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A scholarly affair: proceedings of the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia 2010 national conference

Baden Offord
Southern Cross University

Robert Garbutt
Southern Cross University

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Introduction

The papers in this *Proceedings* are the result of presentations given at ‘A Scholarly Affair’, the National Conference of the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia held at the Byron Bay Community and Cultural Centre, NSW, Australia, from 7 - 9 December 2010. The conference organisers asked participants to focus on the contribution that Cultural Studies makes as an interdisciplinary space for reflexive, critical and empirically based research to the project of higher education, pedagogy and social justice. These proceedings are a product of that call.

Susan Giroux and Norman Denzin have recently argued that the work of the scholar is to subject structures of power, knowledge, and practice to critical scrutiny, what Paul Gilroy has referred to as principled exposure. In contrast, it is salient to recall Toni Morrison’s view that ‘racism is a scholarly affair.’ This inherent tension about what a scholar does - and what is expected of and from them - goes to the heart and relevance of Cultural Studies scholarship. Given the present instrumentalised and corporate university environment with its dominant values of standardisation and emphasis on an audit-based culture - there is a compelling and urgent need to re-imagine the space/place of the contemporary scholar and their role in society. In the age of Obama and Gillard, Cultural Studies, as a discipline that uniquely responds to the pull of the relevant, the imperatives of socially inclusive practices and communities of engagement, needs, as Catherine Burnheim puts it, to go ‘beyond corporatism into the wilds of the knowledge economy’.

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All the papers in the *Proceedings* have been blind, peer refereed by members of a panel of national and international experts in Cultural Studies.

The referencing in the *Proceedings* is a mixed referencing system. While some standardisation has been attempted, the inter-disciplinary nature of the conference meant that one referencing system could not suit all writing and topics. For this reason we have chosen a pragmatic path and allowed a range of styles, the key criteria being clarity, consistency and accuracy.
Editorial Correspondence should be addressed to the editors at:

The School of Arts and Social Sciences
Southern Cross University
PO Box 157
Lismore NSW 2480
Australia

Email: baden.offord@scu.edu.au

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Move, jump, jack your body: 20 years of Adelaide dance music culture as contested cultural space

Cathy Adamek
University of South Australia

Abstract: This paper explores the tension between traditional definitions of (commercialised) entertainment and (‘pure’) art, within a contemporary creative industry. To do so, it draws upon the early stages of the author’s research project which seeks to document and contextualise dance and rave culture in Adelaide as a marginalized art form and communicative space. The late 80s and early 90s spawned a period of extreme creativity in a city whose dance scene was globally innovative but receives scant attention 20 years on from either the mainstream media or traditional art funding sources. Dance Music culture has, however, developed a recent body of scholarly research from cultural studies and popular musical studies and drawing on this I will argue that the nightclub venue (and various dance events) although commonly associated with the entertainment industry, is a space of performance art or a ‘happening’ more in touch with innovative art practice, and vibrant, lived creativity than any government subsidised theatre or gallery. As such, the paper will challenge Adorno-inspired orthodoxies regarding the so-called purity of arts-based practice, especially as compared with innovation in marginal commercial spaces.

In Manchester, UK, in 1988 the innovative nightclub the Hacienda was the centre of a youth culture phenomenon based on a form of music called acid house. This movement broke globally and was soon generically referred to as the Second Summer of Love (Redhead, Wynne and O’Connor, eds, 1997, Reynolds 1998, Reitveld 1993). This period, the late 1980s to early 1990s, saw an explosion of new forms of electronic dance music (EDM), predominantly developed in the US with UK and European influences – Chicago house, acid house, Detroit techno, and hip hop were being played in clubs and one-off dance parties giving rise to a related design and dance aesthetic. The one-off dance party or rave that had developed by the early 1990s is a defining feature of this movement.

It is a contention of my research that this era is also an important part of Adelaide's artistic and cultural heritage that deserves wider recognition and serious documentation. Adelaide's musical contribution to the genre was formidable, with talented DJs and producers and labels, nationally and internationally recognised, such as DJ HMC, Groove Terminator, Damien Donato and Dirty House Records. On the basis of my long-term immersion in this scene, I document the ways in which dance music and the Second Summer of Love manifested in Adelaide and continue to enrich the creative industries.

In this paper, I explore the tension between traditional definitions of entertainment and art, within this contemporary creative practice. The late 1980s and early 1990s were a period of extreme creativity in a city whose dance scene was globally innovative but 20 years on receives scant attention from either the mainstream media or traditional art funding sources. However, a body of scholarly research has recently developed on dance music culture from

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1 The Second Summer of Love was an ironic reference to 1960s hippy counter culture known as the First Summer of Love or the Age of Aquarius, which influenced much of the early psychedelia of the scene.
cultural studies and popular music studies (Brabazon 2004, McRobbie 1999, Lawrence 2003). I will draw on this to argue that the nightclub venue (and various dance events), although commonly associated with the entertainment industry, is a space of performance art or a “happening” more in touch with innovative art practice and vibrant, lived creativity than any government subsidised-theatre or gallery. In particular I will draw on current notions of creativity and improvisation to outline my experiential methodology of improvising ‘live’ on the dance floor. The paper challenges Adorno-inspired orthodoxies relating to the so-called purity of arts-based practice, especially as compared with innovation in marginal commercial spaces.

In earlier sociological approaches to youth cultures, such dance and music activities were generally seen as subcultural expressions of class resistance to late capitalism (Hebdige 1979, Hall, Clarke and Jefferson 1976). Academic interest also focused on the drug-related aspects of the scene, particularly media analysis of associated moral panic (Cohen 1980, Murphie and Scheer 1992, Redhead, Wynne and O’Connor, eds 1993). Newer studies, typified by the cultural anthropology of Thornton (1995) and Malbon (1999), demonstrate that club cultures are experiential sites of explosive creativity and economic growth that make significant contributions to the cultural life of modern cities, from which the creative industries approach has developed as a current critical tool (Bloustien, Peters and Luckman eds 2008, Hesmondhalgh 2002, and Hartley 2005).

Later criticism also highlights the shift of DJ from background entertainment to profiled artist and electronic dance music as an innovative and profoundly influential form of new music (Brewster and Broughton 2000, Reynolds 1998). Issues of relative artistic judgments and values of high and low culture in popular music are also characteristic of musicological discussion in this area (Frith 1996, Swiss, Sloop and Herman, eds, 1998, Toynbee 2000). Although rock, folk and jazz have found their way into the canon of twentieth-century music, techno, house and the club culture that gave birth to these genres still retain their youth tag 25 years on, and are largely ignored by arts funding bodies and the “quality “ mainstream press in Australia. Although the collapse of “low” and “high” has been in recognised in academic debate I would suggest that within artistic circles older attitudes about what constitutes art, and the divide between serious art and popular culture doggedly remain.

**Rewind – ‘Day for Night’**

Certainly my own life has played out the conflict between high and low forms of art. When I was seven I started learning classical ballet, and by the time I was 17 I was dancing full time six days a week. At 14 I started learning classical piano. At 19 I began training as a classical actor and when I was 18 I took on Classics at university after seriously considering Ancient Greek and Latin. Unsurprisingly I developed a muscle spasm in my neck and have been seeing a chiropractor ever since. However, when I was 15 I started dancing in my bedroom to Prince. When I was 16, I went to the Toucan (an

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**Figure 1:** The author dancing in *Adriana Lecouvreur* for State Opera South Australia, 1994. Photo: Adelaide Festival Centre Trust
eighties underground new-wave club in Adelaide) for the first time. It was like finding the
doors to the other world in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe that I’d been hunting
forever. And I mean literally burrowing through the ivy wall at school to find the door into the
Secret Garden. Throwing floppy tutus from repertoire class over laddered footless tights I
freestyled to The Smiths, Dead Kennedy’s, Madonna, Chaka Khan, and Def Jam.

My favourite music when I was six was The Fairy Doll a little known ballet score by Josef
Bayer, by 12 it was easily Carl Orff’s Carmina Burana. When I fell in love with the early
eighties electro pop synth of Video Killed the Radio Star and nagged at my Dad until he took
me to Allans to buy the 7 inch, he announced “this is the beginning of the end” (he gave it a
surprisingly good review, except for the B side – lousy). And so my postmodern life began,
the daytime life of classical pursuit and the night-time catharsis of tearing up the dance floor
to punk, post punk, early hip hop, house, and rave. As a classically trained dancer I wonder
why I moved so easily from spending six days a week submitting to gruelling classes to
dancing all night. Did the combined inspiration of the music and the dance floor provide a
spontaneous act of creation, release and choreographic experiment? Hip hop was still an
underground style where no formal classes were offered unlike today, and I was one of the
few girls dancing with the B-boys (although I don’t remember being conscious of this at the
time). I found a huge creative freedom and exploration in this new form which has been
brought to fruition with the legitimisation of hip hop culture. Twenty years on and the
experiments started to come full circle. The work I would do on the floor was starting to feed
back into choreographic presentation.

Dance music challenges notions of musical authenticity: the anonymous, collaborative nature
of studio (often home) based production and the presence of the DJ. And it is here, I believe,
that the music’s real life occurs: on the dance floor where the live experience is created
kinaesthetically in the body of the dancers and mediated by the DJ who feeds off his audience
back into the mix (live beat mixing means a DJ is able to play to the mood of the crowd but
also transform it – taking the dancers and listeners on a journey, creating a temporal
sculpture). This is the other site of innovation - the collapse of the boundaries between
audience and performer. I will now examine more closely my claim that the dance floor is a
performance space.

Improvisation: Dance floor as performance space

Dance music culture derives its artistic lineage from most recognisable avant-garde forms of
the twentieth century: Dada, Surrealism, the Lettriste International, and the Situationists
(Sussman, ed, 1989, Gray 1974, Plant 1992). This is expounded in Greil Marcus’s Lipstick
Traces (1989) where he plots an imaginative trajectory of anarchism across the centuries,
leading to the destruction of classical structures of art and culture in order to rebuild new
forms in the twentieth century. Rob Gretton and Tony Wilson who built the Hacienda in
Manchester (one of the first homes of house music in the UK), were profoundly influenced by
Situationist writing, as was Malcolm McLaren (Hook 2009). They went on to construct an
innovative space for “the people” to enjoy the best of contemporary music, architecture and
design, and free expression through dance which influenced club culture all over the world.

The Hacienda followed in the footsteps of New York art clubs like Paradise Garage and
David Mancuso’s The Loft (Lawrence 2003): these are keys to understanding the kind of
cultural performance space I refer to. Andy Warhol’s Factory brought together producers and

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2 In some ways this echoes the relationship between conductor, orchestra and dancer.
artists from different creative areas to spend time collaborating, socializing and dancing. The parties he produced were as much a part of the art as the actual artefacts produced - the party was an integral part of the process, an act of planned spontaneity. Parties are hard work, because they are connected with hedonism we do not see the highly constructed nature of this temporary illusion. And that is why I would argue that they are a form of new “high” art. The dance party or rave is now described in terms traditionally applied to theatre or film, such as mise en scène. To produce a creative space or environment like this entails complex organisational ability akin to that needed in staging a performance: graphic construction of flyer, guest list, choice of music and DJs, themed costumes by participants, props, candles, lighting different spaces, visual effects, not to mention the technical requirements of the sound system. As I will demonstrate, improvised dance is a central part of this creative process, which can be taken into a more structured traditional theatre process.3

Figure 2: The author dances to Detroit techno producer Daniel Bell at Sugar Nightclub, Adelaide, 2010. Photo: Driller Jet Armstrong.

To explore the idea of the dance floor as a legitimate performance space, I use my own dance floor improvisation as an ongoing method of data collection, while listening to DJs who are relevant to this study. I document my responses to the music and the effect on the surrounding participants in a journal after the event. Leigh Warren (artistic director of an Adelaide contemporary dance company) told me years ago that William Forsythe (famous Frankfurt Ballet choreographer) firmly believed that the only true improvisational dance was to be found on the nightclub floor. Leigh was both incredulous and dismissive of this. Therein lies the tension.

Theories of creativity and improvisation have tended to focus on jazz. In the last ten years, however, a newer body of work has dealt with dance and improvisation and the role of the human body and bodily interactions in improvisation: Malbon’s idea of “performativity” in relation to clubbing where dancing is both an imaginative and an emotional practice (1999) and Hakim Bey’s (1991) spontaneous play in “autonomous zones” where music is central

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3 A friend and dance lover commented that parts of Polecats (a show I created and performed in for the Adelaide Fringe 2007 recontextualised poledancing in a theatrical environment with elements of ballet, contemporary dance and burlesque) reminded him of one of my parties. To which I replied “and you thought I was just having fun - see it was all part of the work!”
such as the festival provide some insight. Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the body without organs (Jordan 1995) can also be used as a metaphor to describe the collective experience of a dance floor. Smith and Deane (1997) define improvisation as “the simultaneous conception and performance of a work” (3) a satisfying starting point for a discussion of improvisation in this context. The term improvisation suggests spontaneity, extemporisation, and the absence of deliberation. The term also brings to mind creation, invention, or origination, words that imply action (Carter 2000). In his article on dance improvisation in 2000, Carter summarises the historical development of improvisation throughout the modernist period and casts it as a defining influence on all modern art forms.

Yet his definition and analysis stay within the confines of theatre and traditional art forms, with only a cursory mention of “popular dance”. Kai Fikentscher (2000) describes the relationship between DJ and dancer as a unique experience in underground nightclubs, defined as collective performance or interactive performance, created in the moment. The DJ inhabits his domain in the DJ booth and the dancers on the dance floor then perform as a collective body, sometimes making eye contact, dancing with others or on their own, copying a move or engaging in playful competition. Energy levels change and build as the crowd peaks and troughs (64).4 This collective club experience is recognizable as belonging to African American social and cultural traditions, where multiple interactions occur between individuals in a particular space (58).

The idea of improvising, in its classical sense of embellishing on an existing score, is not entirely accurate when applied to EDM – although each track has inscribed meaning through the participants’ knowledge of its genre or an emotional memory response, the score is the spontaneous act of creation that comes out of the collaborative relationship of dancer and DJ. However the DJ, in preparation, has sketched an outline of the night in the tracks he has selected from the many in his collection. For me, a good DJ takes the role of a good ballet conductor who will vary the composition as he plays it to suit the needs of the dancers. The dancer must be in direct communication and instant collaboration with the DJ for this to be a successful union – this lies with the ability of the DJ to read a dance floor.5 DJ HMC refers to this ability as a kind of sixth sense: to feel the mood of the crowd, respond musically and move together on a journey over the night. In 1990 Nachmanovitch, a musician, wrote that “what we reach for through improvisation is the feel of the journey itself” (6).6

On the dance floor the process, the performance and the journey are synchronous events. Similarly this open form was heralded in many avant-garde contexts where the process becomes more important than the final product, which by definition is in constant flux (Carter 2000). The role of the DJ is to construct the dancing on the floor; several writers have commented on the paradoxical quality of dance music as a form of programming and as a free zone (Toynbee 2000 144, Frith 1996 166). However, this idea of a free space where no rules apply needs to be strongly qualified. The underground clubs and club door policies in general include and exclude according to the tastes and directives of management – they control the “cast” of participants on the night. The common idea that anything goes on the dance floor,

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4 There is a profound relationship between music and dancer that shapes the music’s very form of production. The 12 inch record was created as an extended version of a track to keep people dancing while beat mixing and blending tracks live create a seamless transition, building a continuous score of varied intensity and mood that can keep dancers on the floor for hours (Thornton 1995, Fikentscher 2000, Shapiro 2005). Therefore the very form of the music is created through collaborative improvisation.

5 The idea of “reading” the dance floor has been articulated in interviews by key DJs in my study.

6 Many respondents in my participants’ survey and on the floor talk about the journey they went on with the DJ over the course of a night and older participants mourn the loss of the 7 hour set.
that there are no codified steps heralding a break in western dance tradition, is inaccurate. Frith states that when we dance we subject our body movements to musical rules (1996, 164). In the context of EDM there is a particular and flexible repertoire that the individual can draw on without the directives of a choreographer. The music in this instance directs the style of dancing.

The creativity of the dancer is reflected in their ability to respond stylistically to the hybrid nature of many contemporary house and techno based styles. The dancer’s repertoire, like the sampled references within the music playing, extends back through the twentieth century: swing, charleston, jive; 1960s styles – mashed potato, twist; 1970s disco heralding the hustle, nut bush, bus stop, also Latin sounds ushering in a whole different suite of steps and footwork. House developed its own repertoire based on voguing, the footwork of hip hop (culminating in the generic running man) and B-boy styles, all of which developed from the earlier African American styles mentioned. Dancing is not easy – it has to be learnt and practised. The ability to improvise with ease on the dance floor comes from having mastered a variety of styles – recreational activities at school, social partnered dancing, formal dance training, watching and copying video clips and other people, practicing at home, and then venturing to step onto the floor with confidence to respond appropriately to the music, thus individualising various styles through a unique relationship with the DJ. In the arts generally, improvisation involves the suspension of set structures and the introduction of non-traditional elements. Improvisation thus requires the power to invent new forms spontaneously (Carter 2000). It is important to note that the idea of performance in the club space is not limited to the dance floor – the improvisational feel extends to the whole environment. There is also a fluid, imperceptible transition between watching and being watched, being audience and becoming performer.

Montuori (2003) writes that improvisation is still commonly seen as inferior, as makeshift or crude, a deviation from the established correct order. He argues that, although improvisation represents disorder as opposed to order, creativity is naturally disordered. He writes that the jazz musician, to a far greater extent than a classical musician has a personality: “improvisers tell a story – they are the story”, because the latter has no choice about which notes to play (246). Similarly the classical dancer must adhere to the steps of the choreographer. Improvisation was standard practice in Western music until 1800, when it was displaced by two key events: the birth of the concept of the genius composer and copyright. As a result musicians began increasingly to perform scores strictly as written. Before this, soloists improvised and embellished during their performance. Franz Liszt wrote of the virtues of extemporising over slavishly following notation (Montuori 2003, 247).

I am currently exploring Adelaide’s underground nu-disco scene, in particular the relationship between classical forms and house and disco: how the lyrical, orchestral quality of 1970s disco lends itself to classical ballet, as does the upbeat tempo of house, rather than the earthier downbeat techno rhythms. Recently I danced to The Swiss play live.7 Afterwards I noted some comments such as ... “you even threw ‘The Robot’ in - but it wasn't the normal robot it wasn't too mechanical". On reflection, it occurred to me that I was doing a female version of ‘The Robot’ or what I will term ‘The Doll’ with its precedent in Coppélia, the nineteenth-century ballet about a toymaker who makes life-size mechanical dolls. He makes one very beautiful doll called Coppélia, places her in the window of his shop making all the local boys swoon. One girlfriend, mightily irritated by this, steals into the shop and discovers that the girl

7 The Swiss are an Adelaide band who play live original disco, mixing synthesised keyboard with more traditional guitar, drum/percussion.
in the window is only a doll. She swaps places with the doll in order to make a fool of the love torn men. This is a cue for lots of mechanical doll dancing but also plays with the idea of real women versus male-created plastic fantasies. I had previously used this idea in Polecats creating one piece called “Robot Aerobic Dolls” - borrowing from repetitive, predominantly female forms of dance such as aerobics and formation marching bands with bits of the Coppélia choreography I could remember from the film and the live ballet: the doll as a parody of femininity, the robot a parody of masculinity.

This is a practical demonstration of the relationship between perceptions of high and low artistic forms that is being played out for me creatively. However, it is important to stress the electronic dance music scene has developed now for 20 years and has its own hierarchies particularly between and within genres. Indeed the Detroit innovators of the 1980s are now starting to be recognised as musical geniuses. Only recently Detroit DJ and producer Jeff Mills with a full symphony orchestra for whom he had orchestrated one of his 1990s techno tracks played the 909 synthesizer live 8. The proliferation of genres and styles of music over the last 20 years makes it almost impossible to generalise about dance music or the spaces in which it is received, particularly in relation to early claims that it is a democratic space of oneness. I suggest that there are complex distinctions of highbrow and lowbrow EDM clubs and music, similar to the distinctions within classical music. Angela McRobbie wrote in 1999 that:

our critical vocabulary seems sadly lacking. None of the old words like collage, montage or postmodernism seem capable of capturing the velocity and scale of this output. Likewise, the older ways of making sense of music by placing different styles into different categories or by posing the commercial against the creative or experimental, or by talking about white or black music as though they were quite distinct are equally inappropriate (133).

Tara Brabazon (2004) makes a forceful declaration in her book for the necessity of writing that vibrantly captures the experience of dancing and the dance floor. She reiterates how dance and its music have been marginalised as trivial by the dominance of male white rock and its journalistic counterparts. This extends to academic accounts where “dancing is under researched, demeaned and ridiculed” (81). At the same time she points to the problems of adequately containing this form in words – that dance music cannot be contained or pigeonholed. Earlier beats, lyrics, voices and rhythms are carried through to the music of the present. Her answer lies in the form of written expression itself – one that encompasses a more subjective, experiential mode, acknowledging that popular culture affects the body: it inspires tears, laughter, desire and dancing. This would seem to be a call for a style of writing that bridges the divide between deep critical, historical, and theoretical perspective and analysis and a more emotive and spontaneous approach that reflects the subject matter – a summoning of female energy perhaps. She takes Greil Marcus’s metaphor of the lipstick trace to describe the ephemeral quality of popular culture – its imprint forgotten, never to be documented - and relates this to dancing as “a story outside of history”:

The revolution in rhythm, the transformation of body shapes and energies, is unspoken and rarely recorded beyond ‘shock horror’ tabloid ecstasy scares. Lives are changed through dance, but history does not catalogue the transitory moments in dry ice and lasers. Bring the Beat back to history. (Brabazon 2004, 141)

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8 It is starting to look as if, in regard to techno, the origins of EDM are very close to classical music and certainly the work of twentieth century modernist “high” composers. I read one forum that claimed techno is now referred to as post-minimalist music. (Jeff Mills & Montpelier Philharmonic Orchestra - The Bells http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STpOak4iAJY&feature=player_detailpage)
Figure 3: Crowd goes wild to Detroit techno producer Daniel Bell at Sugar Nightclub, Adelaide, 2010. Photo: Driller Jet Armstrong

References


Queering practice-led research: Subjectivity, creative practice and performative research

Dallas J. Baker
PhD Candidate, Griffith University and School of Arts and Social Sciences, Southern Cross University

Abstract: Practice-Led Research (PLR) is gaining increasing acceptance in the tertiary sector as a valid, rigorous and innovative research methodology in the creative arts (Smith & Dean 2009, Green 2007). This is the result of an ongoing debate and discussion led, for the most part, by university academics in creative arts disciplines seeking to have creative works acknowledged as research outputs (Smith & Dean 2009, Barrett 2004, Bolt 2004, Haseman & Mafe 2009, Krauth 2002, Lycuroris 2000, Marshall & Newton 2000).

So far, much of this discussion and debate about PLR in the arts and creative industries has been about what constitutes research (Smith & Dean 2009, Allen 2006, Haseman 2006). This paper, in contrast, discusses what constitutes ‘practice’ and describes a form of PLR that is influenced by Queer Theory. This queered PLR foregrounds subjectivity as a practice in itself and views both creative practice and critical research as components in an ‘ethics of the self’ (Foucault 1978) or ‘self-bricolage’ (Rabinow 1997). In other words, this paper positions subjectivity as the core practice leading both research and creative endeavour whilst simultaneously seeing creative practice, research and subjectivity as intertwined and mutually informing each other. In this way, a queered PLR can be seen to reframe creative practice and critical research as an ethical intervention into subject formation and knowledge production.

The pairing of PLR and Queer Theory is innovative and is suggested by the primacy of gender and sexual subjectivity (or identity) to much work and practice in the creative arts; which itself reflects an increasing primacy of gender and sexual identity in the contemporary world (Weeks 1998: 35). This pairing also arises out of the author’s own creative practice in the field of creative writing which grew out of an individual wish to discuss, understand, express, explore and describe gender and sexual difference.

This queering of Practice-Led Research has the potential to innovate research in the creative arts by providing a methodology for bringing together the diverse threads of subjectivity, creative practice, critical research and performativity (Butler 1990) into a coherent whole. Furthermore, a queered PLR may give the creative arts researcher innovative tools to enrich creative practice, diversify research and increase points of connection with disparate creative artefacts or products. A queered PLR is also envisaged as a dynamic and performative pathway to new knowledges.

