colouring and pours some over the onions.

When he returns the room is dark, except for the TV's glare and the heater's flush. The dog is snoring, his back almost touching the bars. Brett drops a pink onion onto Andy's ice cream.

'What's that?' Andy looks suspicious.

'You've seen them selling chilli chocolate. Sometimes spicy can bring out sweet. Close your eyes and use your imagination. You've got one, haven't you?'

At 10:00, Brett marches his brother to the shower. When Andy returns in his pyjamas, Brett lets him watch another show before he says, 'Bed, mate. Now. If you're up when they get home, we're both done for.'

'You sound just like Dad,' Andy complains. He slides over to kneel by Barney and begins to stroke his sides. 'Can the dog really catch on fire, Brett?'

'Don't be a dickhead. Come on, I'll tuck you in if you want.' He lunges for his brother. 'Does little baby want to be tucked in?' Andy laughs, racing off. 'No way, pervert.' Brett catches him at the door, sweeps him up and tosses him onto his bed.

Back in the lounge, Brett drifts into a rerun about terrorists taking over an office block. But he forgets about the rain. On the screen trucks explode, cars carom into walls, machine guns splinter hundreds of windows. The

hostages are paralysed by fear, but it energises the hero. Brett's heartbeat keeps pace with the action. For a moment he surfaces from the movie. The room smells like smouldering grass. Then suddenly the roof of the building erupts in flames. Helicopters swing away, people flee, screaming. Finally, the terrorists are dead. The hero limps out with his arm around his woman.

After the credits have finished, Brett lies there, tingling as if his body has gone to sleep. He's ready to wake up. But for what? It's late. He has no money. And he needs to watch his brother.

It isn't raining now, but smashing down. He stands and peers out the window. Shards of glass are falling, as if all the windows in the neighbourhood have shattered. Without looking, he knows that the drains are overflowing, the streets awash with leaves, Coke cans, condoms and lolly wrappers. There's no place to go but bed.

'Come on, Barney. Up and out.' He turns and nudges the Labrador with his foot. 'Come on, dog. Bedtime.'

He bends down and his nostrils dilate. 'Jeez, the bloody dog's on fire.' He thrusts the heater away from Barney's back and rolls him over. The dog doesn't move. His hair is singed, grey against the gold, a patch tattooed with parallel bars. Smoke drifts in front of Brett's face.

He rises, switches off the heater at the power point and swings back. 'Barney. Barney?' He kneels to pick up the dog's head. The eyelids are closed. He places his hand over the muzzle. The nose is warm and dry. Brett sits cross-legged and shifts Barney's head into his lap. He doesn't think of anything then, just inhales the burnt edge of the air, lets himself feel the silkiness of the dog's coat, the body nestled against his thigh. And the rain, the incessant rain, which is inside him now too. It slides out as he whispers, 'It's okay, Barns. Don't worry. The bloody fire's out'.

Author

Professor Jeri Kroll is Dean of Graduate Research at Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia. Her most recent book is *Research Methods in Creative Writing*, co-edited with Graeme Harper. Her *New and Selected Poems* is due later in 2013. Her research interests include contemporary poetry, practice-led research and cross-genre adaptation.

The Bridge I Must Walk Across

Is this what it means to be lost?
Stuck inside my skin —
unable to shed it, unable to grow another —

I am between desolations:
between the man I have been
and the man I must become.

My life's stories are in flames,
becoming black smoke, ascending.
Who will speak now the tales of the ancestors,

who will listen, who will hear?
Who will be guardian of their old ways,
who will tend to their burial grounds,

calm them in their restless prowling?
I am a vessel for what I carry, untranslatable,
legacies it has taken a lifetime to learn:

who will pour me out, who will drink me?
Who will read to me this new book
of the night sky, its panoply of trembling stars?

Who will decipher the strangeness all around,
who will gather all the broken shards?
How can I discard myself, all that I am?

I am becoming a stranger inside my skin,
my children becoming
the bridge I must walk across.

*DAVID ADES
PITTSBURGH, USA*

Childhood

PAUL WILLIAMS

'Stop it! Stop it!'

Arthur, Barry, Hank turn in unison, but when they see me, they laugh like cane toads and turn back to the task at hand. Arthur's aim is wide, but Barry's is deadly accurate. One pebble hits the tree trunk directly below the nest. Another whistles through branches and clatters on the bicycle shed roof.

'Wish I had my BB with me,' says Barry.

The other kids are watching. Laughing even. I am truly the alien here. No one else thinks it is an atrocity to kill baby birds in a nest.

'I'll report you. You can't do that. You can't. Stop it now!'

I have no power. Who will I report to? Their parents who buy them guns and encourage them to shoot small animals? The headmaster who drowns his cat's kittens at birth because there are too many of them? My father who admits he burned grasshoppers with a magnifying glass when he was a child?

Hopeless.

But I cannot stand by and do nothing. A fire burns in my chest.

It is Hank's stone that hits the nest. The crowd cheers. Down it comes, tumbling through leaves, hitting a branch, overturning. Out fall two baby currawongs, all beaks and claws and flapping grey feathers. They hit the gravel path hard. The mess of sticks follows. I rush to them, kneel to pick them up, I know what the boys will do if they get to them. One bird's wings sticks out horribly, and blood dribbles from the other's head. I scoop them up in my handkerchief and cushion them in my satchel between towel and swimmers.

The boys have caught up with me.

'Cockroach!' Arthur grabs for my satchel.

'Go away! Leave them alone.'

Barry kicks out at me. If they could, they would smash the birds' heads in. I have seen it before with the baby miners.

'Tree-Hugger!'

'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me.'

It's childish. I don't know why I say it. It is what little kids say when they have no power. And it's not true: of course words harm you. Words have deformed me; words have crippled my life.

'Well then,' says Hank, 'we'd better use sticks and stones then.'

I clutch the satchel in one hand and ride fast up the dirt track from the school bicycle shed, but do not get far when a pebble hits me in the back, then another, and then one smacks me bang on the side of my head. I pedal hard, steering with one hand, trying to keep the satchel steady.

'Gottim! Gottim!'

When I am out of range, I call back: 'One day the animals will rise up against you. You'd better make friends with them now because on that day... on that day...'

Their laughter follows me all the way up the hill.

*

'Boys will be boys,' my father says at dinner that night. 'No, Danny, I'm not going to call Mr Johnson or Mr Walker. Sorry.' He takes a bite of steak, and I watch the blood ooze out onto his fingers. 'That's life, I'm afraid.'

'You should keep away from those boys,' adds my mother.

'Don't provoke them,' says my father.

'Aren't you eating?' My mother pushes my plate closer to me. I prod the steak with my fork, dip it in gravy and re-arrange my food.

'I don't feel hungry tonight.'

*

Childhood is supposed to be the happiest time of your life, according to my parents. What they mean is that life only gets worse. Childhood is nothing more than powerlessness and fear. In the Great Chain of Being, a child is at the bottom with the animals. But adulthood is no better. If children are bullies, adults are worse: they cheat, lie, and become distorted caricatures of themselves. It is not advisable to grow up.

Only the animals have got it right. Animals are from a time before innocence was lost.

But the animals are an oppressed race. Their voices have been silenced.

*

The baby birds are ugly things. I feed them raw mince, which I have to steal from the fridge and roll into little worms to drop into their wide beaks. I try to bind a foot with a bandage, but the bird pecks it off immediately; I dab ointment on their wounds. They are trusting souls, unafraid of humans. They will die, I know. I have only prolonged their suffering. I make a nest for them out of an apple box, stuff it with grass and leaves and mince worms. They caw and caw for their mother. I am your mother now, I whisper. I know, I don't speak your language, but I will look after you.

*

Nature is cruel, predatory and cannibalistic. Life is harsh, hot and dry. Most children spend their time at the club swimming pool while parents drink and smoke themselves to death at the hotel bar. It is an empty life, one which I am expected to grow into. And 'grow up' means to become superficial and shallow, to work in some meaningless job that will drain whatever joy I am trying to cup in my soul. Harden in the sun like a prune. Deepen my genetically programmed fault lines until they are pronounced and habitual. 'Toughen up,' the adults say when I display that soft emotion I call childhood. 'This is life.'

*

Next morning, I check to see if the baby currawongs are still alive. I somehow expect them to die. But they're fine. They caw when they see me hold out the mince balls. They flap their wings and claw my arm, unafraid. I have to administer water with a dropper, for I have no idea how they drink. I talk to them and they listen, their pied grey heads cocked onto one side, their gold eyes bright. They understand, if not the words, the soothing tone of empathy.