Introduction

Practice-Led Research (PLR) is gaining increasing acceptance in the tertiary sector as a valid, rigorous and innovative research methodology in the creative arts (Smith & Dean 2009, Green 2007). This is the result of an ongoing debate and discussion led, for the most part, by university academics in creative arts disciplines seeking to have creative works acknowledged as research outputs (Smith & Dean 2009, Barrett 2004, Bolt 2004, Haseman & Mafe 2009, Krauth 2002, Lycuroris 2000, Marshall & Newton 2000).
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The pairing of PLR and Queer Theory is innovative and is suggested by the primacy of gender and sexual subjectivity (or identity) to much work and practice in the creative arts; which itself reflects an increasing primacy of gender and sexual identity in the contemporary world (Weeks 1998: 35). This pairing also arises out of the author’s own creative practice in the field of creative writing which grew out of an individual wish to express, explore and describe gender and sexual difference.

This queering of Practice-Led Research has the potential to innovate research in the creative arts by providing a methodology for bringing together the diverse threads of subjectivity, creative practice, critical research and performativity (Butler 1990) into a coherent whole. Furthermore, a queered PLR may give the creative arts researcher innovative tools to enrich creative practice, diversify research trajectories and increase points of connection with disparate creative artefacts or products. A queered PLR is also envisaged as a dynamic and performative pathway to new knowledge.

This paper is heavily influenced by the later work of Michel Foucault, in which the French philosopher advocated the adoption of Classical Greco-Roman conceptions of philosophy as a way of life implemented in order to effect a transformation of the self. Foucault (1986b) called this process of applying philosophy as a way of life an ‘ethics of the self’. The article explores how a queered PLR process or methodology can be applied as part of an ethics of the self (self-bricolage) that can effect concomitant transformations of subjectivity, creative practice and research.

**Defining practice-led research**

There are as many definitions of Practice-Led Research as there are practitioners in the field. Rather than attempt to create a universal definition of PLR, and thus codify and limit the range of methodologies and knowledges on which it draws, a number of practitioner researchers in the field have advocated that PLR be seen as multidisciplinary (Smith & Dean 2009, Stewart 2001) and have argued for a kind of radical disciplinary openness (Stewart 2001). Having said that, a core attribute of PLR is its ‘insistence that research outputs and claims to knowing must be made through the symbolic language and forms of… practice’ (Haseman 2006: 4). Smith & Dean have presented the following loose description of PLR that is also useful:

In using the term practice-led research, we… are referring both to the work of art as a form of research and to the creation of the work as generating insights which might be documented, theorised and generalised …. Ideally we would expect a research element to be present in both research and work creation, though we would normally see the documentation, writing and theorisation surrounding the artwork as crucial to its fulfilling all the functions of research (2009: 7). (original emphasis)
PLR is epitomised by the artefact and exegesis model used in academic settings (Smith & Dean 2009, Arnold 2007 and 2005, Milech & Schilo 2004, Barrett 2004). In this model, a creative artefact is produced in concert with a critical component (exegesis) that describes or explores the creative process or themes expressed in the creative work. Generally, the exegesis resembles a more traditional research paper in the Humanities and uses critical theories and standard academic methodologies. In PLR projects, the creative component and exegesis are seen to be research outputs of equal value and as two aspects of a single, unified whole. This is in accord with Scrivener (2000) who argued that theory and practice are ‘inextricably linked and mutually dependent’ (1).

**Performative research**

Haseman (2006: 1) argues that PLR should be understood as ‘a research strategy within an entirely new research paradigm - Performative Research’ (emphasis mine). Performative Research differs significantly from traditional research strategies (see Figure 1). In Performative Research an emphasis is placed on ‘research outputs and claims to knowing’ being made through ‘the symbolic language and forms of… practice’ (Haseman 2006: 4).

Haseman defines the performative as ‘utterances that accomplish, by their very enunciation, an action that generates effects’ (2006: 6). A performative utterance—exemplified by the statements ‘I pronounce you …’ or ‘I do…’ spoken at marriage ceremonies—is ‘itself an act that performs the action to which it refers’ (Pratt 2009). This utterance enacts what it names (Pratt 2009). As Haseman clarifies, this utterance ‘performs itself and in the course of that performing becomes the thing done’ (2006: 6). In Performative Research then, ‘the symbolic data works performatively. It not only expresses the research, but in that expression becomes the research itself’ (Haseman 2006: 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th>Performative Research</th>
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<td>The ‘activity or operation of expressing something as a quantity or amount – for example, in numbers, graphs, or formulas’ (Schwandt 2001: 215).</td>
<td>Refers to ‘all forms of social inquiry that rely primarily on qualitative data…i.e., nonnumeric data in the form of words’ (Schwandt 2001: 213).</td>
<td>Expressed in nonnumeric data, but in forms of symbolic data other than words in discursive text. These include material forms of practice, of still and moving images, of music and sound, of live action and digital code.</td>
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| Scientific method | Multi-method | Multi-method led by practice |

**Figure 1:** Research Paradigms. Adapted from Haseman (2006: 6).

Haseman appropriates the term ‘performative’ from J.L. Austin’s speech act theory, as does Judith Butler. Haseman uses the term performative in much the same way that Austin intended it to be used – to describe acts of speech that, in their enunciation, accomplish the action they describe (Austin 1970). Austin later extended his notion of the performative to include all acts of speech (1970: 147). Haseman’s innovation is to further extend the performative to incorporate the act of writing.

Austin’s extended notion of the performative, that incorporates all speech acts, was taken up in the deconstructive/queer lineages of literary and gender theory linking Jacques Derrida and...
Judith Butler (Kosofsky Sedgwick 2003). In this deconstructive/queer lineage, there has been an emphasis on decoupling Austin’s performative from ‘its localized dwelling in a few exemplary utterances or kinds of utterance and showing it instead to be a property of language or discourse much more broadly’ (Kosofsky Sedgwick 2003: 5). Judith Butler, in particular, has extended the notion of the performative to encompass a broader range of ‘acts’, such as the habitual and stylized acts (or gestures) of gender and the practices (or acts) of subjectivity. Haseman does not engage with Butler’s queer adaptation and re-theorisation of the performative. This is despite the fact that Butler is the principle and most influential contemporary theorist in the field of performativity. Therefore, a queered PLR addresses this oversight by bringing together Haseman’s (2006) notion of performative research and Butler’s (1990, 1993) notion of the performativity of subjectivities, genders and sexualities.

Butler has elaborated the notion of performativity in relation to gender and norms of heterosexuality (1990, 1993). Butler argues that gender is a performance without ontological status when she writes: ‘There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; …identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results’ (1990: 25). For Butler (2004), performativity describes how what might be assumed to be an internal essence to something such as gender or subjectivity is ‘manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body’ (94). Hence, genders, sexualities, subjectivities and identities can all be seen as equally performative; as manufactured through a sustained set of acts (some of them cognitive) enacted through the racial, gendered and sexual stylization of bodies. Queer theories of performativity draw on and align with Poststructural conceptions of identity in which identity/subjectivity is seen as multiple, changing and fragmented (Sarup 1996). In this way, Queer Theory re-conceives gendered identities and sexualities as plural, varying, fragmented and produced in, by and through discourse.

Performative subjectivities are socio-culturally and historically embedded; they are ‘citational chains’ and their effects depend on social conventions (Pratt 2009). According to Butler, gender and sexual norms and subjectivities are produced, disseminated and reinforced through repetitions of an ideal such as the ideal of ‘woman’ or ‘man’ (Pratt 2009). As the heteronormative ideal is a fiction and thereby ‘uninhabitable’, there is room for human agency, disidentification (or counter identification) and resistance (Pratt 2009). In the context of a queered PLR, this disidentification and resistance is undertaken by producing texts that resist heteronormative gendering and present queer models of gender and sexual subjectivity as performative.

The notion of performativity impacts on a queered PLR in multiple ways. The completed creative and critical components can be seen as performative research outputs (Haseman 2006) and the queered PLR projects are likely to produce discourses in which performative subjectivities are explored. In effect, a queered PLR can be seen to be exploring the notion of self and subjectivity through the creative arts; in effect, demonstrating the ways that creative artefacts constitute and deploy sexual and gender subjectivities and vice versa.

**Subjectivity as practice: Performative self-bricolage**

Within a queered PLR, it is proposed that the definition of ‘practice’ be broadened to encompass not only creative endeavours but also qualitative research, engagement with critical theory and, most significantly of all, subjectivity (or identity).
Much PLR scholarship theorises practice in terms of the unconscious and/or the creative ‘impulse’, usually with reference to psychoanalytic theories (Curtis 2009, Hecq 2008, Brown 2008, Brophy 2006 & 1998, Harris 2001). In contrast, a queered PLR distances itself from the sometimes ‘essentialist’ tendencies of psychoanalytic discourse and instead theorises practice (writing, research, subjectivity) in terms of performativity. By theorising creative practice as performativity, it is possible to displace the entrenched and essentialist Romantic model of creative genius (Sawyer 2006, Montouri & Purser 1995, Weisberg 1993) whilst simultaneously disrupting the notion that discursive subjectivities appearing within creative artefacts are representations of the internal, stable identity of the creator. Instead, creativity as performativity foregrounds the appearance of subjectivities within creative artefacts as a deployment or intervention into discourse for a critical or creative purpose. Hence, the inscription of queer subjectivities into creative works should not be seen as a reflection of the creator’s identity, a representation of some imagined ‘internal’ self, but rather as a deliberate inscription and dissemination of non-normative discursive subjectivities.

In the field of literature, Elizabeth Stephens (2009)—in an analysis of the writing practices of Jean Genet—posits that a queered writing practice ‘reframes its homoeroticism so that this is no longer seen as the expression of a queer exteriority – of a perverse author whose intentions determine the meaning of the text – but rather as a dynamic mobilised within that text’ (19).

Stephens (2009) goes on to state that queer writing ‘provides a way to maintain the centrality of sex and eroticism to the narrative without positioning these as the coherent expression of a stable sexual identity’ (19) and that ‘queer writing need neither naturalize nor negate the role (or queerness) of the writer’ (20).

The same can be said for all creative arts, the centrality of (queer) sex and eroticism to a creative artefact need not position these as the coherent expression of a stable sexual identity but rather be understood as a deliberate inscription and dissemination of non-normative discursive subjectivities.

The intent in understanding creative practice, research, critical engagement and subjectivity as mutually dependant performative practices is to explore the tensions or cohesions between creative and critical research and writing on one hand and subjectivity or identity on the other. Foucault once wrote that who one is emerges out of the problems with which one struggles (Rabinow 1997: xix). Foucault advocated an ongoing investigation or struggle with the self—an ongoing assembly and disassembly of subjectivity— that constituted a kind of self-bricolage; a making and re-making of subjectivity that can be seen as an aesthetic struggle towards an artistic ideal (Rabinow 1997).

It could also be said that the creative artefact emerges from this struggle as well. The purpose of this creative self-bricolage is to make philosophy a way of life, and an aesthetics. In this sense, subjectivity itself can be seen as an aesthetic practice; the making of the self is an art. In fact, much of the work of self-(re)making has traditionally occurred in the creative arts which have historically been a domain of self-enquiry, self-exploration and self ‘transformation’. Consequently, the creative arts can be seen as an appropriate site for ‘interventions’ in subjectivity and for explorations into how Queer Theory might be applied as a way of life.
Creative writing: An exemplar of performative self-bricolage

Creative Writing as a discipline offers a clear example of the relationship between discourse and the constitution of subjectivities. John Ambrosio, citing Faust, describes how writing acts on and with subjectivity when he argues:

As a form of reflection and experimentation, writing is a technology of ethical self-formation that views the subject as a work of art and the self as an artefact, as an ongoing work in progress. When conjoined with a philosophical “attitude of resistance that incites new ways of thinking about the forms of experience”, writing enables individuals to begin to “question and modify those systems which make only particular kinds of action possible.

Queer Theory is such a ‘philosophical attitude of resistance’ that ‘incites new ways of thinking about the forms of experience’ (Faust 1988: 188) and makes a wider range of actions and performativities possible.

One of the principal examples Foucault (1986) gave of a technique of the self, implemented to produce a desired or altered/transformed subject, was confessional (or reflexive) writing (8-9). For Foucault, this writing produced the desired subject through a process of self-analysis, of probing for the ‘reality’ of the self in order to construct a subjectivity in line with one’s ethics (Ambrosio 2008). To put it simply, for Foucault certain kinds of writing are a practice involved in the production and maintenance of the self. This can be said to be more so when that writing is informed and/or organised by a philosophy of some kind that is applied as a way of life (Faust 1988).

According to Foucault (1988), ‘there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere’ but rather the subject/subjectivity is ‘constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation, of liberty… on the basis, of course, of a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment’ (50-51). There is no ‘authentic, foundational or necessary self waiting to be discovered and liberated’ (Ambrosio 2008: 253). Subjectivity (in particular sexual subjectivity) is constituted in the interplay and correlation between ‘types of understanding, forms of normativity and modes of relation to oneself and others’ (Foucault 1986: 4).

Furthermore, ‘subjects can occupy a variety of positions both “subject to” discipline and capable of “self-constitution”; albeit within the resources offered by his/her culture, society and social group’ (Foucault cited in Bailey 2005: 122).

In this sense, self-bricolage through writing is a practice of liberty or ‘practice of the self’ that, as an aspect of the queer cultural environment, informs and alters the way subjects actively constitute themselves. In other words, creative and critical texts arising out of a queered PLR are ‘models’ that strongly influence the ongoing becoming of queer subjectivities.

Drawing on Foucault, Judith Butler writes that ‘to understand identity as a practice, and as a signifying practice, is to understand culturally intelligible subjects as the resulting effect of a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of linguistic life’ (1990: 184) (original emphasis). Subjectivity, like creative writing, is a practice that is dynamic, reflective and creative.

Butler (2004) further argues that an experience of an alternate or different subjectivity can ‘undo a prior conception of who one is only to inaugurate a relatively newer one’ (1). In other
words, an experience of a non-normative subjectivity in discourse or creative text can, to use Butler’s terminology, ‘undo’ one’s personhood and facilitate the emergence of a new subjectivity. Foucault described a similar process by which new subjectivities formed through the ‘appropriation, the unification, of a fragmentary and selected already said’ (cited in Rabinow 1997: 209). In the context of Queer Theory, this process of undoing and/or (re)constituting subjectivities is an act of resistance against heteronormativity. This resistance, this re-making of identity, is not without limits or challenges; it is not total voluntarism (Butler 2004). As Ambrosio (2008: 255), pointing to some of these challenges and constraints, argues:

We cannot transform ourselves through a simple act of knowing, through critical reason or reflection alone, but only by risking who we are, by… seeking out and testing ourselves in situations that illuminate the contours of our subjectivity, that destabilize our certainties…. Transforming the self requires that we act with personal courage and develop a tolerance for uncertainty and vulnerability. (original emphasis)

This exposure to new subjectivities or discourses (the ‘already said’) can occur at the point of reception but also, significantly, in the performative moment of production. The practice of writing can provide ‘a means by which individuals… transform themselves, reconstitute themselves as ethical subjects through reading, …reflection, and practical experimentation’ (Ambrosio 2008: 265). This process of ‘undoing’ in which new subjectivities emerge can be described as a ‘queering of the self’.

It can be extrapolated then that a ‘queering of the self’—facilitated by exposure to Queer Theory in the context of PLR—can enrich and inform writing (or arts) practice and research; in effect bringing them into operation as a mutually interconnected self-bricolage. This queering of the self/subjectivity is in effect a denaturalising of the self – a decoupling of identity from notions of the natural. In other words, a queered self is one in which subjectivity and identity are not conceived as somehow natural and stable but rather understood to be ambiguous, ephemeral, fluid and largely produced by discourse in relationship with socio-cultural factors. This conception of the self and subjectivity opens up the possibility of the writer-researcher occupying a wider range of reading and writing ‘positions’ in ways that enrich both the creative act and research processes.

A queered PLR provides writer-researchers with tools to explore notions of sexual and gender difference in ways that produce more than a theoretical understanding. As Michel Foucault (1978) has argued, in his groundbreaking text The History of Sexuality, any strategy aimed at resisting the discursive mechanisms of power that are engaged in the deployment of a narrowly defined sexuality, including mechanisms of repression, must involve a transgression of laws, a dismantling of prohibition and an ‘irruption of speech’ (5). Therefore, Foucault writes, ‘one cannot hope to obtain the desired results simply from… a theoretical discourse, however rigorously pursued’ (1978: 5). Thus, it is apparent that using non-theoretical ways of communicating the knowledges produced in such research and practice are appropriate and a means of enabling queer writer-researchers a voice that resists heteronormative discourse.

To summarize, queered Practice-Led Research is a set of entwined practices including research, creative writing, engagement with theory and subjectivity that lead to identifiable outcomes that include critical and creative artefacts exploring and expressing performative genders and sexualities but also new or emergent subjectivities.
Conclusion

This paper discussed the notion of a queered Practice-Led Research that positions subjectivity as the core practice leading both research and creative endeavour. This queered PLR views both creative practice and critical research as components in an ‘ethics of the self’ (Foucault 1978) or ‘self-bricolage’ (Rabinow 1997).

The paper also touched on how, in a queered PLR, creative and critical practice often emerges from creative researchers’ intention to discuss, understand and describe gender and sexual difference. This is not to say that a queered PLR is only useful for creative/critical projects exploring sexualities or a tool only for queer researchers/practitioners. One possible (perceived) limit or objection to the use of a queered PLR as a model for PLR in general is that it may not be appropriate for non-queer creative researchers. For me, Queer Theory has salience for creative researchers irrespective of their genders or sexualities. Queer Theory is often misunderstood as a vehicle solely for LGBT subjects to investigate the specificity of their experience and culture. In contrast, Queer Theory can be seen as an, as yet, untravelled field of enquiry for non-LGBT academics and students. After all, we are all implicated in the performativity of sexualities and genders, irrespective of the identity categories to which we subscribe. Furthermore, Queer Theory has valuable contributions to make in the deconstruction and analysis of, among other significant research areas, race, class, age, temporality and space.

There are certain limits to positioning subjectivity as a core element to creative arts led research. It is crucial that the model of subjectivity used in a subjectivity-centred PLR is not one that entrenches rather than disrupts the notion of subjectivity as stable, lasting and unified. For a queered PLR to be effective, the model of subjectivity deployed must be one that destabilizes the notion of identity/subjectivity as unitary, fixed and somehow natural. A subjectivity-centred approach that views identity as natural and inherent to the subject, and sees the creative artefact as a direct reflection of the creator’s identity, is little more than a return to the Romantic model of the creative genius.

The methodology most appropriate for queered PLR projects has been described as a kind of performative bricolage; a complex and performative process drawing on multiple disciplines, methodologies, theories and knowledges in which subjectivity, creative practice and critical research combine to produce interdisciplinary artefacts (creative and critical arts) that foreground the performative nature of gender and sexual difference.

A queered PLR takes the form of traditional research teamed with reflective investigations undertaken in the practice aspects (creative endeavour, self-bricolage). Within a queered PLR, new knowledge concerning sexual and gender difference as performativity is produced through reflexivity as well as in the performative act of writing or producing art.

The paper used Creative Writing as an exemplar of the relationship of creative endeavour and discourse to the constitution of subjectivities. Indeed, as Heseman (2006) has demonstrated, the act of writing itself is performative and, in that it produces discourse, is a process through which subjectivities are constructed and disseminated in self-bricolage. With this in mind, the production of creative and narrative textual artefacts that present and describe performative genders, sexualities and identities is a highly appropriate methodology for exploring performative subjectivities themselves.

Although this paper has used Creative Writing as an exemplar of self-bricolage, this in no way indicates that other creative disciplines, such as visual art or theatre, might just have
easily been used. A queered PLR can be applied in any creative arts led research practice. Research into the specific ways that a queered PLR might be applied in other creative disciplines, such as the visual arts or drama, needs to be undertaken by expert researcher-practitioners working within those disciplines.

Finally, there is a scarcity of PLR scholarship on the relationships between creative practice, research and subjectivity. Future scholarship needs to be undertaken to explore the nuanced relationships between subjectivities and creative arts consumption and production. This can be done, in part, by employing a form of PLR that is influenced by Queer Theory, in particular the notions of performativity and self-bricolage.

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Bullied teachers are resilient: Time for organisations to be legally accountable - honestly!

Linda Bradbury

Deakin University

Abstract: Australian research has found that teachers report being bullied by their colleagues to be three times higher than in any other industry (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Riley, Duncan, & Edwards, 2009). The current study is on the lived experience of teachers who are bullied in NSW Department of Education schools and by using phenomenology the research aims to free the voices that have been silenced. While there has been much in the media about bullying in schools the workplace has yet to be understood for the depth of damage it causes to individuals, families, community and the organisation in which the practice is not addressed. The growth in quantitative studies are essential to the body of knowledge, however this study aims to address the paucity of studies on the experience by targets and more specifically the experience of teacher-targets. By applying the descriptions of the experience to investigate the complex issues that maintain the institutionalised practice of bullying, the presentation will offer some areas identified from the pilot study and the early analyses of participants’ texts. In particular, participants show high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder which frames many descriptions of feelings of imprisonment, disempowerment, loss of self, externally control and a sense that they cannot control any aspects of their life both professionally and personally. As an insider researcher the presentation comes from the personal and makes clear the research journey has been applied to healing for self and others. Moreover, it will inform policy, education, practitioners and workplace practices.

The aim of this paper is to challenge the focus on resilience, often recommended as a way to overcome the effects of bullying and mobbing on the targets. A brief review of ‘Brodie’s Law’ is offer to demonstrate that change is the responsibility of the organisation in which bullying occurs. The study has been framed within Heideggerian phenomenology to provide a way for teachers to tell their stories and free their voices on the essence of the experience of being targets of workplace bullying. A discussion on some of their descriptions will be incorporated as a way to reveal the depth of systemic failure around this OH&S issue.

“Mobbing is often carried out politely, without any violence, and with ample written documentation. Yet even without the blood, the bloodlust is essentially the same contagion and mimicking of unfriendly, hostile acts toward the target; relentless undermining of the target’s self confidence; group solidarity against one whom all agree does not belong; and the euphoria of collective attack” (Westhues 2003, p.32). Westhues’ definition is one of many, nevertheless it exemplifies workplace bullying well. Margaret Vickers (2001), an Australian researcher, sums up the experience as “When one considers the numerous constituents and definitions of bullying, the similarities with evil are remarkable” (p.207); and targets of bullying would agree.

Leymann (1990) and Westhues (2000) prefer the word mobbing to bullying. Shallcross (2008), an Australian researcher, has argued that mobbing is the most appropriate term for workplace bullying and all suggest that school bullying is distinctly different to workplace bullying. For the purpose of this paper, both terms will be used due to the popularity of the
term bullying in the Australian vernacular. In response to the phenomenon researchers have
now offered the literature a wealth of studies on both bullying and mobbing, nevertheless, few
studies have been on the lived experience of the targets, in particular that of the lived
experience of teachers.

In 2007 the first and only Australian national online survey was carried out to investigate the
level of bullying of teachers (Riley, Duncan, and Edwards 2009). Riley et al’s research aimed
to identify teachers who were the targets of bullying by other teachers, parents and students;
however, they found that most incidents of the experience came from work colleagues. This
study supported Benham & Greenhill’s (2007) results that found nearly ninety per cent of
teachers within the NSW Department of Education reported bullying by colleagues. Riley et
al carried out the study as a result of what they describe as, “a dearth of research on bullying
in Australian schools” (p. 30) and the current study aims to increase understanding on the
experience of teachers.

To borrow from Catherine Manatunga (2010) where she positioned herself within in the
context of her research, I too am positioning myself in this paper. Spillane’s (1989) sentiment
that no researcher is completely distant from their study rested well with my thesis. He says
that because we all bring our humanness, worldviews, history and understandings to any
project and we always straddle the objective and the subjective. Moreover, Heidegger also
asks the researcher to be a ‘legitimate part of the research’, (McConnell-Henry, Chapman, and
Francis 2009, p.8) and for me this is essential.

Phenomenology as a methodology as been chosen after careful consideration of other
possibilities such as Grounded Theory (Glasser 1992), Ethnography (Holloway and Todres
2006), Critical Feminist (Ogle and Glass 2006) and Emancipatory (Glass 1998). While these
partially supported the desired outcomes of the study, phenomenology provides the rich
philosophical heritage from which to honour the voices and give validity to the words used to
describe the experience as revealed by those who have experience of the phenomenon. That
is to say, it’s a way “to study human experience on its own terms without reducing it to
language that comes from other sciences” (Todres and Holloway 2006, p.224) and the essence
of the target’s experience will be accepted as any quantifiable truth.

Settling on a Heideggerian phenomenological framework became possible with McConnell-
Henry, Chapman and Francis’ (2009) liberating declaration that, “not all phenomenologies
were created equal” (p. 7), and that it’s not who, or what trajectory we follow as
phenomenologists, but rather that we are explorers of the lived experience. Importantly, as
with all phenomenologists, I had to reach a point where I stopped reading what others were
saying about phenomenology and find the essence of my understanding and my thesis.
Phenomenology is far from the dominant quantitative model and its language needs to be that
which is not quantitative.

Conroy (2003) proposes that if we are going to be true to phenomenology it is essential we
stop using the language of science; for example, the word data. What are data? According to
Conroy, “they are isolated bits of facts” (p. 5). Therefore, this study avoids such terms as data
analysis and prefers to use the word story when relating to participants’ texts. Each
participant has been offered their stories to review and change as they choose and asked to
provide any new understandings of what they read about themselves and their story.
However, as with Vickers’ (1997) participants, mine too have found reading their stories
extremely hard and most have either been unable to start reading or stop a few pages in. They
say that reading their own stories is traumatic because it makes their experience too real and painful memories are revisited.

Most participants have described their experience as a “war zone” or “going into battle” each day they enter the school. Whether a child, a teenager, an employee, anyone going back into the situation day after day, while at the same time trying to maintain a sense that all around is functioning in a normal way, feels as though they are continuously returning to battle. It doesn’t look like the war zones we see on TV, the images of exploded buildings and bodies, but for the target, the terror sits within. The fear, the panic, the distress at having to face the situation again over and over keeps targets awake at night in their silent hell (Hockley 2003) each detail forever imprinted on their memories. This nightmare is called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Kinchin 2005).

Leymann and Gustafsson (1996) studied 64 inpatients in a Swedish rehabilitation unit who were admitted with effects of bullying in the workplace. These patients showed severe PTSD and their symptoms were found to be comparable to the PTSD experienced by prisoners of war. Other studies have found this diagnosis to be true in all real cases of bullying and mobbing (Tehrani 2004; Matthiesen and Einarsen 2004; Needham 2003). Therefore, participants’ descriptions of war zones, battle fields and imprisonment are significant in understanding the deep trauma of the experience.

The feeling of ‘being in prison’ is often used by participants. A prison without bars perhaps, but certainly the jailers are present; the bullies and the system or organisation in which the bullying is permitted to continue are the gatekeepers that maintain a culture that ensures the deviant behaviour of the bullies. Robinson and Bennett (1995) define deviant behaviour as, “… [violating] significant organizational norms…” (p. 556). In bullying organisations ‘normal’ is bullying behaviour. Therefore, the target is seen as deviant and in need of managing because they challenge the accepted practices (Blase and Blase 2006). Targets need to be contained, particularly once they have raised structural flaws in an organisation; deviant when they do not conform to the politics reported by participants such as “back-stabbing”, “gossiping”, “whinging about parents and students, or not participating in a them and us” practice common to staffrooms (Riley, Duncan, and Edwards 2009). Bullies justify their behaviour within policies and legislation.

Mobbing (bullying), according to Leymann & Gustafsson (1996), has become the “most problematic and dangerous health-damaging factor at workplaces” (p.251). Westhues (2003) identifies the phenomenon as “… the stressor to beat all stressors. It is an impassioned, collective campaign by co-workers to exclude, punish, and humiliate a targeted worker” (p. 33). Therefore, in terms of OH&S legislation and workers compensation claims, bullying must be measured against the overall cost to taxpayers and organisations as well as the cost to targets, their families and communities.

The Victorian Parliament recently passed legislation that has been nicknamed ‘Brodie’s’ Law (Wilkinson 2011). Brodie Panlock was a nineteen year old waitress who was bullied to her suicidal death in 2006. While there has also been a call to make this law national there are doubts that it has gone far enough in making organisations accountable for acts of bullying. Under the new law the bully may be imprisoned for up to ten years while the employer is merely fined. Many questions are being asked about what this law has not addressed such as verbal and emotional bullying, and by imposing a custodial sentence onto the bully and not

1 Target has become the preferred term to victim in describing the person who is experiencing the bullying/mobbing.
the employer than it essentially defers responsibility away from the employer (Wilkinson 2011). Workcover Authority of NSW oversees implementation of the legislation relating to OH&S on this state, their website clearly states, “Whether it is intended or not, bullying is an occupational health and safety hazard” (Workcover Authority of NSW 2011) and that a single incident constitutes bullying and should not be ignored. Sadly, incidents are ignored and this will be further discussed in the section on unions.

Psychological Injury, which includes bullying, has financial costs that are met by the Australian people and workplaces. The cost to business alone is estimated to be $15 billion per year and a conservative $36 billion in total (Productivity Commission 2010). Nevertheless, even though costs to business are extreme, there is little incentive offered to organisations to change their practices (Goecke 2000). Goecke claims the legal system reinforces the poor practices by punishing the targets and not the workplaces. His 1999 research identified that employees in the USA, who took legal action against an employer on bullying and mobbing, lost 90 per cent of the time. This is an extraordinary outcome and one that would deter a target from taking action. The legal trajectory for targets of bullying is complex and protracted. A participant in the current study pursued her claim against her employer for seven years and, on her lawyer’s advice, stopped one step before the Supreme Court. The outcome, in financial terms, was less than a year’s salary, and the costs are immeasurable when we consider the effects on health and well-being, loss of career and employment as well as the impact on the family and other relationships (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, and Alberts 2007).

Targets of bullying and mobbing reach a point in the experience where they feel they have no control over any aspect of their lives (Lutgen-Sandvik 2006). Using Bentham’s (1995) panopticon where prisoners are unable to see or know their captor, the perceived power over the prisoners is as strong as any real power. In the context of teaching, the targets feel as though they are equally under the control of the perceived power as well as the real power. There is an overwhelming sense of disempowerment that comes from the unknown, from the voices, such as the Executive (principal, assistant principal, supervisors etc) that meet to make decisions about the target and find ways to force their agenda (Carey 2004); that is, the removal of the target (Lutgen-Sandvik 2006; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, and Alberts 2007; Leymann 1990; Leymann and Gustafsson 1996; Einarsen 2000). Teachers, once they become the object of others desire to eliminate, report they are policed, documented by supervisors who will often with fabricated evidence, and they also become vigilant at policing themselves. Participants also report that they reach a point where nothing seems to make sense anymore; that all they know to be true, fair, decent, and humanity is lost. They are trying to survive the power over and constant barrage of attacks that come from management. Their trauma is now well established and thoughts of how to escape the emotional pain lead contemplation of suicide.

This aspect to the experience is often reported by participants; suicidal thoughts and fantasising about suicide, although all are quick to say that they would never do it; something keeps them holding on but this is not always the case as Leyman & Gustafsson (1996) go so far as to claim that most workplace suicides are the result of bullying. A participant, once reporting to the executive that she was feeling suicidal as a result of workplace bullying was telephoned by the Staff Welfare Officer and told ‘how dare you put your death on another employee?’ Furthermore, she was immediately removed from her teaching position and put in a side room of the library, isolated, so she would not be a “risk to other staff.” Later that day she was phoned by the District Schools Director and ordered to attend a meeting with him immediately. He failed to follow Due Process.
Targets also report that their union has been unsupportive and at times obstructive. One union representative advised that as the bullies are also members of the same union they (the union) had a conflict of interest. However, unions invariably support the bullies and close ranks against the target. This practice has been reported by most of the participants. Research both locally (Hull 1999) and in other countries (Kitt 2007; Field 2002) has also found that unions do little to support their members. One participant recently phoned to advise that her union sent a representative to her school to give a presentation to the staff on bullying. The advice was that it was not worth making a complaint and filing for Workcover (Workers Compensation) as the situation could get worse (which it does) and that it would be better for the target to get on with the job. A comment made by all participants is “The union (NSW Teachers Federation) is in the Department’s (NSW Department of Education) pocket.” In other words, the union will do whatever the Department wants them to do, especially in cases of bullying claims. The advice of the union here is that the responsibility is on the target not the organisation and any attempt to address the issue will incur consequences.

Targets are often made the scapegoat of poor workplace and institutional practices, ineffective management, concern for the bottom line, image or spin, as well as an unwillingness to be truly committed to integrity, honesty, self-reflection and listening to the voices of those who have become the statistics of this deeply damaging, culturally accepted, normalised abhorrent human condition (Bowie 2002; Westhues 2000; Braverman 2004). Braverman (2004) argues that in addressing workplace violence (bullying is workplace violence) a closer look at the organisation is required rather than on the individual. His argument is consistently supported by researchers into bullying and mobbing (Bowie 2002, 1998, 2002; Einarsen, Asland, and Skogstad 2007; Einarsen 1999; Einarsen, Raknes, and Matthieson 1994; Hockley 2003; Hodson, Roscigno, and Lopez 2006; Hutchinson et al. 2009; Ishmael 1999; Sparks, Faragher, and Cooper 2001).

A report from the Australian Institute of Criminology shows there was a covert agreement between organisations and workers’ compensation insurers to decline claims of stress related to bullying (Perrone 1999) and this is reflected in the current study. When the union, the workplace, the insurers, and other stakeholders such as a person’s general practitioner, are working to contain a legal and political issue, then the target is made to carry the burden of the problem. In the context of organisational management’s failure to address the issue of bullying, this paper challenges the notion of ‘resilience’ as a way to ‘help’ the target.

Resilience places the onus of change and implied blame on the target rather than shaking down the embedded problem within the organisation. Let’s consider for a moment a pie shape that has three sections; one section for the organisation in which bullying occurs, one section for the bully/ies, and one section for the target of bullying. A pie is 360º (circle) and it is portioned as 348º, 10º and 2º. When I present this to a group of people I ask, “Tell me which portion applies to who takes the greater responsibility for change?” Interestingly, most people say that the bully should take the largest portion and Brodie’s law would support this perspective. Rarely do audiences understand that it is the organisation in which bullying occurs, which needs to take responsibility, take action, and genuinely apply change to practices. By applying 10º to the bully does not absolve them from responsibility, but their behavioural changes must be incorporated into organisational change. The 2º applied to the target is not to build resilience but to find a way to self-care and to heal which is a different concept. I would argue that targets of bullying are resilient, particularly the targets I meet both in the study and in advocacy.
Evidence of their resilience is that they stay in their workplaces while attempting to address the issue of bullying, some for many years. They continue to apply themselves to their position often with increased workload layered by management, as well as attempting to maintain some life outside work. Brodie’s law has taken the common misunderstanding of responsibility and placed the greater portion on to the bully when the organisation needs to be held accountable to the higher degree. Bullying behaviour can only flourish where there is a fertile workplace practice without consequences to the organisation. Resolution is a top down response.

In the words of Elie Wiesel (1986), Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate, “There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.” My PhD is my protest. While I protest, I also aim to raise awareness and bring, through the voices of teacher targets and their stories, some light on the violence normalised within our society and offer a way for their voices to be heard above the deafening silence of unimplemented policy and rhetoric.

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Believe or ‘burn in hell’: The politics of religion pedagogy in Australia, a pilot study

Catherine Byrne
Macquarie University

Abstract: Public school religion education raises complex policy responsibilities in plural democracies. In Australia, ambiguous policy intent and contradictory implementations create confusion for parents and educators. The state’s desire to encourage access by diverse faith groups defends minimal regulation, but also enables extremism, with children warned they will ‘burn in hell if (they) do not believe in Jesus’ (ID44). In the context of debate about alternatives, this pilot survey of attitudes identifies significant differences between the teaching philosophy desired by parents and professional educators and the approach taken by volunteer religious instructors.

Politics, unity and diversity

21st century religion has re-emerged as a social force beyond 20th century secularization. Contemporary global developments (such as transnational labour markets, communication technologies, religious revivalism and mass migration) ‘raise important issues about the status of religious law, custom and practice in the context of Western secularism’ (Turner 2007, 406). Turner noted that the political contradiction between a nation’s desire to maintain homogenous unity, and its economic need for intercultural exchange, produces a ‘binary division between insiders and outsiders ... aliens and citizens’ (411). Turner argued that ‘Globalization has created a system of religions that are competitive and often mutually exclusive’ (412). He warned that ‘where nationalism becomes caught up with religion ... it makes the creation of an inclusive (secular) community especially difficult to achieve’ (Turner 2009, 72).

Australian national identity ‘continues to experience tensions between multiculturalism, on the one hand, and a legacy of Anglo privilege and cultural dominance on the other’ (Forrest and Dunn 2010, 86). Such tensions are exacerbated by modern media’s desire for, and focus on, conflict (Lester, 2011). Lester theorised that the ever-present message of insider-outsider tension creates the belief that accommodating both religious minorities and Christian conservatives in public policy is ‘too controversial or impossible practically’ (2011, 4). Australian media shows some support for a broad-based study of religions in public schools (Topsfield 2011a; Zwartz 2011). However, adversarial articles dwell on potential conflict (Topsfield 2011b) and over-simplify the issue to one of polemical support for, or objection to, religion in schools. The complexities of ‘good and bad’ ways to teach religion are rarely dealt with.

Australia’s approach to navigating insider-outsider boundaries is reflected in education policy and practice, as school room micro-interactions encapsulate the shift, from a white, Anglo-Celt, Christian society, to a nation of multiple cultures and beliefs. Prime Minister Gillard spoke of the power of education to temper the tension: ‘During a time of challenging global trends and demographic shifts ... education policy will play a key role’ (Gillard 2010). In education, religion brings sharp focus on the insider-outsider boundary dispute through two different pedagogical approaches: one that excludes religious others and one that embraces them.
This pilot study examines the two approaches and explores connections between these pedagogies and a liberal-authoritarian spectrum of attitudes. It questions whether a single-faith approach to teaching religion harbours authoritarian attitudes, which in turn may foster intolerance.

**Religion, prejudice and education**

Australian social research points to the importance of interreligious education as part of the remedy for countering ethnic and religious prejudice (Erebus International 2006; HREOC 2007; Byrne 2009; Bouma and Halafoff 2009). In response to increasing international mobility, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, signed by all state education ministers and the then Federal minister for both Education and Social Inclusion, Julia Gillard, noted a heightened need for Australian educators to ‘nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity and a sense of global citizenship’ (Education Services Australia 2008, 4). This call for an intercultural approach to religion in education is not new. Similar recommendations to state and federal agencies can be found throughout the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s (Lovat 2002).

Decades on, the most consistent finding of the 2011 Australian Human Rights Commission Report into Freedom of religion and belief in 21st century Australia, is the ‘need for, and benefits of, education about religion... for all schools to develop awareness, familiarity, and respect for difference, from the first year to the final year of a child’s education’ (Bouma, Cahill, Dellal, and Zwartz 2011, 58). As a ‘critical need’, the report highlights ‘education about the religions, spiritualities and worldviews present in and affecting Australia... (as a way to) increase understanding and knowledge and, in so doing, reduce discrimination and prejudice’ (80).

This need increases with the inexorable shifts in Australia’s religious demographics. At the 2006 census (ABS 2006b): 63 percent of Australians indicated that they were Christian; 30 percent had either no religion or did not specify; 2.1 percent were Buddhist and 1.7 percent were Muslim.

Despite increasing religious diversity, Australian research shows widespread ignorance about different religions (Rymarz 2007; Cahill, Bouma, Delal and Leahy, 2004) and frequent religiously-marked racial prejudice, particularly towards Muslims (HREOC 2007; Forrest and Dunn 2007). Australian surveys in recent decades show consistent high levels of intolerance and rejection of cultural diversity (Markus 2010). 40 percent of Australians believe some ethnic and religious groups do not belong in the country though only one in 10 outwardly express racist views (Dunn 2008). Reflecting Turner’s contradictory tension, Forrest and Dunn noted that ‘strong levels of support for cultural diversity co-exist with anti-multicultural attitudes’ (2010, 81).

Forrest and Dunn (2010) found regional differences in racism depending on the degree of cross-cultural contact. They claimed that culturally diverse areas have higher levels of contact and insecurity about cultural difference, and associated this with high levels of racism. Additionally they found that areas of low-level cross-cultural relations showed low racism levels. When considering exclusive attitudes, inter-cultural exposure is not the only influencing factor. Forrest and Dunn concluded that ‘learned attitudes underlie peoples’actions’ (98), and that uncivil behaviour towards cultural diversity can be changed. As Jackson noted, the connection between education and tolerance depends on pedagogy (2004).
Religion pedagogies

Theorists distinguish between faith-forming instruction or learning into a religion (which teaches the doctrine and practices of a single tradition and encourages the student to become an insider), and multi-tradition education learning about religions, as an outsider (Grimmit 2000). These approaches are considered oppositional due to vastly different emphases on the role of the learner. They are often described as ‘religious instruction’ - RI, and ‘religion education’ - RE. McInerney &McInerney (2002) and Dewey (1938) argued that instruction implies an answer-focused, teacher-centred and top-down approach, where passive learners are spoon fed approved information, while education places the learner at the centre of a bottom-up process which values the art of questioning (in Bradford 2008). Education sees the learner as active protagonist and critical decision maker.

In Australia, different states, institutions and individuals use varying nomenclature. New South Wales (NSW) policy uses the terms: ‘Special Religious Education’ (SRE) - to describe weekly instruction by faith volunteers; and ‘General Religious Education’ (GRE) - to describe social science education, taught by professionals. SRE is more correctly understood to be instruction into a single-faith, so I refer to it as ‘RI’.

Before conducting the attitudes survey, I reviewed various state policy documents and interviewed practicing and retiring teachers, principals, religious community leaders, RI volunteers and parents. Given Australia’s social tensions, the following questions were explored: Do RI volunteers include or exclude the religious other? Do children get conflicting messages from professional educators and RI volunteers? Do current policy and practice support historic Christian dominance and ongoing privilege? Following is a summary of the policy context and common practices.

Religion in Australian schools – more learning into than learning about

The state-based but nationally similar policies emphasize faith formation (RI) over the academic study of religions (RE). In NSW, General Religious Education (GRE) is a poorly supported subject area (NSWDET 2008) and receives about one-sixth of the class time given to RI. In practice, GRE receives minimal curriculum attention, and usually only in grades 3 and 4. The Department also acknowledges ‘limited flow through’ of GRE into the senior stages (NSWDET 2008, Q.20). It appears that learning about religions is not a priority in NSW public schools at any age. In contrast, RI begins in kindergarten, with a dedicated weekly timeslot of up to one hour.

In NSW, as in most other states, parents must specify at enrolment either a faith denomination or ‘no religion’, and select from available weekly RI classes, commonly called ‘scripture’. Some metropolitan schools offer a wide choice of traditions; in other regions, options are limited to ‘Christianity’ or ‘non-scripture’. About 90 percent of authorised RI providers in NSW are Christian (NSWDET 2010). Against policy, a few schools have only the Christian option, with no opt-out provision. In some NSW schools (and in Victoria as policy), if parents do not formally opt out, the default is Christian (usually non-denominational Protestant). In some schools, formal opt-out, in writing, is a yearly requirement.

For many children, scripture is their first experience of cultural segregation. Students not attending are supposed to be separated, but this does not always occur. Often, opt-out ‘non-scripture’ children simply go to the back of the class to read or do homework, while the religious volunteer passes out treats and colouring sheets to others.
Most states legislate against positive opt-out alternatives. In some NSW schools, 80 percent of children opt out of RI (Longstaff, 2010), and are usually placed in limited supervision, age-combined groups. A hotly debated amendment to the NSW Education Act allowed the teaching of secular ethics as an RI alternative for the first time in 2011 (NSW Parliament 2010), overturning more than a century of Church primacy in the ostensibly secular system. Prior to this amendment, the policy prohibited activities which might compete with RI such as ‘lessons in ethics, values, civics or general religious education’ (NSWDET 2002, 3). In one Sydney school, activities such as knitting, playing chess or drawing were also banned (Russell 2011). In another school, opt-out children were told by the principal that they would be ‘better off going back to their scripture class’ (NSWDET 2011, 1).

The NSW ethics program will reach only 57 of the state’s 2200 public schools in 2011. However, several Christian Church leaders have vowed to challenge the amendment. Other states have yet to enable a positive non-religious option despite repeated requests from Humanist organisations.

State agencies do not monitor RI curriculum or delivery. Instead, they authorise providers to develop and deliver RI without interference. NSW policy notes that ‘Schools are not responsible for and should not disseminate… (RI) lesson content’ (NSWDET 2002, 4). Trained teachers are only allowed to attend ‘with the agreement of the (RI volunteer) teacher’ (4), and complaints (of inefficiency or distortion of doctrine) are referred back to the religious bodies who endorse the volunteers. The NSWDET does not collect or analyse or complaints centrally. The policy appears to write out government accountability, with RI administration effectively outside departmental jurisdiction.

One NSWDET complaint illustrates the policy in practice. In 2010, a parent complained about racial vilification in RI. Their nine-year-old’s class was told that ‘God gets angry at men who marry foreign women’ (NSWDET 2011, 1). The child’s mother is of Hindu, Indian heritage. Lesson notes for the children included the story of Ahab, which stated that: ‘foreign nations’ have ‘disgusting customs’; and that worshipping ‘false’ or ‘foreign’ gods (other than ‘the God of Israel’) is ‘unmitigated evil’ and a ‘sin’ worse than ‘both adultery and murder’ (Christian Education Publications 2010, 9-26). During the class, a Bangladeshi girl was asked to role-play the idolater Jezebel, who led Ahab to sin and punishment of death. Children’s notes included the details that ‘prostitutes washed themselves in (Ahab’s) blood … and dogs licked Ahab’s blood off the ground, just as the lord had warned’ (Christian Education Publications 2010, 26). This curriculum is widely used in schools across the country.

Responding to the complaint, the NSWDET defended RI policy on the grounds that it ‘separates church and state’, and reiterated that: ‘the Department has no say over the content of scripture classes’ (Elliot in NSWDET 2011, 1). The provider, Anglican Youthworks, argued that: ‘Whether you like it or not, whether it’s brutal or not, it’s in the Bible’ (Webb in NSWDET 2011, 2).

Problems of extremist teaching are not isolated to the Christian traditions, with various state education departments and minority faith peak bodies recording inappropriate representation. In any case, the complaints mechanism appears to offer little redress. RI providers of various faiths, motivated by good intentions and delivering potentially beneficial programs, find it increasingly difficult to defend the current system.
Christian proselytising privilege

The arm’s length policy enables state support for Christian privilege. In Victoria, the Education Department sponsors Christian Access Ministry (with four year funding of $2 million). Access provides 96 percent of Victorian RI and are the default provider for those do not opt out. They define their role as ‘converting’ children in a ‘cross cultural mission’, since, ‘without Jesus, our students are lost’ (Pattison 2008, 8-12). The Department does not provide financial aid to minority faiths or secular groups. Access describes the policy environment as a ‘God-given open door to children’, with schools seen as ‘the greatest mission field ... for disciple-making’ (Paddison, 2008, 6). An Anglican chaplain from a Victorian private school commented that: ‘The state school classroom is not the place for conversion or proselytising, and while Access Ministries would claim that’s not what they do, I’m afraid that is their default position’ (Noone 2011, 3)

Christianity advantage is also apparent in NSW. For example, the NSWDET produces a worship booklet for Education Week which invites children to: ‘learn more about your Son Jesus as we read the Bible’ (NSWDET 2010a). In 2010, a NSW public school permitted a Christian group to build a room on school grounds for religious instruction. Against state policies, the group opposes homosexuality, supports creationism and teaches intelligent design. Ignoring the conflict of interest, the $40,000 gift was approved by the NSWDET (Gilmore, 2010). This Christian emphasis raises questions for parents and educators regarding policy intent.