*

Every night my parents huddle in front of the TV, lights on, windows shut against the darkness. I sit outside and stare up at the stars, breathe in the moist night air. I can see the stars in colour, in three dimensions, and can hear them. They make faint music barely audible to the human ear. They send messages to those who will listen.

I like the silence most of all. But it is never quite silent enough, even out here in the outback. Trucks strain up hills far away, or engage their brakes down the pass. The mine clatters and whines. And the television in the living room is louder than everything, a constant noise my parents use to fill the loneliness of their lives. They don't like me sitting outside every evening.

'Come inside, Danny, what are you doing out there? You'll be eaten by mozzies.'

'Your favourite program is on TV.'

'Don't you have any homework?'

'Such a strange boy.'

*

I've had them for eight days now. They grow a lot. Still very downy on the underside. They are always hungry and I feed them crickets and worms when I can find them, and mince rolled into snake shapes when I cannot. They leap onto my hand and flap their untested wings. They need to learn to fly, but I do not know how to teach them.

*

On the road outside my house, three older boys are squashing cane toads. They have collected an apple

box full of them, and as they release them, the boy with the heavy boots leaps and stamps onto them, to the cheers of the others.

I run out to see at least twelve dead toads on the road. 'Stop that!'

The boys pause, and when they see it is me, they release another toad and leap onto it.

'Stop!'

'They're invasive pests,' calls out John Turkington. 'My dad says whenever you see a cane toad, you have to kill it. They destroy the environment. Didn't you know that?'

'No. Stop it. It's cruel, not matter what they are. They can't help being cane toads.'

John Turkington laughs. 'Stamp!' he says, leering into my face. 'They need to be stamped out. Stamp! Stamp! Stamp!'

And with each word, he ends the life of another toad. The road gleams with toad blood and toad innards. Intestines and colons and sinews are spread on the tarmac.

'We're the invasive pests,' I say. 'Humans are the invasive pests who destroy the environment!'

They stare.

'We need to be stamped out. Humans are the pests.'

I am surprised at what comes out of my mouth when I am angry and powerless. Even here in the heat of the moment when my cheeks are red and my voice quavery, I know I am being silly. Childish. What I am saying is not logical. Yet I insist. 'We are the only animal on the planet that destroys things. We are! We are!' I choke on my rage and the words come out as a stutter.

The youngest boy, at a nod from the others, pours the remainder of the toads out of the box, and in a free for all, the others squish, stamp, slide them into the tar.

'Join us, Danny,' calls John Turkington. 'It's the best fun ever!'

*

It is a question of finding my voice. I have never had a voice. My sentences trail off like a slug's gleaming passage on a hot concrete driveway, dry up and die. I can never finish a sentence.

Swallows his words. My teachers write on my school reports: shy, soft spoken, quiet. Timid. Dreamy. There is a huge world inside me that can never emerge. I am like Dr Who's Tardis, small on the outside, and inside, a universe, a world spinning full of emotions, ambitions, yearnings, and most of all, words, sentences, long, long trails of sentences that flow endlessly out of me into the spiral entrails of galaxies. I want to be everything, everybody. I swell to burst every time I breathe. But nothing comes out.

*

'Danny, what are you going to do about the birds?' my mother asks. 'They make such a racket all the time, and the box stinks. I'm worried they'll attract snakes.'

'Wring their bloody necks,' says my father. 'That's what I would do. They're pests. Currawongs steal eggs from other birds, you know. And they wake me up in the morning with that godawful racket. Get rid of them, Danny. Or I will.'

*

I am worried about leaving the birds on their own, exposed in the back garden. There are too many predators on the ground and I am afraid that one day I will return from school to find the birds dismembered and eaten by some fox or dingo. And now I have to worry about my father too. He's done it before. They need to be safe.

But already their instincts are at work. That afternoon, I find them leaping off the edge of the box, flapping their wings and plummeting to the ground. They return and try over and over again, cawing in triumph when they are airborne. I pile grass for them to land into to stop them hurting themselves, they are so determined. I encourage them to keep trying, acting as their ski lift every time they tumble to the ground, and muttering encouragement in the coos and caws of what I think must be bird language.