Research in religious diversity and education

Despite calls for inclusive religion education, Australian public schooling favours segregated instruction, using untrained volunteers, in a mechanism lacking accountability, with limited opt-out provisions.

In contrast, standards for government school RE in the UK, Europe, Canada, Indonesia and parts of Africa draw on the Toledo Guiding Principles (OSCE/ODIHR 2007). These principles aim to direct RE policy to: encourage dialogue between traditions; provide positive opt-out arrangements; and enable the state to ensure professionalism in teaching. In addition, research into religion pedagogy and its social effects has been given a high priority in the UK, Europe and Canada in the past few decades. The international trend is for children to ‘develop the ability to live with difference… at the earliest possible age’ (Schweitzer 2009, 41)

Hull speculated that single-faith instruction increases inter-religious intolerance because it provides no bridge to understanding other beliefs and ‘does not expand the cognitive horizons of the student’. At the same time, criticism of the multi-tradition approach includes the concern that while it may ‘help break down the stereotypes of the religious traditions’ (Hull 2001, 2) it has tended to be either overly descriptive (too clinical and full of facts) and thus trivializing the ‘spirit’ in spirituality (Burn & Hart 1988), or, contrarily, over-emphasizing similarity of spiritual experience, thus illegitimately homogenising critical differences between faiths (Barnes 2009)

Australia and New Zealand both use a single-faith access system, but research on its outcomes is non-existent. Bradford’s (2008) study on Victorian approaches highlighted variations in the understanding of educators, parents and religious volunteers, partly because of the RI program’s covert nature, but also due to the lack of RE implementation. Few participants in her survey were aware of any difference between ‘religious instruction’ and ‘religious
education’. Despite a distinction in policy, some parents and volunteers assumed that both RI and RE referred to Christian catechism. Bradford argued that RI in government schools forms part of a hidden curriculum since it does not have an explicit curriculum space and since it resides within an ambiguously understood ‘secular’ policy environment. Her study highlighted the controversial and emotive nature of the subject, with some respondents resembling ‘a sleeping volcano’ (30).

Bradford noted that arguments in support of RI generally relied on implied values education, rather than religious reasoning. She said that by understating its religious component, RI hides its essential nature and that: ‘The education system appears to nest a dysfunction by having a whole curriculum aiming for high level thinking and, on the other hand, a [non-critical] religious instruction program’ (Bradford 2008, 12). Countering this, Gross and Rutland (2010) argued that RI provides a safe space for children of minority faiths, in contexts that are increasingly hostile. Lovat et al (2010) argued that such hostility could be addressed through values education.

The potential to increase education about religions for all children, and the importance of this, particularly for those in privileged groups, has not been explored in Australia. Religion is not a distinct area of the new national curriculum. Representatives of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) stress the Authority’s limited mandate, and that implementation of the new curriculum will conform to state Departments’ requirements (ACARA 2011). Meanwhile, segregated, Christian-centric instruction continues.

Politics as religion pedagogy

Fundamentalist religiosity has been linked to prejudice and right-wing authoritarianism by Allport (1950), Altemeyer (1996), Duck and Hunsberger (1999); Rowat and Franklin (2004) and Brint and Abrutyn (2010). What is less understood is the manifestation of these links in classroom practice. Mavor, Louis and Laythe emphasised the complexity of authoritarianism as a construct, and the importance of further efforts towards ‘understanding the paradoxical relationships between religiosity, prejudice and social conflict’ (2011, 41). Farnen and Meleon (2000) found that a teacher’s ideology may influence both pedagogy and student attitudes. Jackson also linked pedagogy to ideology, with RI favoured by conservative nationalists, who ‘promote the association of morality, religion and citizenship (with) ... cultural and national identity... by arguing that Christian indoctrination is an educationally valid approach’ (2004, 2).

In this vein, Law (2007, 23) argued that the most ‘vital’ dispute regarding approaches to religion pedagogy lay not between believers and atheists, but between ‘Liberals on the left’ and ‘Authoritarians on the right’ (original capitalization). Law found ‘a sliding scale between the liberal and authoritarian extremes’ (2), locating most approaches between these positions. The approaches tend to differ on: single versus plural settings; literal versus metaphorical scriptural interpretations; top-down and centralized versus bottom-up and distributed authority; and collective versus individual moral responsibility.

Law noted that both ends of the scale can be problematic. Extreme liberalism can become confused with relativism and distort into ‘politically correct twaddle of a rather noxious sort’ (2007, 89). On the other hand, he argued that stopping pupils from being exposed to different points of view on the grounds that it would ‘only confuse’ (29), was ‘essentially manipulative’ (31). Following Kymlicka’s (1989) case for socially grounded liberalism, Law argued that the critical thinking emphasis of liberal RE is the best defence against the dangers
of both authoritarian ‘thought control’ (Law 2007, 101) and a too-liberal ‘flabby… non-judgmentalism’ (97).

Law noted that a major liberal-authoritarian difference is the location of responsibility for choice. He argued that critical, liberal RE ‘insists that people make up their own minds about morality… it confront(s) young people with the responsibility to think for themselves about right and wrong’... (and) involves making sure citizens have the skills they need to discharge that responsibility properly’ (2007, 1-2). This approach involves acknowledging a functional similarity for religious traditions, while also respecting their significant theological differences. Jackson (2004) argued that liberal RE providers prefer a plural setting, to enable the recognition of those differences. Such settings are not generally supported by authoritarian teachers, who prefer to deliver understanding of others through the lens of a ‘home tradition’ (Byrne 2011).

Not all single-faith RI takes an exclusivist approach. Jackson (2004) noted that pedagogies can emphasise a single-faith tradition while recognizing plurality. Critical RI, for example, teaches respect for others by honouring human dignity despite religious differences, particularly regarding truth claims (Barnes 2009). However, a single tradition approach usually emphasises either: exclusion (that only one way is right); or hierarchy (that one way is definitely best).

Single-faith RI stresses the importance of submission to a single religious authority and external consensus for moral decisions. It aims to encourage faith understanding by immersion. This may enable religious insight that is not possible via rational analysis. The approach builds on Aristotle’s argument that understanding comes from experience. By being a Jew, perhaps a student may come to understand Judaism. The United Kingdom’s Chief Rabbi expressed the authoritarian view that religious experience requires a degree of submission, which ‘presupposes obedience, discipline, and self control… (and that) before we can properly criticize a (religious) practice, we need to set foot within it’ (Sacks 1997, 176-177 cited in Law 2007, 143). This approach grounds children in a particular system where moral authority generally resides within religious texts. A more literal interpretation of scripture is common.

According to Inglehart & Welzel’s world values analysis, liberals emphasize choice and diversity, and teach independence and ‘flexible forms of spirituality’, while authoritarians emphasize conformity and unity, and teach obedience and ‘institutionally fixed forms of dogmatic religion’ (2005, 31). Commenting on this ideological spectrum, Altermeyer (1996) found that liberalism depends on a willingness to sympathize with, and include strangers, while authoritarianism involves an excluding fear of others. Altermeyer claimed that authoritarian approaches are preferred by the politically privileged.

Liberal RE has its detractors. Barnes &Wright (2006) argued that liberal RE does not respect a student’s right to hold doctrinally supported illiberal views, particularly regarding homosexuality or abortion. In addition, l’Anson (2010) and Barnes (2001) argued that liberal RE sometimes claims a neutrality which is difficult to defend, that it over emphasizes secular ideology and Protestant theology. Barnes implied that pluralism minimises theological differences by ‘attempting to press on pupils... the principle that all religions are equal... [thus failing to]... inculcate true respect for difference’ (2009, 616). Perhaps he confuses equity with sameness. The plural principle emerges from the shared humanity beneath religious differences. By its nature (plural meaning many), it recognises (and encourages students to
respects) tradition differences, but demands fair and equitable treatment of individuals despite those differences.

Another argument against liberal RE is that it claims a self-evident good, that it is ‘over-positive’ in asserting its potential social impact, but dismissive of its potential to confuse those students who desire certainty (Barnes 2009). In Australian public schools, where liberal RE is limited, and volunteer RI is neither monitored nor researched, any evidence is difficult to find. This pilot study offers a first step towards examining the relationship between Australian religion pedagogies and community attitudes towards religious diversity.

Method

A mixed methods survey explored educators’ attitudes about teaching religions and beliefs as part of a study into links between educators’ attitudes and pedagogies and children’s attitudes to religious difference. Following is a report on the adult survey.

Sample

Participants were drawn from a population-based survey of adults (Year 1 teachers, Year 1 parents, school principals and Year 1 RI volunteers). Sixteen schools were invited, four from each of four locations: the regional towns of Ballina and Coffs Harbour and the Sydney suburbs of Baulkham Hills and Camden. This selection enabled two urban regions (one of high diversity and cross-cultural contact – Baulkham Hills, and one of low diversity – Camden) and two rural regions (one of high diversity and cross-cultural contact – Coffs Harbour and one of low diversity - Ballina)

Ballina is largely Anglo-Celtic, with few non-Christian religions. Coffs Harbour is 10 percent (mostly Indian-born) Sikh, has two Sikh temples and elected its first Sikh Councillor to local government in 2007. One local bank uses Punjabi language advertising and one surveyed school has signs in English and Punjabi. Stories in the local newspaper show a high level of cross-cultural contact.

Baulkham Hills, in Sydney’s ‘Bible Belt’, is home to the nation’s largest Pentecostal megachurch. Its public schools have the highest number of non-Christian options in public schools, indicating significant religious diversity. Camden, in Sydney’s south-west, is 82 percent Australian-born and largely Anglo-Celtic. Both Sydney regions’ city councils controversially rejected Muslim developments – in Baulkham Hills, a mosque and in Camden, a Muslim school. These areas have higher than average numbers of census respondents nominating a religious affiliation (ABS 2006a). They were selected to compare with regions of lower religious identity salience

Potential participants were invited to complete a paper survey distributed by the school. Of 800 sent surveys, approximately 550 were distributed1 and 123 were returned from 13 schools. See Tables 1 and 2.

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1 It is difficult to know the exact number of surveys distributed since some schools did not survey all year 1 classes, and one did not distribute to parents.
Table 1. Sample composition – educational role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI Volunteer</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missing</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>123</td>
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Table 2. Sample composition – regional location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballina</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffs Harbour</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baulkham Hills</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballina</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses generally reflect census religion data (ABS 2006b). 83 respondents were Christian and 26 not religious. Minority faiths included: 5 Hindu, 4 Buddhist, 1 Muslim, 1 Jain, 1 ‘spiritual’, and 2 ‘not stated’. 99 respondents were females and 22 males.

All RI volunteers were Christian, more Catholic than Anglican, reflecting census figures (ABS 2006b). RI volunteers ranged in age from under 30 to over 60, but the majority fell within the 46-60 age group and only 2 were male. They included representatives from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, though most identified as Anglo-Celt or ‘white Australian’, and 90 per cent believed Australia to be a ‘Christian nation’ (compared to an average of 40 per cent in the other roles surveyed). They were represented in all participating schools, with the majority from Baulkham Hills.

Limitations

In busy schools, voluntary paperwork gets a low priority. Other reasons for the low response rate became apparent during the study. Only two schools promoted the survey. In some regions, religious officials asked RI volunteers not to participate. RI is a controversial, highly politicised topic in Australia. One principal said he would be surprised if any surveys would be returned, describing scripture as: ‘too hot to handle… it’s just a no-go zone that no one
wants to really look at’. Another said they had: ‘just defused a knife edge argument’ (between parents and RI volunteers about the inclusion of non-religious children in scripture classes)... ‘The Buddhist teacher didn’t want non-Buddhist students because they couldn’t meditate. The Jewish teachers didn’t want non-Jews’. Another explained that: ‘Messing with scripture is like throwing a lit cigarette near petrol… it might fizzle out or it might explode’.

**Measures - Teaching Beliefs Attitudes Index**

The Teaching Beliefs Attitudes Index (TBAI) assessed liberal-authoritarian approaches to religion teaching. ‘Beliefs’ covered both religious and non-religious beliefs. The 16 survey items contained expressions of liberal and authoritarian attitudes which were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The survey also contained open-ended opportunities for respondents to make statements which were analysed for significant themes.

**Results**

The Teaching Beliefs Attitudes Index generated a Cronbach alpha of 0.85\(^2\) (N=123) and a mean of 3.58 (SD=0.66). See Table 3.

The statements showing the highest correlation were that: Children should learn about religion only from a teacher who shares their parent’s faith or belief system’; and ‘Young children should learn about religion only with peers of their own faith or belief system, not in combined groups with different beliefs’ (TBAI-15 and 13). This highlights the possibility of a position on segregation as a predictor of ideological stance.

The survey item which resulted in the largest deviation from the mean was that: ‘Moral and religious authority resides only in God, God’s word and representatives’ (TBAI-2). Another item showing wide variance was that: ‘Schools should not host talks by atheists or humanists about non-religious beliefs’ (TBAI-7). These statements reflect essential differences between the stances - the validity of sources of authority and openness to alternative perspectives.

**Variation in attitudes – role, region and religion**

To determine whether attitudes differed with educational role, regional location and religious orientation, one-way between-groups comparisons\(^3\) were conducted. Comparisons between role groups revealed that RI volunteers were significantly more authoritarian in their approach (TBAI Mean=2.9, SD = 0.62) compared to parents (M=3.74, SD=0.63, p=0.001), principals (M= 3.76, SD=0.50, p= 0.001) and teachers (M=3.57, SD=0.53, p=0.006). Respondents from Coffs Harbour showed more liberal views (TBAI M=4.15, SD = 0.59) than those from Baulkham Hills (M=3.36, SD=0.68, p=0.001) and Camden (M=3.46, SD=0.60, p=0.012). Baulkham Hills also differed significantly from Ballina (M=3.85, SD=0.45, p=0.011).

72 percent of RI volunteers thought children should be taught the Bible as fact, as opposed to 15 percent of parents and 3 percent of professional educators (TBAI-3). 77 percent of RI volunteers thought children should not learn ethical concepts and values from various traditions, as opposed to 8 percent of parents and 16 percent of professional educators (TBAI-14). 85 percent of parents (and 22 percent of RI volunteers) want educators to teach children

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\(^2\) This level of internal consistency indicates that the TBAI provides a consistent measure of the underlying liberal-authoritarian constructs.

\(^3\) ANOVA with post hoc tests (Tukeys HSD). Levene’s tests for homogeneity (p>0.05) indicated that sample variances are not random but relate to specific variables.
that they have a free choice whether or not to believe in God (TBAI-12) though only 66 percent of educators see this as part of their job. The lack of respondents from minority religions meant that scores could not be compared across individual faith groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>*Reliability correlation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>**Y%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When it comes to religion and moral beliefs, each individual SHOULD make up their own mind.</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>91.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Moral and religious authority resides ONLY in God, God’s words and God’s representatives.</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Young children SHOULD be taught that the scriptures are divine words or historical facts and thus accepted without too much questioning</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Young children SHOULD be taught that scriptures are guiding stories but encouraged to think critically and independently about what truths the stories might contain.</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parents’ rights to educate their children in their own religion/beliefs ARE more important than the right of the child to learn about different world views.</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Encouraging a child to make up their own mind on religious or moral matters IS too risky.</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Schools SHOULD NOT host talks by atheists or humanists about non-religious beliefs.</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Schools SHOULD host talks by representatives of different religions and take children to observe collective worship of different faiths.</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. A nation’s institutions SHOULD favour the majority religion of its society</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. A nation’s educational institutions SHOULD teach about any religion or belief system if it makes up a significant component of its population.</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Young children SHOULD be encouraged and taught HOW to critically question and think independently about religions and non-religious beliefs.</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Teachers SHOULD tell children that they have free choice whether to believe in God (or not).</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Young children SHOULD learn about religion only with peers of their own faith or belief system, not in combined groups with different beliefs.</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Young children SHOULD learn ethical concepts and values from various religious and non-religious traditions of the world.</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Children SHOULD learn about religion only from a teacher who shares their parent’s faith or belief system.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Children SHOULD learn about different religions from a teacher trained in religious and non-religious diversity.</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Teaching Beliefs Attitudes Index

* Correlations showed minimal impact of removing any item, so all 16 were included in analyses.

** Y% = percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree showed wide variance and so were not a focus of the analyses.
Qualitative findings

Open-ended statements generally supported the quantitative findings, with liberal views accompanying higher TBAI scores and authoritarian views accompanying lower scores.

Liberal statements (and the TBAI mean for the respondent) included: ‘Children should be educated about the belief systems of different religions to promote understanding and allow them to decide’ (ID15-OS6, M = 4.63); ‘Scripture should be taught as belief, not fact’ (ID42-OS6, M = 4.25); and ‘Public schools should teach tolerance, not blind faith’ (ID43-OS16, M = 4.88). Authoritarian statements (and TBAI mean) included: ‘It would be better if there was total attendance at scripture by all students’ (ID94-OS10, M = 2.19); ‘Children should believe in what their parents follow’ (ID116-OS8, M = 1.56); ‘Australians will only be free when we submit and follow our saviour, Jesus’ (ID39-OS18, M = 3.31); and ‘Other religions should keep it to themselves... It worries me that other faiths come to our school’ (ID14-OS6 and 12, M = 2.38).

Demographics were mixed at both ends of the spectrum. The ten most liberal respondents (TBAI mean range from 4.88 to 4.75) included 4 males and 6 females, all in the 31-45 age range, with 6 being non-religious and 4 religious (2 Christian and 2 Buddhist). 3 were from Coff’s Harbour, 3 from Ballina, 2 from Baulkham Hills and 1 from Camden. Eight identified as Anglo-Celt Australian and one as European. One was a school principal, all others were parents.

The ten most authoritarian respondents (TBAI mean range from 1.56 to 2.56) were female. Six were from the 31-45 age group, 3 from the 46-60 age group and one was over 60. Eight were from Baulkham Hills and two were from Camden, 9 identified as Christian and one as non-religious. Three identified as Asian, 3 as Anglo-Celt Australian, 2 as European and 1 as Middle-Eastern. Six were RI volunteers, 4 were parents.

Analysis of open statements revealed that 69 percent of respondents (including some RI volunteers) support a multi-tradition approach. This was not dependent on religious affiliation or TBAI score. Indicative statements included: ‘It would be beneficial if they had teachers trained in delivering all the faiths’ (ID63-OS6, M = 4.56); ‘Religion should be about them all so an informed opinion can be made’ (ID12-OS5, M = 4.63); and ‘There should be equal representation’ (ID56-OS6, M = 2.56). One Principal noted that: ‘We only have Christian scripture but our school has a 35% Punjabi Sikh enrolment. It’s ridiculous. We need an option for world religions and beliefs’ (ID43-OS6, M = 4.88).

Some respondents (from all role groups) perceived RI as exclusively Christian. Responses to the open ended statement: ‘Some people think that Australia is a Christian nation’ included: ‘Scripture refers only to God’s word as revealed in the Bible’ (ID94-OS6); and ‘No other religions are represented at our school. I feel glad about this. There is no other true God’ (ID39-OS5, 6). At times, this exclusivism displayed ignorance of other faiths. From a school offering only Catholic, Protestant or non-scripture, came the comment: ‘We have all the different faiths’ (ID116-OS5). One parent regarded the Easter hat parade as a ‘non-Christian alternative’ (ID39-OS9).

One school had 50 percent of children opt out of RI. This creates a logistical issue which schools respond to in different ways. Twenty percent of parents perceived some pressure to enrol in a religious option to avoid large, minimally supervised and unproductive non-scripture groups. At one school, some parents believed that: ‘There is no non-scripture available’ (ID15-OS6), or that: ‘Bahai is used for the non-religious students’ (ID75-OS4).
Some children felt banishment: ‘My child feels left out since she is placed in the naughty room’ (ID4-OS1). Some schools ignore policy instructions to separate non-religious students from RI classes. On the other hand, one parent claimed that: ‘Even non-scripture children are segregated into those with some spirituality and those with no defined affiliation, it’s preposterous’ (ID13-OS6).

Many respondents expressed confused and contradictory understanding about: the available RI options; the nature of RI outcomes; the presence of trained teachers; and class sizes. In some schools, teachers were encouraged to attend RI to manage behaviour, in others, teachers were not permitted. One principal argued that: ‘there is no way to know what values are being taught’ (ID43-OS13). There was a notable desire for parents to receive more information on policy and practice.

**Positives and problems for minorities**

For many minority faith communities, RI is a socially including activity offering rare access into the education of their children. It can enable a safe space for children to gain a deeper understanding of their religious and cultural heritage. 70 percent of all respondents felt that RI delivered important lessons in values. One school newsletter noted that scripture validates cultural minorities and ‘educates the whole school community’. RI volunteers appreciated the opportunity for representation and raised the importance of children learning from an exemplar. However, one community leader reflected that his faith community had tried to deliver scripture but was discouraged by school co-coordinators and by a lack of translation assistance from the NSWDET.

**Discussion**

Allport (1954) emphasized that positive contact with the ‘other’ reduces prejudice. This was borne out by more liberal attitudes in Coffs Harbour, where Sikhs have a strong community identity. This challenges Forrest and Dunn’s idea that high levels of cultural contact are linked to insecurity and exclusive attitudes. The positive approach taken by the Coffs Harbour community may temper exclusion tendencies.

Authoritarian views appear to be associated with intolerance. The Sydney regions’ higher tendency to declare religious affiliation and their more authoritarian views suggest that identity salience may affect perspectives on religious diversity and pedagogy. Extreme views displayed elements of Christian-nationalism. One participant commented that: ‘Bowing down to minority cultural groups denies our culture was built on Christian Values… These new migrants have come into OUR culture (their emphasis), not the other way around’ (ID56-OS18, M = 2.56). However, some respondents with low TBAI scores included statements supportive of multiculturalism, such as: ‘We should accept people for who they are because Australia is multicultural’ (ID116-OS17, M = 1.56). This confirms Turner’s, and Forrest and Dunn’s, simultaneous but contradictory views on diversity.

RI’s lack of professional standards appears to put some RI content at odds with formal curriculum. One teacher said that: ‘the children were told we would burn in hell if we did not believe in Jesus’ (ID44-OS18). In addition, some regional volunteers distributed a ‘Creation For Kids’ (Grigg 2007) kit to dozens of schools, promoting a literal understanding of the Bible. The kit teaches that the earth is only 6000 years old and that: ‘Genesis is neither a fairy story, nor poetry, nor a parable …it is a reliable record of what actually happened’ (7). It derides atheism and evolution and quotes Bible references to show that ‘man and dinosaurs
once lived together’ (27). This finding highlights Law’s (2007) concern about the use of extremist tactics.

Law (2007) argued that a critical approach to religion education brings lasting benefits for a plural democracy - that it immunizes against the manipulations of both extreme liberalism and dogmatic authoritarianism. Internationally, governments are engaging with RE because of its social implications. Australia’s RI policies appear at once inspired (by encouraging access of minority faith communities) and yet limited (by excluding non-religious alternatives, by not addressing structural inequities for minority faiths and by not ensuring professional teaching standards).

Conclusion

This study explored insider-outsider tension in the context of Australian RI. Results support the hypothesis that the ‘learning into’ approach is associated with intolerant attitudes. Findings suggest that Australian public school parents and professional educators support a more inclusive approach to religion than is currently delivered, but that government bodies distance themselves from religion education and its social implications, leaving teachers in uncertain territory. The study does not measure outcomes of liberal RE against authoritarian RI, but suggests that research into children’s attitudinal outcomes may be an important next step. Sample size limitations make it difficult to draw other conclusions.

I have also tried to advance the understanding of the policy context and common RI practices in Australian public schools. Ambiguous applications of the secular principle contribute to variant practices, discrimination against some beliefs, and instances of fundamentalist doctrine. Australia’s national goal of ‘values-based education… [in which] respect for diversity is paramount’ (DEST, 2005), is ill-served by a policy which effectively protects Christian privilege and removes state accountability. In light of international trends in the teaching of religions and ethics, and, considering Australia’s continuing religiously based racism, a rebalancing, from instruction to education, appears overdue.

References


A Scholarly Affair
CSAA 2010 National Conference Proceedings


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Outback and Beyond: Live media as live research

Grayson Cooke
School of Arts and Social Sciences, Southern Cross University

Abstract: “Outback and Beyond: A Live Australian Western” is a live audio-visual performance I am currently developing with my collaborator, Rome-based sound artist Mike Cooper. This show is in the “live cinema” tradition, with Mike’s soundtrack of deconstructed Blues and processed electronics juxtaposed against my visuals, which consist of a live mix of archival footage of the Australian outback culled from films from the National Film and Sound Archive. The result is a live “Australian Western,” a meditation on Australian iconography and mythography, the dusty, hard-bitten DNA of national identity. With an outback road-movie soundtrack, and footage from docu-dramas, documentaries and feature films from the 1920s to the 1950s, “Outback and Beyond” presents the audience with a series of micro-narratives reminiscent of the themes and aesthetics of the Western film genre, but crucially, it is a Western set in Australia’s outback, reflecting Australia’s own relationship to its land, its history and its peoples. In this presentation, I wish to explore the ways in which this project can be understood as research, not merely in its development but in its performance as well. As an emanation of the Australian archive, this project is an exploration of Australian mythography, the process by which images of Australia and Australians have taken on iconic and mythic import. The project interrogates these myths through the practice of de- and re-contextualization, the montage aesthetic of the VJ mix. Importantly however, because this show is live media, because it is different every time it is performed, because it is mixed live and designed for live performance not static broadcast, it is only in performance that this de- and re-contextualisation occurs; and if by research we understand something like the purposeful study of a subject and the generation of knowledge that benefits others, then we can say that this project is constituted as research primarily in its live performance. This is live media as live research, real-time scholarship, scholarship on-the-fly.

“Outback and Beyond: A Live Australian Western” is a live audio-visual performance I have developed recently, in collaboration with Rome-based sound artist Mike Cooper, with whom I work regularly. It was conceived when Mike played me a recording of a solo performance he had done recently in Athens. With his roots in country blues in the 1960s, Mike now plays lap-steel guitar which he samples, loops, and processes electronically with a bizarre assemblage of pedals, digital effects-processors and blinking black boxes. He also sings, and in this performance, he was singing a kind of deconstructed Blues (with lyrics cut up and rearranged, Burroughs/Gysin-style, from a Thomas Pynchon novel), accompanied by this cavalcade of steel guitar licks and electronic noise. It sounded like a road movie, like a dusty, scratchy détourned Western, like Ry Cooder and John Ford had dropped some acid together and headed out West to beat out a new song.

But while listening to the recording, I started to wonder if this Western could be juxtaposed against the Australian landscape. I am a live audio-visual artist who works a lot in the “live cinema” tradition, mixing film and video clips live to produce performances that are cinematic but improvised, narrative fragments strung together on the basis of real-time...
decisions. I think audio-visually, always feeling out the images to go with a sound, the sound to go with an image. What kind of images could I mix to Mike’s latest work? It was a travelling-shot of the Australian outback that first came to mind, a dirt track stretching through a forbidding land, red earth and white gums, the imminent threat of attack from unknown quarters, a sense of un-belonging, of a beautiful, harsh, indifferent country waiting to throw you from its back. This was the Western! And it was also the story of Australia’s invasion, colonisation, exploration and settlement; the dream of the inland sea, camel trains and buffalo hunts, the coming of “civilization,” of technologies of communication and transport, the mail, the railroad, the telegraph. And so the travelling shot was now black and white, grainy, dusty and scratched, the celluloid degraded and failing; this Western was an archival Western, a Western formed from Australia’s cinematic history, which is also its imaginary, its storehouse of imagery and thus of myth.

In this paper, I will discuss the development and underpinning concepts of this project within the context of discourses surrounding creative practice research. This paper is about the “scholarly affair” inside of me, the cross-fertilization between my creative practice and the discourses of the academic system within which I work.

An excerpt from the show’s premiere performance at the Byron Bay Film Festival can be viewed here: http://www.vimeo.com/21008914.

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“Outback and Beyond” features live improvisation in both audio and visual modalities. For the audio, Mike Cooper plays lap-steel guitar and electronics. He also sings a libretto based around the adventures (and misadventures) of Charles Todd, the British astronomer and engineer who built the Adelaide to Darwin telegraph line in the 1870s. The libretto explicitly situates this project in relation to one of the main themes of the classic Western: the spread of communications technologies across “open” land, and the role of such technologies in the development of “the nation” (Cooke 2)

The visuals are taken from a group of early films selected from the National Film and Sound Archive, after numerous searches and viewings of films in the archive tagged with the term “outback.” The films are: Franklyn Barrett’s two surviving features, A Girl of the Bush (1921) and The Breaking of the Drought (1920); John Heyer’s well-known classic Back of Beyond (1954); The Inlanders (1949), a docu-drama produced by John Kingsford Smith for the Australian Inland Mission; and the travelogue A 5000 Mile Tour Through Central Australia (1930). These films all, in one way or another, depict and explore the landscape and societies of inland Australia in the early to mid-20th century. They depict settler characters struggling against the harshness of the land, forming communities via communications technologies across vast distances, meeting and in some instances warring with Aboriginal people; again, all themes that can be said to characterise the classic American Western, yet which are here employed in the service of Australian myth-making, and which reside in the nation’s archive.

In conceiving this project, then, a number of questions arose for me: What is an Australian Western? Does or can such a thing exist, and if so, what would it look and sound like? In casting my mind through the Australian cinematic canon, I was easily able to identify films that had been shot in and characterised by the outback, and so were set in the place where Westerns would normally occur; films like George Miller’s Mad Max series (1979-85), Ted Kotcheff’s 1971 masterpiece Wake in Fright, and Peter Weir’s The Cars That Ate Paris (1974); all films that took the Australian landscape, and especially the dangers of it, as a
major theme in some way. I also thought immediately of *The Proposition* (2005), John Hillcoat’s “revisionist” Western, with its depiction of banditry and bastardry in settler Australia.

None of these films, however, constituted an Australian Western in any traditional or canonical sense; while they had aspects of setting, *mise en scène* and narrative that bore similarities to some Westerns, they were also horrors, thrillers, and road-movies, and so could not be classified as Westerns as such, and either way, did not coalesce into a tradition of the Western. Another of my questions, then, was why did Australia not develop the Western as a film genre? Given a settler history that was in some way comparable to that of the United States, and especially given the similarities between the notion of the American “West” and the Australian “outback,” why did Australia not develop the Western as one of its defining modes of mythography in the same way the U.S. did? While my project does not “answer” this question as such, it is framed such that the audience must be confronted with the question: in producing a live audio-visual performance that is premised on new media and digital technologies yet is named an “Australian Western,” this show forces the audience to do the questioning of what an Australian Western might be, and whether what is occurring in front of them could be such a thing.

Because I conceived this project as being pulled together from existing media, I also had questions about the archive: If the Australian Western didn’t exist as a concrete formation, might it perhaps exist in the archive in an abstract form? Could I bring it out of the archive, could I make the archive spit out something new? To ask such questions is to ask about the function, now and in the future, of the national archive. Archives exist not merely as storehouses of public memory and as mechanisms for shoring up the mediated past against media degradation and format obsolescence; they also exist in relation to, as projections into, the future. As Jacques Derrida notes in *Archive Fever*, the archive as a concept is not so much a question of what is past, but a promise for and opening to the future, the future in which the archive will be asked to give up some of what it holds (Derrida 36). “Outback and Beyond” is a conscious play on this capacity of the archive to open to the future; in mixing, live, excerpts from archival films, the project aims to foreground this requirement that the archive is not merely understood as a repository of what is past, but as a generator of the future. To use the national archive in this way, the archive that in some way stores and creates the nation’s imaginary, is to ask audiences to envision the future of this imaginary, it is to imagine Australia’s myths and myth-making differently.

With such questions underpinning my enquiry, it was clear to me there was some research basis to this project. It was an enquiry into Australian mythography, the Australian imaginary, and the documents or artefacts that feed this imaginary. It needed to ask about the storage of these documents, their place in both history and historiography, as well as their contemporary function, the degree to which the contents of the archive existed in a space not of suspended animation but virtual re-animation. It was also an enquiry into live-media, live cinema, and the possibility of working live with a genre more associated with pre-edited film.

These questions thus also required that I think about creative practice and research, and the models under which they’re understood: practice-led research, research-led practice, practice as research, performative research etc. This was especially pertinent given Australia’s long history of enquiry into creative practice research, and its gradual and hard-won inclusion within the official definitions and funding of “research” (Strand; Smith & Dean). How would my project fit within these schemas?
In reading through the texts that have come to form the canon of arguments for and research into creative practice research in Australia – texts such as Dennis Strand’s 1998 report on Research in the Creative Arts for the Australian Government, and Brad Haseman’s “Manifesto for Performative Research,” as well as the considerable contribution in collation and editing by Hazel Smith & Roger Dean in Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice, and Estelle Barrett & Barbara Bolt in Practice as Research – I started to become frustrated with the ways creative practice was figured as research, and found that I was having trouble fitting “live,” improvised, collaborative performance into the models. Models of creative practice research seemed to favour finished works, static works, scripted or choreographed or composed works, and the language with which these works were described seemed to mitigate against works that were partially pre-conceived but were also definitively incomplete.

In what follows, I would like to detour quickly through the ways creative practice research has been figured recently, and especially in Australia, in order to provide some context for my own misgivings about how live audio-visual and improvised performance could fit within these schemas.

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In 1998, Dennis Strand’s Research in the Creative Arts report for the Australian Government noted how governments had tended to understand research in terms of the OECD definition, from the Frascati Manual of 2002, where research was defined as:

creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications. (OECD, in Strand 32)

However, despite a nod towards “creativity,” this definition kept research within a scientific, technological and essentially utilitarian mode, dedicated to economic value, products and services. In light of this bias, Strand recommended the notion of research equivalence as a way around this emphasis on application:

individual universities and the major funding bodies… should adopt the notion of research equivalence as an appropriate and valid concept for recognition of research-based practice and performance in the creative arts…. Research equivalent activity should be recognized as being equivalent to research and scholarly activities in traditional fields. (Strand xvii)

This notion of equivalence, however, has been found by subsequent commentators to be problematic. It retains a scientific model of research as primary, allowing, as Graeme Sullivan notes, that it accepts creative practice as a form of “creative social science or inventive applied technology” (Sullivan 46). We could also note that the term “practice as research” bears an echo of this notion of creative practice as a kind of disgraced cousin: practice playing at research, practice under the guise of research.

More recently, then, writers and research granting/assessment bodies (including the UK’s Research Assessment Exercise, New Zealand’s PBRF, and firstly the RQF and now the ERA in Australia) have worked to expand the definition of research and, importantly, have allowed that non-textual forms can be understood as research. That is, there is a demand for acceptance of symbolic, rather than textual or verbal, forms as appropriate mechanisms for the expression of research. Brad Haseman’s 2006 “Manifesto for Performative Research” states
that “research outputs and claims to knowing must be made through the symbolic language and forms of their practice” (Haseman, “Manifesto” 100-101). Smith & Dean note that while “for an artwork itself to be a form of research, it needs to contain knowledge which is new and that can be transferred to other contexts” (7), this knowledge may be non-verbal:

since it is clear that a sonic or visual artwork can sometimes transmit knowledge in non-verbal or non-numerical terms, we believe that any definition of knowledge needs to acknowledge these non-verbal forms of transmission. (3)

Brad Haseman and Daniel Mafe concur, arguing that:

this begins to shift what we consider knowledge to actually be and has epistemological implications for each study and the field. Affect is now actively brought into the equation and with it the indeterminacy of interpretation. (Haseman & Mafe 220)

And, it is with this imbrication of symbolic forms into the equation that Haseman coined the term “performative research,” in the Austinian sense: “Symbolic data work performatively. They not only express the research, but in that expression become the research itself” (Haseman, “Manifesto” 102).

These developments, in which symbolic, performative, emergent and experimental creative works have come to be recognizable within a research paradigm, have been an immense boon for creative practitioners seeking to understand their work as, and have it recognized by research granting bodies as, research. However, in thinking this through in terms of my own live, improvised, collaborative practice, I had a number of questions: What is a research “output”? What does it mean to say that research is “transmitted” or “transferred”? What does it mean to “report” on research “findings”? How does an artwork “contain” knowledge?

Despite the repudiation of the notion of “equivalence,” I find that the language with which creative practice research is expressed, retains echoes of very traditional notions of research which don’t fit with live-media performance. There is the assumption that research is completed, finished, then reported on, it is assumed to be a 2-step, binary process. It is also a private process, in a lab, or studio, that then makes “findings” public. If there is experimentation, it happens in the lab, in the studio – not in public.

This “making space” of the studio is central to much arts practice – but it does make the assumption that art is made in private and then displayed, and that these are separate processes, temporally and spatially separated. Likewise, research is produced, then it is consumed, and these are separate processes; it’s not produced at the same time as it is consumed. This is the temporality of research as normally conceived – research has a when. Moreover, research is understood to contain knowledge, the veracity and containedness of which is witnessed by an audience, as in the scientific practice of witnessing that Donna Haraway describes in her book Modest Witness (see Haraway).

However – and here we arrive at the gist of my hesitation over fitting live-media into existing descriptions of creative practice research: what if your practice is definitively incomplete? Live-media, at least my approach to it, is never “finished,” and it is designed to be incomplete, it is structurally partial. How can it be constituted as a research “outcome” if it is never “finished”? What if your research is produced at the same time as it is consumed? What if it occurs in “real-time”? What if it is based on improvisation, and is different every time it is manifest? What if the “research” is manifest only in performance, “live” and only during the time the performance occurs?
If research is the production of “new knowledge,” and if we can accept that knowledge may be able to be figured as affect, as “novel apprehensions” in Stephen Scrivener’s phrase (Biggs 68), as something that happens in the mind of an audience member, then it is not “contained” in the work, it occurs only in performance, and the “research” does not precede the work’s public performance or dissemination but happens concurrently with it. Research in this sense is a process, a doing, an event, it is not something static that can be contained as such.

While Outback and Beyond is indeed underpinned by what we could call traditional research, as evidenced by my discussion above of the questions that appeared to me as I conceived the project, any “outcomes” happen at the same time as this research is further developed, in the live situation, when the work is constituted. Every time I do this show, different answers to its questions will be proposed, it is iterative in its mode of enquiry but these iterations occur not in the private space of the laboratory or studio but in the public place of performance. The work is partially preconceived, again in the manner of a traditional research dichotomy between pre-conception and presentation, but only partially. It is spun together from over 120 “clips” sampled from the aforementioned films, which have been arranged broadly into categories so that “like” materials – materials similar in content, visual aesthetic or theme – can sit together. At bottom, though, this show is a superimposition, a montage, a Benjaminian “dialectical image,” superimposing the Western onto the Australian film tradition, onto Australian mythography and onto the landscape (with all the ambiguity of that term; landscape as an idea of the land, as land viewed a certain way, through certain eyes). It is also an audio-visual superimposition, juxtaposing images that stem from the early past of the 20th century, against a soundtrack that can only exist as a function of technologies of the present moment. As such, this superimposition cannot be a process that ends; it is a strategy for ongoing knowledge generation.

Live research, as I’m describing it here, is about setting up research conditions in a performance setting. It also thus allows that the researcher is not the only one who knows. Under this model, “knowledge,” as the thing that is generated by research, is not “contained” in the research but is a function of it, and “knowing” happens in the bringing together of audience and performer.

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In concluding, I should note that much of the literature on practice-led research does, indeed, identify the need for experimentation, improvisation and emergence to form part of research strategies (Smith & Dean 23; Kershaw 117). I’m sure that in some way many of the authors I’ve quoted would be in accord with me as regards the possibility of live research. So in making the critique I make here, I’m suggesting not so much that the authors re-think their underlying arguments regarding creative practice research, but that they re-think the way they write about it. My point is, that in opening up the possibility of practice-led research, or creative practice research, we need to pay attention to how we speak and write about research just as much as we pay attention to how we conceptualise it. Because so much of the history of how creative practice research has been figured in Australia and elsewhere has been a history of terminological shifts and nuances, re-phrasings of canonical “texts” and their use within Governmental policy and the policies of funding bodies, it is only to be expected that the future of these debates will be constituted by the same terminological scrutiny. If we are to be able to, in the future, continue to make space for the research status of emerging creative forms and practices, then we have to be mindful, in the present, of the languages and grammars we generate in this process.
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The converging worlds of ‘surfing the web’ and the sport of surfing

Marcos Dias
School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne

Abstract: The expression ‘surfing the web’ has been used to describe the experience of browsing the World Wide Web since the 1990s. Although this seems to have nothing in common with the physical experience of surfing waves, both experiences are linked through flow. Castells (1996: 412) has argued that flows are “the expression of processes dominating our economic, political and symbolic life”. I argue that the experience of ‘web surfing’ has significantly reshaped surfing as a sport.

The surfing industry has benefited from electronically networked flows to increase their revenues and markets. Rather than assuming increased control over individual surfers by the surfing industry, I argue that the former are able to reshape these flows to their own benefit. Ultimately, collaborative flows bring surfers and the surfing industry together in a synergistic two-way system of flows with benefits for both. I use Castells’ (1996) definition of the ‘space of flows’ as a starting point to analyse the importance of networked flows in reshaping surfing as a sport and use case studies of successful initiatives and my own personal experience to illustrate.

Introduction

The experience of ‘surfing the web’ has significantly reshaped the experience of surfing as a sport through the added benefits of electronically networked flows, or according to Castells (1996), the ‘space of flows’. This convergence process is mirrored by the convergence of surfers and the surfing industry through collaborative online initiatives in a synergistic two-way system of flows. I argue that individual surfers are able to reshape this process for their own benefit, rather than simply entering “flows of modulating systems of control” (Deleuze 1995, 121).

Surfers benefit from the flows of information available online to plan in advance where and when to surf, buy equipment, share experiences of previous surf sessions and facilitate political engagement in surf-related causes for charitable or personal purposes. The surfing industry has also benefited from extra flows of revenue and marketing from online initiatives, such as the broadcasting of surfing contests from remote and exotic locations to a worldwide audience through live webcasting. I will use Castells' (1996) definition of the ‘space of flows’ as a starting point to analyse the importance of networked flows in reshaping surfing as a sport and the convergence of surfers and the surfing industry through collaborative practices.

Surfing the web?

In 1992 Mark McCahill, a windsurfing enthusiast and one of the founders of the Internet application protocol Gopher, coined the term ‘surfing the Internet’ in a post on Usenet (Frana 2004, 21–31). A few years later the expression ‘surfing the web’ became a common way of describing the experience of browsing the World Wide Web, although hardcore (wave) surfers strongly criticise what they see as an inappropriate use of the word. Despite this, both experiences of the term surfing are inextricably linked through the experience of flow.
Castells (1996, 412) defines the importance of flows by arguing that they are “the expression of processes dominating our economic, political and symbolic life”.

**A personal account of an electronically networked surfer**

In the early 1990s, when I was learning how to surf in Brazil, I wasn’t able to reap the benefits of ‘surfing the web’ due to limited availability of access to the World Wide Web. Nowadays, living just over an hour’s drive from the world-famous Bells beach in Torquay, Australia, I have incorporated electronically networked flows in my daily routine to decide when and where to go surfing, and therefore engage in both forms of surfing, or experiences of flows. I check several surf forecasts regularly, send text messages and engage with friends through Facebook to plan surf trips, check live webcams of my favourite spots, post surfing photos online and plan trips abroad in detail through the vast surfing resources available online.

Unintentionally or not, I have become one of the small end nodes in the extensive networking structure of the surfing industry, which financially supports both the forecasts I use to plan my surfing experience and the live webcasts of surfing competitions world wide which I check occasionally. Yet my participation in the commercial networks of the surfing industry is a two-way flow. When British Airways banned surfboards from their flights in 2007, I promptly join the online protests.

**A Deleuzian account of surfing**

Everywhere surfing has already replaced the older sports. (Deleuze 1992, 6)

Deleuze wrote the preceding quote in Postscript on Societies of Control, originally published in 1990– around the same time the World Wide Web was moving from concept to reality. Deleuze’s description of surfing deserves a closer analysis. In Negotiations, published five years later, he argued that in new sports such as surfing, the individual is no longer the source of movement, or the origin of the effort, but rather gets “taken in the motion of a big wave” (Deleuze 1995, 121). Deleuze argues that we enter the flows of modulating systems of control, which entangle us and ensure that we are “never finished with anything”. According to him, once we enter these electronic flows (controlled by computer code and electronic passwords), we are no longer individuals, but “dividuals”, or merely masses, samples or data (Deleuze 1992, 5).

I argue that (wave) surfers, rather than getting entangled or "taken in the motion" of the pervasive convergence of electronic (and mostly business-oriented) and oceanic flows, are able to reshape their own experience through the affordances provided by this convergence. I do not intend to refute Deleuze's arguments, but rather I seek to reinterpret them in the context of our contemporary online practices through the blurring of online and ‘real’ environments.

In doing so I move away from the cyberspace rhetoric of the 1990s and its depiction of an all-encompassing immersive environment as an alternative to the experiences of ‘real’ space. This is illustrated by the failure of surfing videogames (see Amith) and surfing simulations in virtual environments such as Second Life to reproduce the complexity and nuances of the sport of surfing. Also, as Wendy Chun (2006: 9) points out, Deleuze's reading of control societies ascribes "to control power that it does not yet have and [erases] its failures”.

Therefore, rather than individuals simply becoming data (in Deleuze’s terms), they absorb and reshape it to enhance their own surfing experience. To explore how the experience of ‘web
surfing’ has significantly reshaped the experience of surfing as a sport, I will use Castells’ (1996) description of the ‘space of flows’ as a starting point.

Castells’ space of flows and the surfing industry

The space of flows is the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows. (Castells 1996, 412)

Castells argues that flows are “the expression of processes dominating our economic, political and symbolic life”. His emphasis on the word dominating indicates the central role he assigns to (networked) flows in contemporary society. But rather than defining the space of flows as an abstract entity, Castells grounds the term by describing it as “the combination of at least three layers of material support” (Castells 1996, 412).

Castells describes the first layer as the circuit of electronic impulses. These encompass telecommunications carriers, computing processes and broadcasting systems conducted through high-speed connections (Castells 1996, 412). To the electronically networked surfer, mobility and access to constantly updated information are key assets. As private infrastructure networks become the “dominant vectors of global-local flow”, as Castells (2010, 390) points out, access to them translates directly into network capital, which becomes a point of advantage to highly connected (wave) surfers.

The second layer of Castells’ space of flows is constituted by nodes and hubs, giving it a place-based structural logic. The hubs are the communication centres, providing coordination, and the nodes are “the location of strategically important functions of locality-based activities in the network”, sometimes originating in unlikely places because of historical specificity” (Castells 1996, 413–414).

The central hubs of the multibillion global surf industry are strategically located near well-established surfing areas close to world-famous surfing breaks. Robert McKnight, CEO of Quiksilver, the biggest surf company in the world—with assets of over 1.6 billion dollars and central headquarters in the popular surfing area of Huntington beach in California—explains why: “I thought I could make a few shorts and stay near the beach and party” (Pederson 1997, 441 and Quiksilver, Inc. 2010).

Quiksilver’s central hub is located in Huntington Beach, California, while its secondary hubs are located in St. Jean de Luz, France and Torquay, Australia, all situated in world-renowned surfing areas that are host to major surfing contests. These hubs coordinate design production nodes in California, Europe, Australia and Japan, while also controlling production nodes in several countries of the Far East. Their presence in the global financial markets is consolidated through their listing in the New York Stock Exchange (Jarratt 2010, 241 and United Securities and Exchange Commission 2010).

All these material processes are supported by three distinct but interconnected electronic networks, which constitute Quiksilver's three main web portals: www.quiksilver.com, which targets its customer base, the corporate portal www.quiksilverinc.com, which coordinates its business interests, and www.quiksilverlive.com, which promotes Quiksilver's events. These events are heavily promoted through live web broadcasting, especially (but not limited to) the several events that Quiksilver promotes that are part of the elite Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) World Tour and constitute the top-tier of professional surfing worldwide.
Castells defines the third layer of the space of flows as the spatial organisation of the dominant elites, who “exercise the directional functions around which such space is articulated”. According to him, this occurs through two processes: the articulation of the elites and the segmentation and disorganisation of the masses. He points out to the importance of social organisation based on ahistorical flows—“superseding the logic of any specific place”—in the consolidation of the global power of the elites. These flows establish their own sets of rules and cultural codes that are embedded in specific physical spaces and the cultural practices of business executives (Castells 1996, 414–415).