The bird with the damaged leg takes his first faltering flight. His sibling joins him. They do one circuit, then another. I whistle in encouragement, and they caw in delight at their new found power. A few more wobbly landings, a few more circuits, and they are qualified navigators of the air.

At first they can only circle my head and land in the

low branches of the gumtree, but each time they go off, they fly further away. Finally they soar over the roof of the house. I expect them to disappear forever, but here they are, returning in triumph, calling loudly, hungry for their next meal. They always return. This is home, and I am their mother. How long does all this take, I want to know, for currawongs to grow up.

Childhood is a golden age, the best time of your life, I tell them. Better enjoy it while you can, little currawongs. Humans are your enemy, I tell them. Fear them! Don't trust any of them.

*

But I don't have to worry. Nature takes care of its own.

One morning, as the baby currawongs peck mince snakes from my hands and clamber onto my shoulder, I hear an urgent cawing.

Overhead I see two dots. Two shadows in the sky circle the house, descend and glide with their wings outstretched. Their feathers are like fingers spread in the wind. I think of predators and shield the babies under my arms as a mother would. But then I see two large glossy currawongs. They caw again, speaking a language I now understand.

The baby birds understand too. They wriggle apologetically out of my hands and waddle out in the clearing where they can see their parents in the sky.

The two birds circle twice, calling, watching me with cautious eyes.

And then the two babies—healed, plump, ready—leap into the air. They flap hard, squeak a greeting to their soaring parents. They take their place between them, fly higher and higher in the blue haze. I watch them become four tiny dots, listen to the echo of their distant cawing. And then they are gone.

Author

Paul Williams grew up in Zimbabwe and has a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Wisconsin (USA). His young adult novel *The Secret of Old Mukiwa* won the Zimbabwe International Book Fair fiction prize (2001). He has also published several short stories and a memoir (*Soldier Blue*, 2008) about growing up in the Zimbabwe civil war. At present, he teaches Creative Writing at the University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland.

This Shall Not Be Taken

All this talk of beginnings —
as if we could unwind ourselves
from our own history,

from the cultural baggage
that is the frame, the walls, the house,

as if it is destination that matters
and not journey.

Beginnings go back
to where we cannot go:
the road ahead opens
as the road behind closes

and what has been left there
and what is known.

What we drag with us
in our nakedness
leaving furrows in the path:

the weight of our dispossession,
the dead gods of our childhood,
thicknesses of scar tissue.

We promise each other nothing,
know that even if we stop
arrival is illusion.

Wherever we are,
we have dust on our feet,
we huddle like timid sheep,

we look for shelter in each other's eyes:
the only place we can find it.

DAVID ADES,
PITTSBURGH, USA

SHOWCASE GALLERY - STUDENT ILLUSTRATIONS

PRESENTING FOUR STUDENT WORKS FROM THE EXHIBITION, 'VIVID' – A VISUAL COMMENTARY ON THE 'WORLD WE LIVE'



BREATHE (above)

Daniel Hine, University of the Sunshine Coast

Lifestyle means something different to each person – be it entertainment, relaxing or studying or other activities. Ultimately, the lifestyle you choose is a reflection of your inner being, and what you choose to do with your life. Sadly, our current culture asks people to work longer hours and have less free time to relax and be with family, resulting in a constant work-based lifestyle.