The ASP elite World Tour event circuit illustrates Castells’ argument. Some of its events bypass historical flows and specific places by benefiting from cutting edge networking practices such as live webcasting. One such event is the Billabong Teahupoo Pro in Teahupoo, Tahiti, a very isolated destination with difficult access even for the local community. Teahupoo was unknown to most of the world surfing community until the late 1990s, when it suddenly gained a reputation as one of the most challenging and exciting surfing breaks of the world.

The live webcast of the yearly Billabong Teahupoo Pro surfing event involves a convergence of many levels of electronically networked flows: live webcasts with live comment are edited onsite and interspersed with advertisements from the event sponsor; constantly updated scores are streamed directly from the judge's competition unit; prize-winning competitions entice the viewer to pose their questions for the professional surfers; Facebook feeds from the ASP World Tour present the latest results and news from other ongoing competitions, while the streaming of Twitter feeds from competitors give viewers a sense of what is happening backstage. Just in case you've lost any of that, video and photo highlights are available for replay and iPhone-specific applications keep you constantly updated.

While the surfing industry business executives have a strong presence in these highly mobile events, the surfing industry also follows the usual patterns of segregated spaces of the global business elites as described by Castells (1996), including the traditional golf charity circuit (see Quiksilver Foundation 2010 and Surf Industry Manufacturers Association 2010). These arguments illustrate Castells’ argument of the consolidation of the global power of the elites, yet it is important to also analyse how surfers with access to these electronically networked flows are able to reap benefits from them. In certain instances, they have organised themselves to fight for their own causes, as we will see next.

From surf forecasting to online collaborative practices: reaping the benefits of surf-related spaces of flows

Despite the vast sums of money, time and energy poured into the surfing sector of the Internet over the years, wave- and weather-related sites were the most popular in 2003—just as they were in 1994. (Warshaw 2005).

The thirst for surf-related data—especially wave and weather information—fuelled the expansion of online surf-related media since the mid-1990s. Surf forecasts evolved from simple and unreliable newspaper forecasts, to (equally unreliable) pre-recorded phone forecasts before finally evolving into more accurate web-based forecasts based on precise satellite data (NOAA) (2010). Wind and wave forecasts such as Windguru (2010)—which was originally marketed to windsurfers—became important sources for surfers to predict surf conditions many days in advance with reasonable accuracy, but required a good understanding of weather and surf forecast models to decipher them.
In recent years, websites such as *Magic Seaweed* (2010) have adopted a more user-friendly approach by translating the raw data into easily understandable models, while also cleverly merging forecasts with targeted advertising and promotion of surfing-related events. Magic Seaweed understood the importance of online social networking collaborative practices in engaging users of the World Wide Web. Its photo section—where users around the world are encouraged to post pictures of their local surfing breaks—has been incredibly successful and have generated a constant flow of discussion around the photos that complements their surf forecasting tools and keep individual surfers engaged.

Surf-related spaces of flows were further extended with the introduction of live webcams on surfing beaches, arguably one of the last 'public' places to be submitted to electronic surveillance, albeit mainly for the benefit of surfers rather than for security purposes. Surfing webcams have evolved into sophisticated ‘surfer’s cybernetic eyes’, automatically panning and zooming to allow multiple views of the beach. In the surfing web portal *Coastalwatch* (2010)—which displays over one hundred surf webcams located around Australia on a Google map—these video streams are linked to detailed local surf forecasts and archived snapshots of previous surfing conditions of each webcam, allowing users to track down conditions of good surfing days and use them as a reference to compare with future predictions and determine the best conditions for their local surfing beaches.

With the advent of *Google Earth* (2010), the 'surfer's cybernetic eye' was extended to the confines of space. *Google Earth's* detailed satellite imaging of the world and user-friendly interface provided extra functionality for information that was once the exclusive domain of the military. Surfers attempting to evade increasing crowded conditions—ironically one of the collateral effects of the increased availability of surf webcams—started using *Google Earth* in search of untapped perfect wave conditions with mixed results.

*Surfing Magazine’s* Google Earth Challenge encouraged readers to explore the raw data of *Google Earth* in search of undiscovered perfect waves, reporting them back to the magazine. The best ‘discovery’ was rewarded with a fully paid trip to the actual wave. This has been criticised by local surfers in remote surfing areas, who argue that they expose their tightly kept secrets. This mirrors previous arguments against surf webcams (see Warshaw 2005, 293–294), except this time the placing of the ‘surfer’s cybernetic eyes’ in space prevents any attempts of vandalism against them as a counter tactic.

This points to a cycle in which newly introduced online networking tools are initially appropriated by those with a better technical understanding of raw data, and then subsequently incorporated into more mainstream online resources. Although *Google Earth’s* models are yet to be transformed into more user-friendly models, *Magic Seaweed’s* user-friendly forecasting tools and related online social networking practices have turned it into an established web surfing portal.

The benefits of electronically networked flows to individual surfers extend to online social networking websites such as *Facebook*, where surfers share experiences of previous surf sessions while also getting involved in surf-related causes for charitable or personal purposes. A well-known case of the latter was triggered by (previously surf-friendly) British Airways’ sudden decision in November 2007 to ban surfboards in all its flights while still allowing, among other things, golf club bags and double basses. This enraged surfers directly affected by the ban, which in turn engaged other surfers all around the world through an online networking campaign against British Airway.
A Facebook group named 'Protest British Airways Surfboard Ban' was set up, gaining more than 2000 members in six days (Facebook 2010 and Dugan 2007) while a petition on the British Surfing Association website received hundreds of signatures in just a couple of hours. The campaign expanded into other forms of media. British Airway's competitor Virgin Atlantic cleverly targeted their rivals by posting billboards with the slogan “No Sex Wax please, we're British Airways”, a reference to the iconic brand of surfing wax (which is an indispensable item applied to surfboards to avoid disastrous surfing slippages). Two years later, British Airways partially revoked the ban.

Non-profit organisations such as British-based Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) (2010), who campaign to protect surf spots from environmental damage, have also tapped into the networking flows of online social networks, registering 20000 supporters on their Facebook news stream, which has a prominent place on their own homepage.

Facebook's ubiquity has ensured that it often becomes the primary source of surfing-related news to surfers, such as the recent untimely death of three-times ASP world champion Andy Irons. This has not been overlooked by the surfing industry, which have incorporated their own Facebook streams into the live online broadcasting of surfing events, such as in the Billabong Teahupoo Pro.

Conclusions

Despite web surfing and wave surfing being two highly differentiated sensorial experiences, they are continuously converging through their experiences of flow. By using examples of online practices of both the surfing industry and individual surfers, I have attempted to illustrate the increasingly collaborative relationship between both. Most of these practices are profit-driven and directly benefit the surfing industry through additional forms of revenue and marketing. Yet individual surfers are also able to reshape them towards their own interests, using the information flowing through these networked spaces to enhance their own wave surfing experiences and engage in surf-related community initiatives to their own benefit and that (in some occasions) might be directly opposed to prevailing commercial interests.

References


The blogs of war: Narrating the Afghanistan and Iraq wars

Richard Gehrmann
University of Southern Queensland

Abstract: The post 2001 ‘War(s) on Terror’ have seen changes to the manner in which war is communicated, and this offers opportunities to those writing the social history of war. These events reflect the contemporary realities of war and communication. Borderlands of scholarship have opened and the community of those at/of war can now be more openly engaged and interrogated by the scholarly community. Past conflicts have been marked by the contest between official government representations of reality and the image presented by the mainstream media. This dual dominance is increasingly challenged by virtual individuals, a challenge that provides scholars fresh space to engage with a community that is too often excluded. Social media offers a remarkable degree of access for scholars to complement official reports and mainstream media accounts of war. This paper explores these areas of scholarly engagement and assesses the development of the new virtual community at war, with an examination of the 2010 case of Richard Strandlof and his fraudulent identity as wounded American war veteran Rick Duncan who was actively opposing war. New media has been used by community activist groups who detect and publicise such impersonations in both Australia and the United States, and in a more prosaic manner by soldiers and their families who just want their voices to be heard.

The recent conflicts in the Middle East, the ‘War(s) on Terror’, have been accompanied by changes to the manner in which war is communicated, and this offers opportunities to those writing the social history of war. Borderlands of scholarship have become open and the community of those at war can now be more openly engaged with and interrogated by scholars. Narrations of past conflicts have been dominated by the contest between official government representations of reality and that (sometimes dissenting) image presented by the conventional mainstream broadcast media, while personal or individual accounts have existed in the margins with less authority. The dominance by governments and mainstream media is increasingly challenged by individuals using the virtual realm, and this citizen journalism or grassroots media is something that provides scholars fresh space to engage with a community that is too often excluded. Social media can offer a remarkable degree of access for scholars to complement what are often defensive official reports or sensation seeking mainstream journalistic accounts. This paper will assess the development of the new virtual community at war and explores areas for scholarly engagement, with an introductory examination of one recent case study, that of invented veteran Rick Duncan.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have coincided with the evolution of social media and the blurring of previous distinctions between media audiences and practice which allows an increase in the diversity of opinions in the public domain, as well as misinformation and identity-fraud. Grassroots media or citizen journalism is well placed to provide an alternative reading to the official representation of conflict, but like this official representation, it also requires critical scrutiny and evaluation. Earlier scholarship saw the positive aspects of this, with enthusiasm regarding the progressive role of the internet in “developing alternative organs of communication” in the face of a mainstream media supportive of the Bush government war aims (Kahn and Kellner 2005). This paper illustrates the way that social
media has moved beyond mere opposition, and shows that it is both co-opted by the mainstream media, and is also embraced by participants in war and their families, and by their friendship networks. At different times any of these might be opposed to war, supportive of war, or ambivalent towards war.

Past scholars identified the internet as a progressive, vibrant and exciting terrain that could provide space for citizen activists challenging the status quo, as occurred with Zapatista activism in Mexico in the early 1990s or in the World Trade Organisation protests in Seattle in 1999 (Kahn & Kellner 2004). However, blogs have importance for groups that range from political observers (McKenna 2008) to teenage school girls (Bortree 2005), and social media can be used by those that seek to challenge what they see as mainstream norms from all dimensions of the political and social spectrum. Climate change sceptics and believers both use social media, as do racist hate groups (Chau and Xu 2007). The way in which blogs are part of both pro-war and anti-war domains has been successfully explored by Wall in her analysis of blogging during the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Wall 2006), but more research remains to be undertaken on war blogs.

The contest between official government representations of reality and that (sometimes dissenting) image presented by the mainstream media has already been mentioned. While opposition or support for conflict varies between mainstream media outlets, there is no government censorship at the levels seen in major conflicts such as the Second World War, and commercial imperatives meant that even conservative media outlets that supported the United States led invasion of Iraq in 2003 were obliged to report the negatives such as the failure to find Weapons of Mass Destruction, the increasing death toll, and the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal. Association between media proprietors and politicians might shape such reporting but the stories themselves could not be ignored. Attempts to shape and manipulate the mainstream media in the war zone in what was a continuous struggle for public opinion were more overt. After the comparatively free access to the battlefield of the Vietnam era, the United States military learned to control the media and journalists found themselves constrained first by a media pool system in the 1989 invasion of Panama and in the 1990-91 Gulf War and then by embedding them in the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq (Foster 2008; Kellner 2008; Middleton 2009). Yet it is symptomatic of the lack of restraints and the flexibility of the new social media that it can also function both as a weapon supporting an official transcript of war crafted by the authorities, as well as becoming a richly diverse terrain for discourse among participants in war.

Communities at/of war

In the past decade the United States and other actors including Australia have been engaged in wars in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), and this experience of warfare has become significant for both veterans of the Middle East conflicts and to those in their communities at home. In both Australia and the United States, more people have experienced war than at any time since Vietnam. This era of war is significant because of the long duration of these conflicts, the repeated deployments of soldiers, and because of the numbers involved in this experience. While the United States government has not released official figures, it is likely that more than 2.2 million Americans are veterans of these wars, compared to the 2.59 million who were in Vietnam (Benjamin 2005; Korb et al. 2007; Burstein 2011). In the case of Australia, analysis of the Australian government Honours and Awards website on 28 November 2010 indicates that at least 28,658 have served in the Middle East, compared to 59,000 who went to Vietnam. Since 1975, more than 62,210 Australians have seen active service in a wide range of conflicts ranging from Rwanda to Somalia. Sizable though this
veteran community is, it is even larger when non-military veterans are included. The civilian elements of the community at/of war can also experience the full challenges of war, an example being the death in Afghanistan of British surgeon and blogger Karen Woo (Boone 2010).

The experiences of this multifaceted community of soldiers, aid workers, federal police, diplomats, civilian contractors, and their families remains on the borderlands of scholarship and is relatively unexplored by the academy which will often focus on high profile issues such as the debates over the legality of these wars, human rights abuses in detention centres, or the case against continued military commitment. At a time when webcam is ubiquitous, Skype offers easy and near instant communication with home, and virtually every soldier has a laptop, the wartime experiences of these communities of/at war offer a rich and untapped cultural realm to be explored.

The perception that Vietnam was the world's first televised war has been succeeded by an understanding that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are the first Internet wars. In earlier conflicts personal accounts such as letters, memoirs and journals and diaries were written for local or intimate audiences but often only published for a general audience many years later. Contemporary technologies have changed this. While the scope of this paper will not explore indigenous Iraqi or Afghan blogs in detail, some accounts exist. Baghdad based examples include the 2002 to 2003 blog *Where is Raed?* by the gay secular Iraqi known as Salam Pax, which became the book *The Baghdad blog* (2003), and *Riverbend*, in which a young female observer chronicles the transitions from dictatorship to occupation and insurgency in 2003 and 2004. Her account, presented in book form as *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog from Iraq* (2005), engages the reader to provide an endogenous account of an Iraq at war. This rich and fascinating area will be explored in my extended research, while the account below focuses on the exogenous Australian and American accounts of war.

The way in which past conflicts have been narrated has varied. Primacy and authority is often given to official government representations of reality, and these appeared in published form as contemporary sources such as incident reports and statements to the mainstream media, and also after the conclusion of conflicts as official histories. Of course, official government narratives are often constrained by narrow, partisan desire by members of governments who wish to protect their own positions, and also by legitimate concerns regarding operational security. War narratives are also formed by the mainstream media, and historically these also appeared in published form as ephemeral contemporary news sources, which journalists might subsequently refashion into books. Other personal accounts by participants can appear in book form for a public audience, or as letters home, journals, diaries and memoirs directed at an immediate and narrow family audience. While these were significant for family recipients, they would only appear in the public domain when published as books long after the conflict. Some examples include the interwoven letters and diary entries in Philippa Poole’s *Of love and war*, an account of her father’s experiences as a prisoner in Changi (Poole 1982) and more recently, *From the frontline*, Hew Pike’s anthology of four generations of his extended family experience in wars that spanned a century (Pike 2008).

A different picture emerges when narration of conflicts in the age of new media is analysed. What was formerly an authoritative government representation now routinely expects to be challenged by mediums such as Wikileaks. Both government accounts and those of the mainstream media have had their monopoly threatened by the subversive forms of the new media. However, the extensive resources of both governments and the mainstream media have also allowed them to use new media to disseminate their preferred depictions of reality,
and the military is also aware of how blogs can be used in their information operations (Robbins 2007). Because of the 24-hour news cycle and the requirements for instant comment, both governments and media organisations are placed under increasing pressure to be able to respond rapidly.

The fiction and non-fiction narrations of war continue to be important, but the speed of publication and globalisation makes this far more accessible to far more writers. As always film is very effective, with movies such as *The Hurt Locker* (2008) being highly successful in capturing the horrors of war. The embedded journalist becomes a feature of both a United States and an Australian military that sought to both promote itself and control the media, a topic that has been widely discussed (Foster 2008; Kellner 2008; Middleton 2009). Embedded journalist Evan Wright’s acclaimed *Generation Kill* (2004) is a narration that appeared across mediums in magazine, book and television to offer a journalist’s account comparatively soon after the fall of Baghdad and defeat of Saddam’s government. As a companion text for this, Nathaniel Fick, one of the soldiers who Wright was embedded with wrote his own memoir *One bullet away* (2005) depicting military life in Afghanistan and Iraq from the inside. A further example from the United Kingdom is the populist Andy McNab’s account *Spoken from the front* (2009) which is based both on his interviews with British soldiers and their emails.

**Milblogs – military blogs**

The biggest change has occurred in the area of personal narration - letters, journals, diaries and memoirs. While letters are still sent home and individuals still keep journals, these increasingly use an electronic format. The use of Skype, email, Facebook and blogs has become a defining feature of the narration of both the Iraq and the Afghanistan wars. Blogs in particular have become a medium where individuals communicate with family and friends, and ultimately with the global community.

Blogs (or rather milblogs) take many forms, but a small sample can give the flavour of these narratives. An older account is that of Dan, a male American marine officer who deployed to Afghanistan in 2006 and again in April 2010. In the accessible and well organised *Afghanidan* (2006-2011) he articulately records routine and remarkable events which bring the reader clearly into his world over two separate deployments. Another readable account is *The sand docs: The story of a navy forward surgical team in Afghanistan*, with commonplace posts about the quality of food and encouragement to bench press 300 pounds in weight set against more eventful stories of trauma in war (Scott 2010-2011). Some reflect the American home front as is the case in *Army Tanker’s Wife* (Chrissy 2005-2011) in which an African-American spouse gives an account of her life at home with their children while her husband is deployed, including helpful hints for other spouses. Another that covers the experiences of the spouse whose partner is deployed is *The kitchen dispatch: a literary Milspouse blog* (Fong 2009-2011). This blog, with its subtext banner of ‘war, literature, writing, wellness and Yoga’ includes posts as varied as one about the Special Forces Female Engagement Team and their activities in building hearts and minds and developing linkages with Afghan women, and another speculative piece from a deployed male soldier on the wave of democracy spreading through the Arab world. A warm and moving Australian milspouse blog is *Adopting our Thai baby and my life as an army wife*, whose title reflects the hybrid nature of its author’s life (Gemma 2008-2011). Milbloging has reached the stage where an annual milbloggers conference is held, and the 2010 Conference saw United States General David Petraeus speaking as an online attendee with the avuncular and awkward fashion of the baby boomer
confronted by a new phenomena he accepted as significant, but did not quite feel at home with.

Past accounts of the experience of war were usually print based, but an ongoing phenomena of the new media in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars is the evolution from electronic to print, where military blogs have become books. An example is Matthew Burden's *The Blog of War: Front-Line Dispatches from Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan* (2006). Overall, this is a book that presents a positive picture of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and uses the blog material to create an account that supports soldiers and their families. It explains the challenges of the conflict rather than exploring detailed criticisms of the military. There could be a variety of explanations for this, one of them being commercial. Any United States book recounting the experiences of soldiers today needs to appeal to one of two markets, that of those who wholeheartedly support the war, or that of those who oppose the war. American military culture also constrains soldiers, as Browder notes in her (print based) *When Janey comes marching home: portraits of women combat veterans* (2010). The female soldiers Browder interviewed felt it was disloyal to criticise the mission in Iraq or Afghanistan and were reluctant to do so, even when they did not support the wars.

Blogs have allowed what was once private to become public, as has occurred in the case of the blog *Kaboom*. Started in 2006 by soldier Matt Gallagher with the usual bloggers stated intention of informing family and friends, *Kaboom* became widely popular before being shut down by his superiors in 2008. The United States military directed him to close it after he detailed complaints he had made about his immediate superiors, something which would normally have been a protest directed privately to his family and friends. Because these complaints appeared on his blog site with its wider public access, this was seen as an inappropriate criticism of the United States military that could not be tolerated (West 2010). Two years after his return from the war the material in the blog was published in hard copy book form as *Kaboom: Embracing the suck in a savage little war* (2010).

We live in a borderless world where government institutions are hypersensitive to criticism, and that such criticism can be disseminated almost instantaneously through the proliferation of emails is a telling difference between the wars of the contemporary online age and earlier conflicts. Governments are under increasing pressure to be able to respond rapidly and coherently to any apparent criticism, even if such criticism emanates from the lowest of levels in the form of a personal email between individuals. Such personal critique is accorded power and significance out of all proportion when the position of the writer is considered. It seems a disproportionate response when a high-ranking Lieutenant-General is required to respond to an apparently private criticism from a low ranking soldier, as has occurred in one Australian case (McPhedran 2010). This willingness by a large government organisation to engage with an individual’s dissenting email is interesting when set against Kevin Foster’s assessments that the Australian military within Afghanistan is too reluctant to provide open access regarding its activities to the media (Foster 2010). Again, this illustrates the strength of the new media’s influence in the communication of war, but the new media goes further and also provides a strong yet complex forum for opponents of war.

**Truth and fiction: The Rick Duncan story**

Rick Duncan was a former Marine Corps captain who appeared to be custom-made as a perfect opponent of United States President George Bush’s War on Terror. He ticked all the boxes as an advocate of veterans’ rights and as a faultless anti-war activist, and naturally became a supporter of the Democratic Party. Personable and articulate, a combat veteran who
was also a graduate of the elite United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, he was also gay, a marginalized identity in a military that prohibited service by homosexuals. He matched the popular American stereotype of a genuine combat veteran, having suffered a head injury from a roadside bomb attack in Iraq. Even his injury was perfect, having been sustained in the Iraqi town of Fallujah, a town whose name has iconic status in United States military circles as the location of heavy fighting in 2005.

On his return from Iraq Duncan left the military and took up the cause of war veterans in need, establishing the Colorado Veterans Alliance. His popularity and his charisma led him to be drafted in United States Democratic candidate Hal Bidlack’s (unsuccessful) campaign for Congress. Rick Duncan's veteran status, his record of advocacy and his past role as a nuclear missile launch officer made him an ideal supporter of Bidlack’s anti-war platform in the 2009 Congressional elections. He also supported the successful campaigns of Congressman Jared Polis and Senator Mark Udall. Besides being a member of the Colorado Veterans Alliance, he was a member of VoteVets and Iraq Veterans Against War. His military background gave credibility to the opponents of the war, and came at a time of increasing dissatisfaction with the Republicans and criticism of the wars. In a conservative American political culture where prominent political figures had suffered from the perception that they lacked war experience and credibility (remember the insinuations that Bill Clinton and George W. Bush had evaded military service?) Duncan was the man of the hour.

Sometimes, when things seem too good to be true, they are too good to be true. Unfortunately, Rick Duncan was not actually Rick Duncan, but was a socially isolated schizophrenic named Richard Strandlof. All American hero Rick Duncan had not been on duty in the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 because he had been in California at that time as Richard Strandlof. He had never been to Iraq, he had never been wounded in combat, and he had no military background at all, but he was a very convincing individual (Frosch & Dao 2009). However, he was a compulsive milblog reader whose well-developed understanding of the world of the combat veteran came from the Internet, as well as his face to face contact with veterans (Melloy 2009). There is a duality in virtual identity as both the actor and their audience have to exist to develop an online persona (Jordan 2005) so Rick Duncan was both a fraud who betrayed his milblog community as well as a part of that very audience.

Duncan/Strandlof had an impressive ability to impersonate a former soldier, and his military knowledge was extremely convincing. Inconsistencies in his accounts of his military experiences had initially been explained away as a consequence of his Fallujah head injury, but he was eventually questioned and exposed first by milbloggers, then weeks later by mainstream media on 7 June 2009. Since 2005 United States legislation (The Stolen Valour Act) has prohibited individuals from falsely presenting themselves as military veterans, despite court challenges to the act. Duncan/Strandlof was unsuccessfully tried under this Act, and subsequently had a case filed against him by the United States veterans organisation, the American Legion (Seavey 2010). While his own motivation for this fraud remains a subject for further research, the motivation behind similar inventions of other faux veterans often relate to a basic desire by a low status alienated individual seeking validation and importance.

The online media facilitated the birth and evolution of Richard Duncan to become Richard Strandlof, just as it also contributed to his demise, and it could be argued that his outing by the online community is an illustration of the strengths of that community, not a weakness. Although linked to online media, his authenticity was validated by his public appearances and his face to face advocacy work, making him more than just a web phenomenon like the fictional leukaemia sufferer Kaycee Nicole Swenson who ‘died’ online in 2001 after two and
half years of virtual (and illusory) suffering (Jordan 2005). There are no Australian cases where high profile false veterans of Iraq or Afghanistan with political interests have been created from the Internet world, but there have been less spectacular cases of a more suburban style of Walter Mitty. There is an Australian veteran online community, the Australia and New Zealand Military Imposters network (ANZMI), who operate a website dedicated to the exposure of military frauds. This organisation tries to have individuals who impersonate veterans prosecuted under the Section 80A of the 1903 Defence Act, but generally relies on public shaming in an effort to compel them to apologise for their impersonation and manipulation of others. The ANZMI method of operation demonstrates a reliance on new media, with photographs of suspects taken at public events and downloaded to the webpage. They conduct investigations, and the story and image remains on the site but may be removed if the accused person admits their guilt and apologises.

As is perhaps the nature of such individuals for whom fantasy has replaced reality, claims are often made of their membership of special forces, of secret ‘off the record’ operations, and of atrocity stories along with accounts that appear to be racist and delusional. Some of these accused individuals appear to go to great lengths to exploit and manipulate those around them and to gain access to financially rewarding veterans’ benefits, while others exploit nothing more than the good natures of those nearby as they seek to impress and, their fellow drinkers at the local bar. The cases of the ANZMI make compelling reading, yet are also incredibly sad, when the individuals who go to great efforts to create false histories about themselves have their facades stripped away as they are exposed in their home communities by the power of the new media (Hyland 2007).

Conclusion

Narrating war is increasingly becoming the realm of the virtual world, ranging from high profile actors such as Rick Duncan/Strandlof to any dissenting soldier, however inarticulate. This provides scholars with the challenge to engage with a community that is too often not considered, that of the community of/at war, both active participants and their wider families. In the United States, this is becoming an increasingly significant community due to the numbers that have had this direct experience of conflict, with an estimated 2.2 million Americans having served in Iraq or Afghanistan. The figures for Australian are of course smaller, but this remains a significant area of research for scholars of international cultural studies, history of war, and of media. By using social media, we can access these communities and critique both defensive official reports and sensationalist commercial journalism in an arena that calls for scholarly engagement.

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Writing that matters: Positioning cultural studies and criticality in the ‘audit age’

Andrew Hickey

University of Southern Queensland

**Abstract:** Research in the humanities has variously received criticism for its obtuse and inaccessible language (Reizs 2010), benign claims for action (Lather 2007) and authorial positionality (Jameson 1990, Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Perhaps worst amongst these criticisms is that scholarly, academic work is irrelevant to the world outside of academe. With recent conceptual developments in the way that research, particularly naturalistic, humanist, qualitative research is undertaken and generated (Denzin and Lincoln), cultural studies is (and has been) positioned to lay bare the operations by which humanities research is both made and consumed. In this paper, an approach to cultural studies research that attempts to re-engage the ‘ordinary’ (that original site of investigation for cultural studies scholars) for the ‘ordinary’ by making a case for critical, de-centred accounts of the everyday will be presented. Such an approach seeks to remove the institutionalised nature of knowledge construction through the deployment of a ‘critical aesthetic’ mobilised by the ‘citizen-as-critic’. In citing examples from the author’s own fieldwork and significant contributions from the recent literature, a renewed view of how cultural studies research might be considered, undertaken and mobilised beyond the academy will be provided. This paper will also make a claim for how emancipatory imperatives, so often promised in humanist academic writing, must be realised in those communities and settings from which research is generated and moves on to suggest, within a discussion of a critical aesthetic, the operations of a research ‘mentality' that goes both beyond and between institutionalised research agendas.

What follows is a cautionary tale. Contained here is a statement—a call to action of sorts—for academics and those engaged in the writing of scholarly works that report on our world. This is a paper that, whilst perhaps short on analytic depth, hopes to provoke the re-appraisal of what it is we do as academics, and how it is our work comes to mean in an increasingly bureaucratised and corporatised university sector.

I want to begin by relaying an anecdote of a life-altering experience. Early one morning as I walked from my motel to a University I was working at whilst on a visiting scholar appointment late in 2009, I cast my gaze toward the glass front of an empty store and the vandalised pronouncements it contained. For that moment, I was stopped dead in my tracks. My career flashed before my eyes. Here I was, a previously brash young academic, now with ego dashed and shattered broken on the ground before me. A statement so simple, yet powerful, that it made those thousands of words of scholarly output I worked so hard to produce look meaningless (Figure 1).

What prompted this realisation was a simple piece of vandalism (Figure 2), albeit an entirely intended and cleverly contemplated détournement, situated above one of those ubiquitous no-smoking signs so often seen at the entrance of buildings. Here the simple word ‘bullshit’, cleverly situated, spoke to a larger audience than any article I could produce and provided a glimpse of an underlying social critique and suggestion for living pasted by an unknown and
unnamed activist. I was horrified. Those precious A* ranked journal articles¹ I worked so hard to produce counted for little in front of this swear-word genius.

Figure 1: One work of social commentary. Photo: Andrew Hickey.

Figure 2: Another, arguably more influential, work of social commentary. Photo: Andrew Hickey.

It was from this point on (but now that I think about it, I see roots for these concerns operating in my scholarship from sometime earlier) that I realised that I couldn’t simply exist as an academic, content to produce a couple of articles a year—articles that may well maintain my career, but do little else. The role of the academic should be too important for just this. Like so many others who enter the humanities, what I wanted to achieve as an academic and what I wanted to do as a cultural studies scholar was have some positive effect on the world; to alter things for the better through critique and exposure of social practices that aren’t right (as academics, we have an obligation to the world). It occurred to me that writing my articles and labouring away on erudite works that largely weren’t going to be read, at least by those people for whom I hoped this work would matter, was a largely pointless endeavour, but one actively encouraged by the Universities in which we mostly do our work, and the policies and practices that arbitrate how it is we do it. Beyond meeting performance review processes and research output targets, what does our work do? Who would read my work, and more importantly as Patti Lather cogently notes ‘who is going to get emancipated here’? (2007: 50)

I wish to present what I think is a fairly straightforward proposition in this paper. That is, that the conceptualisation of the results and outcomes of academic work require reconfiguration in the minds of scholars and must look beyond existing points of academic success as markers of

¹ As per the ranking system currently applied in Australian Universities following the Federal Government’s ‘Excellence in Research Australia’ initiative.
‘good academic work’. I argue that it should not be the case that a journal publication (or for that matter, any publication) be seen as the result of social research, nor that it be considered anywhere near enough. Something more engaging and directed to the communities with whom we do our work must also be ensured.

Noises from the academy

I’m not alone, of course, in drawing a critique of the role of academic work. Beyond those well worn, populist criticisms of the ‘ivory tower’ exclusionism and the inaccessibility academic pursuits (particularly in the humanities) are often lumped with, two recent items from the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, stand as examples:

- Leeds University, as reported by Newman (2010), has recently implored of its staff to write more ‘humanly’, with less technical jargon and a focus on humour and wit. The point here is to connect with a reading public who, it is claimed, are unable to comprehend current academic writing.

- Similarly, Reisz (2010) reports concerns regarding the delusional self-importance of much academic writing and the rhetorical hurdles that are put in the way of otherwise straightforward ideas.

These concerns are picked up also in Rowe and Brass’ (2008) survey of the ‘uses of academic knowledge’. As they note:

> There is a pattern of criticism in the media and public sphere of universities for being ‘out of touch’, disconnected from the real world, outside the ivory tower, complacently and indulgently oblivious to ‘ordinary people’s’ needs and priorities. (677)

Again, these views are far from alone. ‘Academic bashing’ is a largely popular pastime for the media and some quarters of the community—particularly in some of the more anti-intellectual aspects of Australian society (eg, the conservatively laden sections of talk-back radio and print media for instance). Even amongst ourselves, we argue as to the accessibility and arcane nature of our work. In the well-publicised debate between (then) Monash University’s Peter Gronn and Peter McLaren, following Gronn’s review of McLaren’s seminal work *Schooling as Ritual Performance*, McLaren responded to Gronn’s claims for undue complexity and ‘pretentious apocalyptic socio-babble’ (1988: 313) by making the point that perhaps complex ideas and new terrains of knowledge require complex language. His defence is an appealing one for academics partial to the turn of a phrase—that indeed we should sometimes expect language to be difficult and that perhaps some intellectual labour is required on behalf of the reader in comprehending these works (as a Literature and History graduate, I wholeheartedly support this view and wish that some of my students would just knuckle down and read with intent like in the good old days when I was a student!).

What all of this points to is the existence, in the public imagination at the very least, of two forms of writing. On the one side is that accused of being highly technical, jargonistic, academic and purportedly ‘useless’ to anyone but an academic, and on the other, a softer, simpler community oriented language of the ‘everyday’. This is a compelling situation—particularly in terms of a public disconnected with the work of academics; a public that also happens to be suspicious of the importance and relevance of some of the work they do (again, especially in the humanities). The problem here is one of how we as academics get the
message across and the manner by which we approach and connect with those communities we do our work on behalf of.

Realisations of a scholar

So what must we do as academics? I want to introduce and build upon what I think is a seminal idea developed in part by, as it turns out, a colleague of mine from the University of Southern Queensland. In explaining the practices and behaviours ‘resistant’ classroom teachers within the institutionalised world of schooling, Danaher, Coombs, Simpson, Harreveld and Danaher (2002) coined the term ‘double-agent’ to explain the way that these teachers performed their work across two realms of practice—that of the formalised bureaucracy and that of the real work of teaching at the coal face. Often times these two realms did not align and resulted in resistant activity by teachers who had identified alternative goals for their students as compared to those mandated by ‘the system’.

I want to apply a variation of this idea to the work of academics and pose some thoughts on how this might be done. But first of all, it is necessary to understand the realities within which we work. We do need to take account of the structural conditions that most academics in the humanities in Australia have come to expect as being normal—that is, such wonders as tight budgetary constraints, increased workloads, administrative reporting, benchmarking and quality assurance accounting. Unfortunately, it seems that these things and more structural shifts in the way academics work (mandated by innovations such as *Excellence in Research Australia* ranking process and the unyielding corporatisation of the University sector) will remain for some time. Whilst it is of course vital that we actively critique these changes to our work and question the underlying motives they carry—neo-liberalising motives that result in increased reporting and surveillance of academics through accounting ‘busy work’ and the homogenisation of locations in which to publish—we must also be pragmatic, on a day-to-day basis, and find ways to work within the system as it affects us in doing the sort of work we want to do. Here, a ‘double agency’ that allows us to quite simply maintain employment but also do the work we need to do (that is, socially just and meaningful work centred in those communities with whom we work) is the goal. We should seek to provide ourselves with space to critique and respond to the transformation of the University at the same time we retain as sacred an autonomy to work with community.

The role of cultural studies

The dynamics of the ‘scholarly affair’ in the context of this new audit culture in Australian Universities (and those in most parts of Western world) have changed. What once used to be a profession of considerable autonomy and public respect has been scrutinised to the point that the life of an academic is now as much about record keeping and justifying ‘outputs’ as it is about producing scholarly works. Our teaching, research and engagement with communities are carefully accounted for via institutional and national regulatory agencies, with this new climate theorised by scholars including Strathern (2000) and Shore (2008). As Shore notes:

The economic imperatives of neoliberalism combined with the technologies of New Public Management have wrought profound changes in the organization of the workplace in many contemporary capitalist societies. Calculative practices including ‘performance indicators’ and ‘benchmarking’ are increasingly being used to measure and reform public sector organizations

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2 Such as that noted recently by University of Queensland Vice-Chancellor Paul Greenfield, in Trenwith (2010). Further concerns are raised by Shor in his seminal article, ‘*Audit Culture and Illiberal Governance*’ (2008).

3 With this scrutiny motivated by mistrust in what it is academics are seen to be doing.
and improve the productivity and conduct of individuals across a range of professions. These processes have resulted in the development of an increasingly pervasive 'audit culture', one that derives its legitimacy from its claims to enhance transparency and accountability. (2008:278)

It is no different for the University, argues Shore. Similarly, eminent sociologist and cultural critic Raewyn Connell notes of the current climate and Excellence in Research Australia initiative specifically:

“It’s a technique intended to help ration the inadequate resources for research available in Australia, but on the evidence so far, the cure is far worse than the disease. (2010:20).

This is the terrain upon which we work. As publicly visible ‘cultural workers’ who draw on public funds and are rarely seen to be able to commercialise our work (perhaps unlike our fellow travelers from faculties of engineering or business), we find ourselves open to public critique voiced from a perspective of neo-liberal accountability; ‘how are you contributing, and why should you continue to be funded’ goes the mantra4. It is within this context that we must reconcile our purposes as academics interested in making the world a more inclusive and egalitarian place. To seek that space we require, we must look at what is available to us and work to protect and maximise those opportunities to keep doing the sort of work that matters.

The great advantage and privilege of Cultural Studies is in what it allows us to explore. Williams (1989) and Hogart (1957, 2003) both noted that we should focus our attention on the everyday by tapping into those life patterns and operations of culture that shape what it is people do. This is the first key point to take on board in light of those criticisms of academic work I identified above: cultural studies allows inquiry into everyday culture and provides direct access to people and the things they do. This is important, because if there is an indeed a gulf between what it is we as academics do and what it is ‘the public’5 know, it is upon this terrain that we might reinvigorate the role that academic work plays in public life.

Secondly, it is from this engagement with the everyday and the fluency cultural studies practitioners must have with culture and its people that mediations between the academy and community might occur. We stand on the cusp of these two worlds—between the institution that employs us and those communities with whom we undertake research and engage in teaching—and are positioned beautifully to function as interlocutors for each. This is the point from which we must conduct our work as ‘double agents’. We must articulate with both and be fluent for each in having our work mean something.

What I am arguing for is the breaking of the format for conducting academic work that spins around in its own world of self-reporting and self-affirmation. We must move outside of these formulated formats of producing academic work (such as the journal article) that sees the ‘reportable output’ as the end in itself. If we are serious about fulfilling the responsibility of the positions we hold as academics, and about doing something positive with those people we spend time developing our ideas (that is, our research participants and the communities in which we work) we must assume the role of double-agent and proceed to co-exist between the

4 A ‘contribution’, of course, being measured via largely economic determinants.
5 I want to stress that homogenising terms such as ‘the public’ are largely aberrations. In no way do I want to suggest that some self-aware collective known as ‘the public’ exists, except in terms of how this might be conceptualised and framed by institutions such as the media. What I do want to suggest here is that academics and academic work has been cast in certain ways, and it is in terms of that work we do with those communities we are connected with that these impressions might change.
positions of academic privilege we hold and that of the cultural interlocutor who hopes for positive intervention in those sites we research.

There is value in maintaining and growing an academic position—I do not wish to suggest otherwise. But I argue that the sorts of moves we see being thrust upon academia, moves that are arguably predicated on rationalist approaches to make economically ‘viable’ the work we do, must be clearly recognized and seen for what they are. For instance, I become somewhat depressed when I hear new academics talking about the number of ‘A’ rank articles they have published or the amount of funding they have received (or are aspiring to) as if this is the end in itself. The risk is that the purpose of social research—that of contributing to the betterment of the communities with whom we work as social researchers—loses its intent. We must be more than criteria checkers and points gatherers, and to do this we must conceptualise our work primarily according to how it will benefit community; and only worry about completing ‘reports’ after this is achieved. It is possible to do meaningful work and meet the requirements of those reporting structures we work against. It is the priority that is given to each that matters.

Where to from here?

Where does this leave us? I argue that the work we undertake as Cultural Studies scholars must recall those original intentions our founding theorists established; such things as criticality, concerns for social justice and concerns for local practices. With the ethics that these intentions suggest, we must work to not only expose those situations and practices that marginalise, but also work to do what Paulo Freire (1972) refers to as conscientisation; to provoke in those people we encounter a criticality for reading the world. This might be as much focused on our colleagues and management structures as it is with those members of community we encounter. This is how we must approach the world—as active agents and public intellectuals (in the tradition of Edward Said and Henry Giroux for example) seeking to disrupt marginalising practices and set ‘right’ what is currently not so. It isn’t enough to simply report; we must seek to make things better.

The point of this is to more genuinely aspire to make the sort of world we would like to see; to not rest comfortably once the publication has been accepted, but to actively work at making the world a more participatory and inclusive place by provoking a ‘critical aesthetic’ in those people we encounter when undertaking our work. In short, the products of our academic labours must carry an ethical purpose and seek to do some good beyond just maintaining our employment. What is the point of this work otherwise

On this point, I say this: make sure your academic labours mean something. They must go beyond simply furnishing a career and must prompt some move towards positive social change. To do this, seek inspiration in those original ethical concerns from cultural studies’ seminal works and founding theorists and work between those two zones that cultural studies is well positioned to articulate—the institution of the academy and community. How this is done might take all manner of forms, but the measure of good academic work must be in the effect it yields in communities; not in reporting. If reports and tallies of journal articles take precedence, the purpose of our work is lost. Work that seeks to open dialogues, engage opinion and generate democratic participation in the world is the goal.
Some final points

To finish, I want to reiterate the following points. The academy is undergoing significant changes in the way that it values and understands academic work, with this resulting in the heavy reframing of practices for conducting academic work within logics of accountability and performance measurement. Anyone working in the humanities in particular will be well and truly aware of these changes. These changes have been fuelled by a (perceived) disjunction between the work of academics, academic writing and what it is the public ‘knows’. Core to this dynamic is mis-trust of academic labour and the results it is seen to have; hence a cyclical logic by which further scrutiny and performance measurement is supposedly required.

It so happens that Cultural Studies is well positioned to articulate between these two worlds as a discipline interested in the ‘ordinary’ and everyday. As such, Cultural Studies must maintain its imprimatur to undertake work of social importance; work that matters to community and those people we engage as cultural workers. But Cultural Studies mustn’t forget those everyday sites (our communities) with whom we work in the rush to produce works that are accountable under regimes of performance measurement. We must continue to engage with community and refuse to produce academic works for the sake of producing academic works alone. We must operate as ‘double-agents’ between the corporate requirements expected of us as professionals (whilst also opening these for critique at every opportunity) whilst also maintaining meaningfulness in those communities we seek to work on behalf of.

In light of these pronouncements, I urge any cultural studies scholar—particularly those new to cultural studies—to contemplate what it is they hope to do as academics.

References


Cultures of the good: Notes on a critical cultural studies of development

Maria Koleth
Department of Gender and Cultural Studies, University of Sydney

Abstract: This paper argues for a greater convergence between the interdisciplinary fields of development studies and cultural studies. While work within the women, culture and development and post-development paradigms in development studies has contributed to such a convergence, there is room for more work as development becomes not just the province of experts but a popular activity engaged in by tourists on volunteer assignments. In cultural studies there is still a need to critically consider the role that cultural products play in political and economic projects of development. There is also a need to revise the division between affluent/Western and non-Western societies in some cultural studies work on poverty because of the growing disparities in wealth within most countries. Furthermore, the growing cultural diversity of putatively ‘Western’ countries, such as Australia, makes the Western/non-Western division conducive to problematic and exclusionary academic practice. In development studies, a greater engagement with cultural studies may help to overcome narrowly economic definitions of the good and bring conflicting experiences of pleasure and personal definitions of the good life into theorizations, such as the capabilities framework, which rely on a public consensus around the good life. This article introduces a concept of ‘cultures of the good’ as one way of theorizing this convergence. A ‘culture of the good’ is defined as the dynamic and transnational web of texts, technologies and spiritualities which inform views of the good life from individuals and communities, within particular patriarchal and capitalist structures of power. This paper considers how the concept of ‘cultures of the good’ could be an inspiring and effective way of critiquing the visions of the good life in development, through examples from my fieldwork in development studies with women’s organizations in the southern Indian state of Kerala in May 2009.

The southern Indian state of Kerala was once a model of the good life in development studies, but more recently it has come to embody certain crises of concepts of the good life in development. In the 1980s-90s the Kerala model of development was proclaimed as a utopian salvation narrative in countless academic forums in development studies and in the media (Ramanathaiyer and Macpherson 2000, 1). The model was presented as an alternative to neoliberal growth narratives, in which state investment in education and health led to low mortality rates, close to complete literacy, falling birth rates and gender equality, despite low economic growth (Jeffrey 1992, 4). In an illustration of the detrimental power of some dominant ideas of the good life, in the 1990s, feminist and other scholarship in Kerala elucidated the way in which the texts that propagated the Kerala model of development had served to obscure the detrimental realities that women and minorities face in Kerala (Omvedt 1998; Saradamoni 1994). The death of this model of the good life is central to the argument that I make in this paper for a more critical consideration of the cultural forms or ‘cultures of the good’ that contribute to ideas and practices of the good life in development.
To speak of the ‘cultures of the good’ in development, as this paper tries to do, is to foreground questions about embodied engagement with texts, technologies and spiritualities in development work and how they inform ideas about the good life in development. These questions go to the heart of the infinitely expanding ways in which we can be good to the poor in the ‘third world’ and through which the ‘third world’ can attain the elusive good of development. I will first consider one of the ways in which the field of development ethics has sought to deal with the good life in development through the example of Nussbaum’s theory of central human capabilities (Nussbaum 2000, 2004, 2005). I will explore some of the criticisms of Nussbaum’s approach and raise some possibilities for an alternative approach, with reference to my Honours fieldwork with women’s development organisations in Kerala in May 2009.

The argument for an alternative approach aims to build on the criticisms of the development industry’s perpetuation of colonial, capitalist and patriarchal power structures, which have been raised in post-development and women, culture and development literature (Bhavnani, Foran and Kurian 2006; Escobar 1995).

To alight on Nussbaum’s theorisation of central human capabilities, as an example of frameworks for the good life in development, is to both highlight the importance of its focus on women’s social realities and its simultaneous dismissal of different conceptions of the good life in development. Nussbaum’s theory of essential capabilities, which came into prominence over ten years ago (Nussbaum 2000), has had a significant influence on thinking about what the good life is constituted by in development. The Capabilities Approach sets out a list of essential human capabilities which are the things that people value that their external circumstances should allow them to achieve. Her list includes the ability to enjoy a reasonable life span, gain an education and being able to play (Nussbaum 2005, 311). Nussbaum’s work is important for its attempts to put women at the centre of development and recognize goods that exceed the purely economically valuable (Nussbaum 2004, 244-247).

The Kerala model, for example, came unstuck, partly because of its inability to take account of the detrimental realities that women faced (Eapen and Kodoth 2005). Furthermore, part of the popularity of the model was arguably due to the fact that in economic terms it purported to be able to deliver social goods such as education and positive health outcomes without taxing scarce economic resources.

Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach has already been extensively critiqued for its inadequate account of diversity and ignorance of power struggles (Breckenridge and Vogeler 2001, 351-352; Dallmayr 2003, 429; Feldman and Gellert 2006, 441). For example, the approach implicitly perpetuates an exclusionary regulation of embodiment, as Breckenridge and

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1 The Capabilities Approach is built upon a distinction between capabilities and functionings most clearly articulated in Amartya Sen’s Development as Freedom (Sen 2000). Sen defines functionings as those things which people value being or doing, while capabilities are defined as the different combinations of circumstances that are feasible for a person to achieve (Sen 2000, 75). In this sense capabilities are a kind of freedom that are shaped by external circumstances (Sen 2000, 75). For Nussbaum, conceptualizations of the good life in development can best be structured around a list of essential capabilities, which make us human (Nussbaum 2000, 311). These capabilities, in brief, are life (that is being able to enjoy a reasonable life span), bodily integrity, health, being able to adequately access and use the senses, the imagination and thought (this includes having an education and free expression), being able to have emotions and attachments to things and people, being able to utilize practical reason to decide your conception of the good life, being able to live in affiliations with others, being able to live with concern for animals and nature, being able to play, being able to have control over one’s political and material environment as well as seek employment on an equal basis (Nussbaum 2005, 311).
Vogeler ask, does the Capabilities Approach presume a subject with a “(cap)able body?” (Brechenridge and Vogeler 2001, 351-352). What happens when certain abilities and the lack of others, together with the differences in experiential reality that this entails, preclude basic capabilities? Among other points, critics have highlighted that the approach ignores the structural aspects of patriarchal and capitalist power. For example, Feldman and Gellert note that the Capabilities Approach perpetuates an ignorance of the technocratic elites in development as well as the institutional struggles behind certain ideals of the good, such as literacy, being put into practice (Feldman and Gellert 2006, 441).