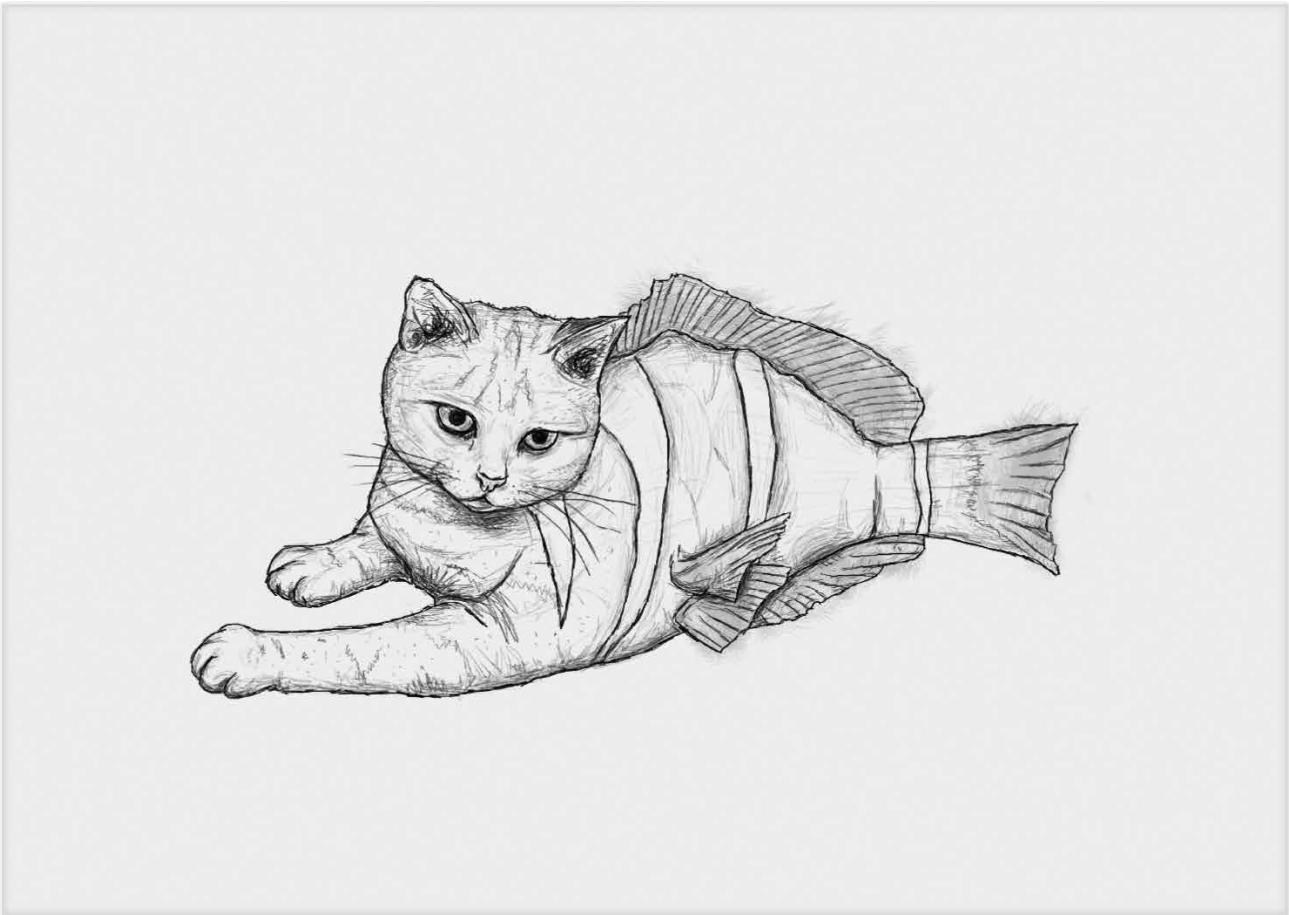
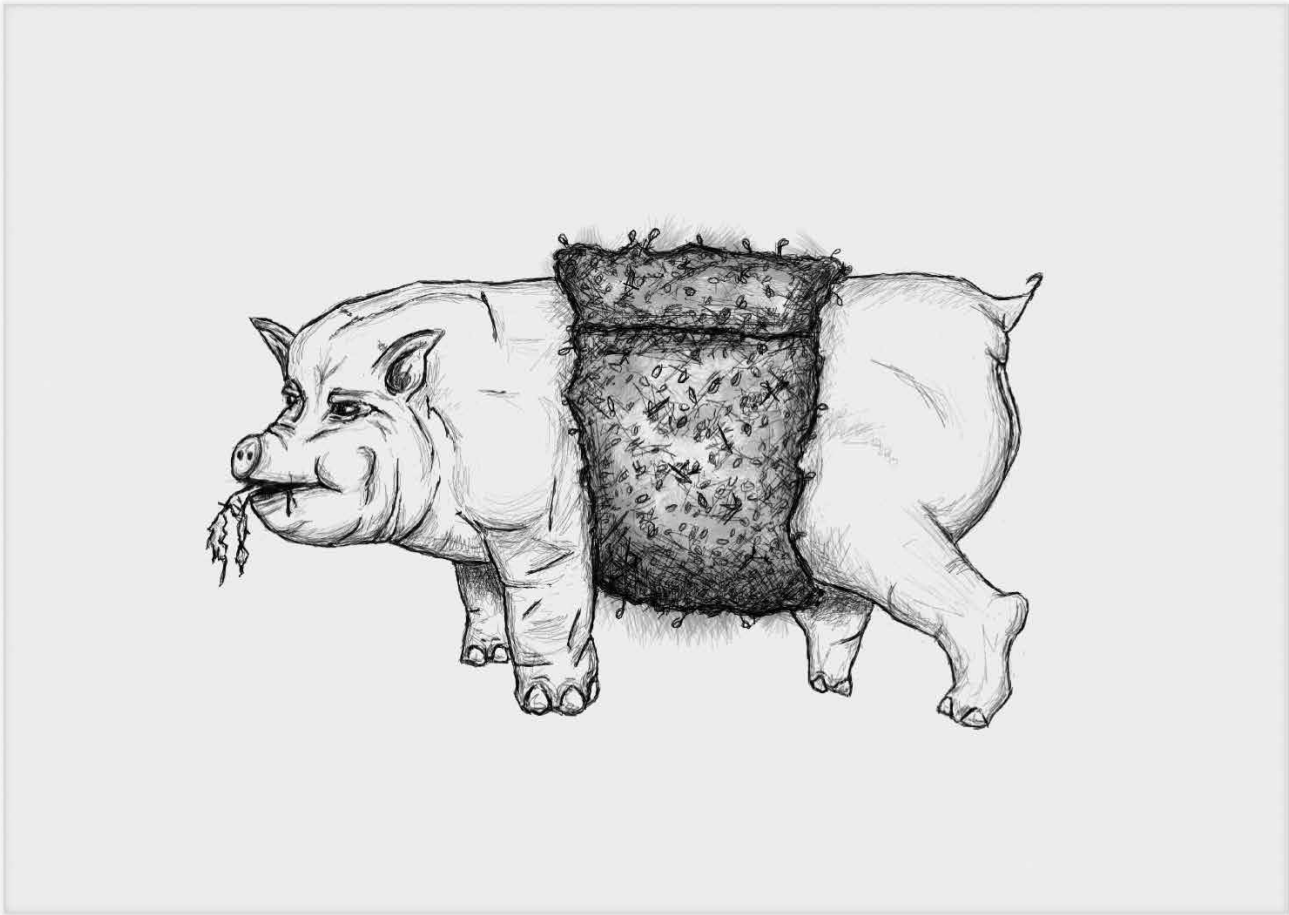
My work addresses the contrast between work and the desire for a better lifestyle. Here, my aim is to evoke a feeling of calm and serenity because sometimes you just need to pause and breathe.

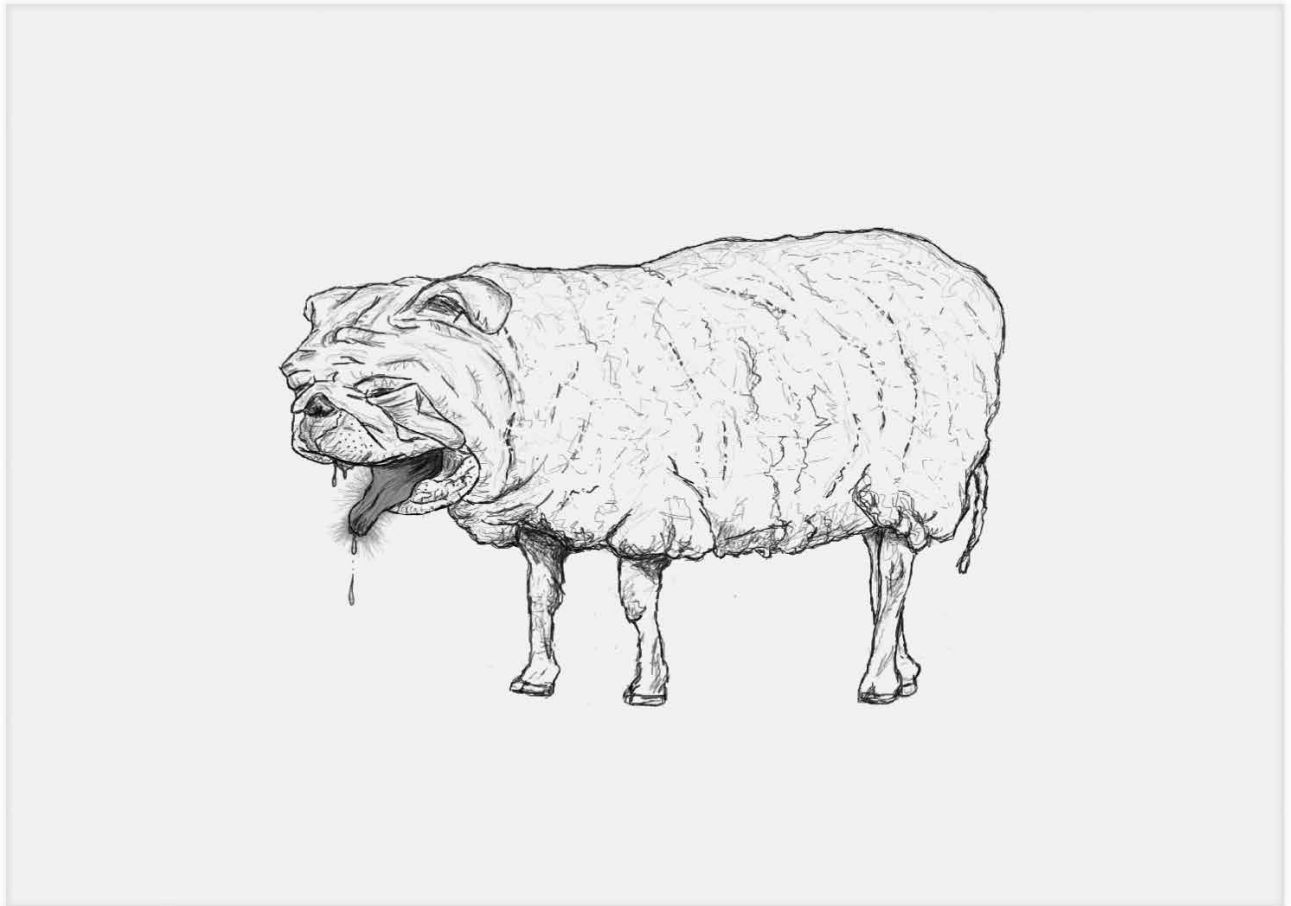
CRYPTIC CRITTERS (right and page 60)

Susan Bohmer, University of the Sunshine Coast

I find that animals truly represent the spirit of the natural world. I wanted my illustrations to have a lighthearted and playful tone that expresses an animal's personality. Based on the popular Pictionary game, each drawing in the series gives you clues to the name of another animal. Some of them are quite obvious, but others not so much!

I started by finding animals with names that could be dissected into other words such as 'jellyfish' or 'earwig'. These words had to be interesting enough to be illustrated in a humorous way. I drew each animal and created the final construction using the software program, Photoshop and tracing with a digital drawing tablet. The obscurity and visual interactivity involved in the animal puzzles make very entertaining artworks.







MINE

Damien Paddick, University of the Sunshine Coast

What I wanted to achieve with this piece is to create a world where anything can happen – an open ended story, an imagination running free. I want people to view it and think of their own story.

I have my story for this illustration; a fellow is so involved in his cyber fantasy he does not see the beauty of the world around him – engrossed in his technological environment nothing exists beyond the screen. This is how I see him, which of course this fellow is, at times, me:

A fellow lives inside his mind.
A fellow has become one with his avatar.
A fellow is being controlled by a jovial group of creatures.
A jovial group of creatures have been imprisoned by a fellow.
A fellow believes that a magnificent beard would make him omnipotent.
A fellow's contributions light the world of the people around him.
A fellow believes his own publicity.
A brilliant quest commences.
A fellow involved in his computer and his imagination
.....he rarely sees the world around him



ALWAYS CONNECTED

Hayley Ritchie, University of the Sunshine Coast

Technology allows people to constantly stay connected with each other, such as through social media. It is commonplace to find people consistently using their mobile devices that seemingly control people's lives. My work questions if this is at the expense of real human interaction? My illustration examines the relationship between people and technology in modern society by presenting a mobile phone as a puppeteer with strings to represent technology as the ultimate controller.

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