Much has been written about Kerala’s positive performance on measures of women’s development, such as literacy, with a similar disregard for the complexity of the context, in which this literacy is valued (Eapen and Kodoth 2005, 3278). Kerala’s high literacy rates obscure the fact that it has one of the highest rates of recorded instances of violence against women in India (Mukhopadhyay, 2007, 3-12; Eapen and Kodoth 2005, 3283). The state is also showing evidence of increased female feticide (Rajan, Sudha and Mohanachandran 2000, 1086) and has decreasing female workplace participation in comparison with other states in India (Rajan, Sudha and Mohanachandran 2000, 1090). Nussbaum’s list of capabilities does support general goods such as literacy and bodily integrity (Nussbaum 2004, 249) but it has little to contribute to the intricate power struggles against private and public inequalities, such as violence against women. What is perhaps needed in developing contexts is greater attention to the embodied engagement that women and other disadvantaged groups are already having with dominant texts of the good life. In the case of the Kerala model, feminist scholars have highlighted that much of the modern state project in Kerala, which was lauded in the Kerala model, has inaugurated a regime of good, domestically oriented women and publicly powerful men (Mukhopadhyay 2007, 8; Devika 2009, 21-46).

My research participants elucidated that there were dominant cultures of the good, historically crucial to the Kerala model, which portrayed women involved in political and social organizations as bad women because they challenged the ideal of domestically oriented women (Koleth 2009, 56). Being labeled a bad woman in Kerala has a viscerally material element. The label of the bad woman acts to shame the bodies of women who open themselves up to political or social participation in the public sphere and therefore violate a central part of dominant ideas of the good life, which is the sanctity of the female body in the private sphere. This was most clearly demonstrated in the comments of Jansie, an activist from a feminist organization called Anweshi, who described the situation for feminists in Kerala, “Even now, about people in Anweshi as a whole, some say bad things like they are prostitutes” (Koleth 2009, 56).²

For the feminist activists who participated in my research the publically sanctioned idea of the good life in development conflated a life free of poverty, inequality and deprivation with a discriminatory conception of private virtue and goodness. Paying attention to the embodied reality of this conflation in our understandings of what is worth developing towards allows us to challenge those power structures which cut across the divide between public policies to tackle poverty and the private realities which ensure certain groups, such as women, face structural violence on an extensive scale. The implication is that a good fulfilled life has much

² State development discourse in Kerala no longer subscribes to the Kerala model, since 1996 it has undertaken crucial reforms in its development programs that put a greater focus on local development planning and the participation of women through state organizations such as Kudumbashree (Isaac and Franke 2001). However, the interviews, which I undertook with a small (unrepresentative) sample of women’s development organizations in Kerala suggested that the effects of the model, such as the perpetuation of the historically contingent line between good and bad women in Kerala’s development, were still felt (Koleth 2009).
to do with the ideals that subjects have to embody in many spheres to be good or virtuous in the eyes of their communities.

Nussbaum’s list of capabilities acknowledges that cultures change and that there is a possibility that people may need to diverge from the prescribed list of capabilities to address the complexities of local contexts (Nussbaum 2004, 244-246). Nussbaum argues that the list of capabilities is open to specification within local contexts and that “Arriving at the best specification will most reasonably be done by public dialogue with those who are most immersed in these conditions” (Nussbaum 2005, 315). The allowance for the local specification of an abstract list of capabilities in the Nussbaum’s Capability Approach is not an admission of plural ideals of the good but rather a reification of a dichotomy between the local and a universally valid ideal of the list of capabilities. It is a dichotomy in which the ‘local’, which is a homogenization of various groups, is disempowered. The ‘local’ is only able to contribute to the debate but not to set its terms. Critics such as Dallmayr have pointed out that in concentrating on a list of essential human capabilities, difference is rendered non-essential and marginal to moral debates (Dallmayr 2003, p. 429). The Capabilities Approach does allow for some diversity in versions of the good life but makes a claim that we need to decide if “there is diversity worth preserving” (Nussbaum 2000, 51). The question of what diversities are worth creating seems alien to the Capabilities Approach. Nussbaum’s Capability Approach focuses on the moment of agreement on capabilities as the most important moment, even if communities have to change their ideals of the good to reach that point.

Arguably, what is needed in development ethics is a way to make sense of the process by which ideals of the good change, what informs this change and how they continue to change beyond moments of agreement. Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach cannot speak to the way in which the texts, technologies and spiritualities, which form and inform people’s version of the good within everyday spaces can undermine their agreement to an abstract list of capabilities or indeed expand their specific conceptions of what is possible in their daily lives. In my research in Kerala, engagement with different technologies in concrete settings helped change some of the participants’ ideas of the kinds of lives they could aim to live.

For example, a locally renowned activist, who was then in the women’s wing of the district Congress party saw her sewing machines as crucial elements of the good life. The sewing machines provided her with the independence of earning her own living and allowed her to employ other women from disadvantaged backgrounds as apprentices. Her room with the sewing machines, which faced the road, was the concrete location of an embodied idea of the good life, which she shared with her apprentices. Another respondent from a local religiously affiliated women’s organisation, elucidated how sewing machines could bring independence to those who may be alienated from the dominant ideas of the good life. She recalled the way in which a young woman, who had been ostracized by her community for having a child out of marriage, was able to join a sewing class that their organization ran, which changed her life, gave her a community where she was accepted and provided her a career path as a sewing teacher.

The changes that occur in visions of the good life in development, transcend the borders between developing and developed contexts. A more rigorous exploration of visions of the good life could go beyond prescribed frameworks to ask, what does the lending of central human capabilities to those living in sub-human conditions entail for those of us in places considered developed? Theories of consumption and ideas of the good life in cultural studies more readily address questions of accountability and complicity than Nussbaum’s list of
capabilities. For example, Kate Soper’s concept of alternative hedonism suggests that the practices of affluent consumers, such as buying fair trade goods, can prompt changes in the way in which the byproducts of consumption such as noise, pollution or danger effect people in less affluent parts of the world (Soper 2007, 211). Soper argues that the conception of the good life articulated through alternative hedonism is necessary if “affluent nations are to be pressured into assuming proper responsibility for promoting sustainable development and global stability” (Soper 2007, 223). Soper recognizes that there is a diversity of conceptions of the good life for consumers in richer nations (Soper 2007, 211), but there is also a necessity for greater recognition of the variety of conceptions of the good life in poor or developing areas. A dichotomy in frameworks applied to rich and poor nations in the East and West are dangerous and exclusionary to those minorities, which do not share in dominant ideas of the good.

The question of accountability in our ethical frameworks for the developing world was one that I thought about deeply in Kerala because my research was shaped both by a critique of abstract models of development and my own personal, diasporic connection to Kerala, where my family is from. To adequately theorise this accountability we have to make way for a reflexive approach to development ethics that speaks as much about the ways we enact change as about the ways in which we are changed in the processes of development. The changes that occurred in my own conceptions of the good life in development, through my research, transcended distinctions between local specifications and universal goods and were informed, for the most part, by the expansive experiences of spirituality that I encountered.

One such spiritual experience was hearing a story that one of my research participants, Sister Kalathil, from an order of Franciscan nuns in the south of the Kerala told me about when she was working in a particular area of Kerala called Attapaddy in the 1980s, in which the local people began to see a high incidence of tribal women hanging themselves (Koleth 2009, 18). As the Sister put it “We see that one woman is hanging over there” (Koleth 2009, 18). Through talking to the local people, the sisters found out that tribal women were being raped and killed in this particular part of Kerala by settlers from other parts of Kerala, who were there to facilitate the development of the area (Koleth 2009, 18). When the Sister spoke of seeing the woman hanging, I felt the hairs on my arms prickle, and for moment outside the window of the hall where I was interviewing the Sister, I saw the spectre of a woman hanging in a tree (Koleth 2009, 18). Perhaps the ghosts of those murders haunt every place that the story is told. This is not the most comforting activist text that can be shared but it does motivate activists such as Sister Kalathil to continue their fight for those who missed out on the Kerala model of development.

This experience with spirituality as ghostliness became part of the cultures of the good that I saw myself as contributing to in carrying out my Honours research. Bringing a sense of accountability and diversity into theorizations of ethics in development may inaugurate a process of mutual change rather than strict divisions between those of us with visions of development and those who need to be developed.

Spirituality was not a part of the Kerala model, and could only be an abstract possibility in Nussbaum’s theorisation of the good life and yet I found that it was an essential part of the lived practice inherent in ideas of the good life in Kerala. An amalgamation of various spiritualisms and secularisms was also evident in the visions of the good life that I saw in the local women’s organizations that I visited in the rural parts of Kerala. In many of their activity halls, where our interviews took place, I saw banners depicting the various government initiatives in which they had participated, alongside depictions of Hindu gods and pictures of
Jesus. The spiritualities forming and informing these views of the good go beyond measures of economic wellbeing and essential capabilities to transcendent ideals. These are everyday spaces and scenes of spirituality and they need to be taken seriously in our understanding of what kind of goods are worth developing towards.

To critically reassess the ideas of the good life imagined and enacted through development projects there is a requirement for a more dynamic and exploratory analysis of the texts, technologies and spiritualities that form and inform ideas of the good life in development. Such an approach to the ‘cultures of the good’ in development could contribute to the turn towards the simultaneously material and discursive analysis of social formations in recent theorizations of feminist ontology (Alaimo and Hekman 2008). A wider redefinition of spirituality in development ethics could include experiences of ghostliness and communion with natural artifacts as well as traditional notions of religious practice that have been highlighted in recent geographical theory (Cloke and Dewsbury 2009).

The inclusion of an expansive notion of spirituality in such discussions is significant because early visions of development omitted religious beliefs from modern visions of the good life in development (Clarke 2007, 77-8). In addition, a reassessment of technological engagements that subjects have in relation actor-network theory (Latour 2005) and feminist reassessments of the power structures in which technologies exist (Wajcman 1993) may be able to further fuel our utopian and dystopian ideas of the good life in development. An analysis of the embodied engagement with varied texts, technologies and spiritualities in development could also be retheorised through phenomenological and action research methodologies as well as postcolonial work on the changing nature of global power structures. These latter traditions may be also able to interrogate the growing popularization of development through practices of development tourism and individual donations to specific project, which have led to the commodification of development’s ethical imperative.

Constructing an approach to development ethics in the space of embodied interaction between disparate worlds allows for the possibility that our ideas of the good life may change for the better because of and not inspite of the diversity of people’s experiences and visions of development. The diversity of the texts, technologies and spiritualities that form and inform our visions of the good life do not need to be replaced with a prescribed list of immutable goods but rather provide a space in which we can question the underlying good intentions and changing practices in our models of development. In a world trying to make better sense of continuing problems of poverty and the changing relationships between the developed and developing it is imperative that we practice a critical curiosity to ask questions of different notions of the good life.

References


No *Brideshead Revisited*, no summer of love in the empty quadrangle: challenges to scholarship in the on-line age

Andrew Mason & Richard Gehrmann

*University of Southern Queensland*

**Abstract:** As scholars we value the belief that we are part of a pedagogical project that challenges and critiques contemporary society, and that replicates itself with new generations of critics. We celebrate the arrival of the online era, with its multiple opportunities for facilitation of research, and the engagement and enrichment of the student experience. But has the new media gone too far in replacing the actual with the virtual, and what implications has the adoption of the online model of pedagogy on the on-campus student experience? The positive of online university is that it enriches and democratises, and allows disadvantaged and lower SES students to study in their own time and place, whether in Bangalow or Beijing. The authors consider the evolution of the online mode to become the increasingly dominant discourse at the Wiki-University of the future, supplanting the physical campus in its central position in the student experience. Increasingly compelled to respond to marketplace concerns, the corporate university presents a new learning experience that displaces students from the physical campus and allows them to embark on a fragmented part-time education where the learning experience can be compartmentalised, sidelined or marginalised to accommodate other pressing Gen Y concerns. The student narrative has changed and become diluted and depoliticised, and is in danger of reflecting instrumental values of credentialism with reduced scope for wider cultural learning. Representing different disciplinary perspectives, the authors of this paper chart the evolution of the on-campus student experience. They argue that while virtual education facilitates access to learning, if mismanaged the removal of the actual student from the spaces of the campus has the potential to create an empty credentialing virtual institution where actual students will be incidental not essential, with vastly altered learning experiences.

Student expectations of university life may be partly understood through the discursive formations present in popular culture. Has the trend towards on-line teaching significantly changed the campus experience for traditional on-campus students? People used to “attend” or “go to” university – now they “do” university. This paper questions what expectations on-campus students bring to university life and surveys popular representations of campus life as part of a broader discussion about understanding university life, the recent moves toward more on-line teaching and the changing ways that students engage with universities.

The scope of this paper is a reflection on the changing nature of the university’s relationship with on-campus school-leaving age students. This is not to diminish the importance of traditional distance mode, which constitutes a significant percentage of students; however the expectations and lived experience of the traditional distance education student are quite different to those of the on-campus student. Our key focus in this paper is on university engagement with school leaver on-campus students and their lived experience within an environment of increasing reliance on on-line teaching materials. As Coates, James and Baldwin (2005) observe, there has been a rapid adoption of campus wide Learning
Management Systems (including on-line delivery of materials), but that the use of these methods of teaching as an adjunct to, or indeed replacement of, traditional learning modes has not been the subject of extensive study beyond comparisons of software systems available.

This significant change in universities’ delivery mode would have bearing on expectations of what it is to attend university. The resulting changes in the relationship between student and university affects the roles of each. A potential student’s own expectation of their personal level of engagement and commitment to study may also be affected. There is the possibility that for some students, “doing university” becomes more transactional, akin to shopping on e-bay or simply seen as a series of basic tasks to be completed. In this way the student’s enthusiasm for study and to engage with ideas, their immersion in a culture of exploration and learning becomes much more their own responsibility, with the on-campus teacher distanced or placed at a level commensurate with their on-line presence and materials. The student has a choice to attend class, or to consume the packaged materials on-line.

There are a great many benefits to on-line delivery and engagement, especially for distance students, and like any technology it must be used efficiently and to effect for the best possible outcomes. This is an issue of balance, and consideration, not of rejection of one system over another. With a focus on the traditional on-campus student and the changing nature of university engagement, let us consider the first stage of a student’s engagement with tertiary study; the perception of what a university is and what university life is like.

When one asks “what is university?” the answer is manifold. However, the university experience may be roughly divided into two areas, the first being the formal learning, assessment and attaining of prescribed skills and knowledges and the second being the broader social experience. Both of these serve to make up “campus life”.

The first of these categories, focused on assessable skills and qualities, is more easily quantified and it is this that universities centre on when designing formal teaching and educational requirements. In contemporary Australia the attributes that graduates are expected to have may be codified by the university, for example, desirable graduate attributes at the University of Southern Queensland are clearly listed as:

Discipline expertise - evidence of analytical engagement with the theoretical knowledge of your chosen discipline

Professional practice - evidence of the skills required for effective participation in your chosen working environment

Global citizenship - evidence of students' ability to connect discipline-based theory and practice to the sustainability of communities, economies and environments in a global context

Scholarship - the capabilities to make a scholarly contribution to your workplace and wider communities

Lifelong learning - evidence of independent, life-long learning.

(University of Southern Queensland 2009)

These are justifiably the desirable attributes of a university graduate, and they reflect the 1873 statement by British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli that a university should be “a place of light, liberty and learning” (Brown 1999). These codified attributes may be tested through the
assessment processes, but tied to them are broader skills, knowledges and ways of seeing that may be enhanced through the freedom, experimentation, and association with others of diverse backgrounds and opinions that on-campus university life is thought to bring. These interactions include, but go beyond, a form of phatic communication. These experiences are formative in the development of identity and attitudes that may be carried into later life. This then, at its basis, is a question of epistemology rather than solely being one of pedagogy (or, in fact, andragogy) alone.

The epistemological conundrum arises in separating the formal learned information, which may be written in a book or on a website and may be narrow and discipline specific, and the understanding and implementing of knowledge and critical thinking skills which may be developed through interaction of the student with a variety of others. The graduate attributes listed above allude to these broader notions with phrases such as:

…skills required for effective participation

…students' ability to connect discipline-based theory and practice to the sustainability of communities, economies and environments in a global context

…contribution to your workplace and wider communities

[And finally, the developing of a lived, reflective epistemology in the concept of continual personal review, growth, and development through what is called “Life-long learning”:

…Lifelong learning - evidence of independent, life-long learning.]

(University of Southern Queensland 2009 emphasis added)

To understand popular conceptions of campus life, we turn to a necessarily brief survey of opinion-shaping popular culture texts signifying the dominant popular discourses on university life; often reflecting a time of individual extension, experimentation with ideas and the development of self identity. These texts tend to focus almost exclusively on the lived social experience of university, rather than the formal learning - which may be alluded to, but is substratum to the narrative discourse.

Shaping opinions of the imagined university

There is a delightful British-ness in the fact that Liverpool Hispaniscist Edgar Allison Peers (also known by his pseudonym Bruce Truscott) created his seminal account Redbrick University (Truscott 1943) at the height of a war. In this he reflected on the role and purpose of the university, on the place of research, and the way student experiences differed between those who experienced university life away from home with the enriched Oxbridge experience, in contrast to the more utilitarian redbrick experience of the Victorian era regional universities. He saw the university as not just a place of study, but as a holistic environment.

What we might choose to call the classic image of the University can be reflected in that vision of Oxbridge perhaps most faithfully articulated in the early chapters of Evelyn Waugh's 1945 novel Brideshead Revisited (2008). His account, written towards the end of the war against fascism and almost contemporaneous to Redbrick was not an isolated depiction, but is a classic of this genre. Another less enduring example was Nicholas Monsarrat's semiautobiographical This is the schoolroom (1939) which paints a similar picture of 1920s
and '30s sybaritic upper class indulgence, although in Monsarrat's case conflated with a veneer of left wing anti-fascist activism. In *Brideshead Revisited*, university gives the student the opportunity to learn about the world – neither Charles Ryder or Sebastian Flyte have an overly academic focus, but enjoy a freedom, which ultimately comes at a significant cost. We might consider that this depiction of the university was outdated and obsolete even when it was first promulgated, yet this mythic discourse has been strangely enduring. The desire to emulate Oxbridge is seen in the far-flung corners of the former empire and in more recent times than we might expect. From the mid 1980s the University of Queensland Student Union replicated the Great Court Race from *Chariots of Fire* in subtropical Queensland, and in 2010 Queensland conservative opposition leader John-Paul Langebroek was a figure of public ridicule when it was revealed that as an undergraduate in the 1980s he had, for a time, emulated Sebastian Flyte and carried a teddy bear around campus (AAP 2009).

Another more recent picture of the on-campus university experience is that of the late 1960s to early 1970s ‘Summer of Love’ era of sexual and social freedoms, student protest, and challenges. A variety of characters inhabit this realm in David Lodge’s *Changing Places* (1975), where readers can identify with the experiences of the very British Phillip Swallow when he has a sabbatical in place of the archetypal Californian Moris Zapp, exchanging the grimy and grim Midlands University of Rummige for the exciting, permissive west coast Plotinus University at Euphoria. Likewise Howard Kirk as a subversive (yet lecherous) lecturer in *The History Man* (Bradbury 1975) captured the feeling of an era of political awareness, social activism - and careerism.

As the 1970s drew to a close, there was a new image of permissiveness, often crude and sexist, that progresses from the liberties of the late 1960s and 1970s toward more questionable values. *Animal House* (Landis 1978) as a cult film is irreverent, tasteless, hedonistic, and anti-authoritarian, and while set in late 1960s with references to the challenge of the Vietnam War, it provided models for the narratives of university life into the 1980s. To the students of the 1980s, *Animal House* presented modelling for Toga parties and other licentious behavior that is only now facing challenge (Hurst 2010). The film provided a clear discourse that the university was a place of experimentation and defiance of authority. For all their apparently simple message of male centric debauchery, American films in this genre will often include a narrative of a subordinated group eventually triumphing over a dominant or oppressive group, an example being the nerds versus jocks in *Revenge of the Nerds* (Kanew 1984). Along the way they may indulge all manner of hedonistic predilections, but the innate message could be well disposed to a Marxist reading in that creativity and challenging the established order can result in a worthwhile outcome. Any hint of ideological redemption disappears, however, with the advent of more dissolute and commercialised narratives of the University in the form of light-porn sex comedy films such as *Spring Break* (Cunningham 1983). In this reference there is little study at university, virtually no intellectual development, memories of anti-Vietnam protests are long gone and college life is nothing but fun.

In the carefree greed-is-good era of the corporate 1990s attending university was an enjoyable life experience. Beyers (2005) chose ‘Those happy golden years’ as the title of her examination of the mainstream television phenomena of *Beverly Hills 90210* (Star 1990-2000). This vastly popular television series that transitions from high school to university at California University (filmed at the real-life Occidental College) showed student viewers around the world what they could expect when they went to university. While neither author was a devotee of the program, we have forced ourselves to explore this realm and conclude that it wasn't all bad. Despite the focus on individual success and indulgent materialism in a cast of predominantly white upper middle-class stars set against ethnically diverse minor
characters active in the background, the themes that are mentioned can be positive. There is some exploration of the socially significant issues such as date rape, racism, animal rights, denunciation of anti-Semitism, charity work, reclaiming the night and sexuality issues, but the nightly focus is mostly on University providing the good times. There is some occasional study, although as Beyers says, mostly in relation to concerns about failing. You don't want to fail university and drop out, because if you did the in-crowd might forget to invite you to the next pool party. Again, the dominant discourse of hedonism comes strongly through the text.

More recent literary works in the “campus novel” genre include Stephen Fry’s *The Liar* (1991) and *Making History* (1996) which are set almost entirely on university campuses in Oxford and in America. Again, the discourse is one of youth, and a form of freedom and adventure that brings formative personal growth.

Campus fictions have long fermented in popular culture, providing powerful discourses about the liberties and freedoms associated with university life. Much like the ‘mythology’ of universities, these powerful series of signs are part of the discursive formations (structures of knowledge, or epistemes) proposed by Foucault, which both constitute and exert power over objects in the social realm (2002).

While there is great variety in the depictions of universities and their students, and while some of the questionable and anti-social practices associated with some of these texts would not be acceptable today, the consistently reinforced discourses are centered around youth (away from parental guidance for perhaps the first time), the freedom to experiment, a form of adventure, exploration, and personal growth. These discourses must inform part of a prospective student’s understanding and expectations of university life. They are reinforced to the level of mythology, even with non-fiction accounts of university life, as can be found in Seaman’s detailed exploration of United States student experiences (Seaman 2005). It seems the freedom for self exploration while at university has benefitted many throughout our society, including political leaders such as Queensland Premier Anna Bligh, who was the subject of a television programme in the series *Australian Story* on ABC Television.

In the ABC TV program, former student union president Eugene O'Sullivan recalled the Premier's days in the union.

"Anna came from the five foot four feminist faction, who were a left wing, Marxist, feminist group ... fairly strident, hairy arm-pitted type women who were either lesbian separatists or running a fairly anti-bloke line," he told the program.

But Ms Bligh wasn't bothered by the anecdote.

"I think we're all young once and we do some silly things, and as I say, each to their own," she said. (AAP 2009)

Bligh’s comment alludes to youthful passions within the safe environment for experimentation that is university. These valuable learning experiences as an undergraduate activist would have shaped the woman who is today’s Premier of Queensland.

**The evolution of the on-campus experience today**

Having discussed these representations, signifying images and popular narratives constructing university life, we now look at on-campus student experiences today to find they are certainly varied, but (unsurprisingly) more tame than that depicted through media. Student life can
include some activism, for example, the support given by students at the University of Southern Queensland in opposition to the racially offensive “Nigger Brown” nametag on a local football stadium. This issue is discussed at some length by Andrew Hickey, Jon Austin and Stephen Hagan (2007). There are some students who demonstrate concern with ethical and environmental issues and enjoy the celebration of diversity as seen in Harmony Day. Former iconic acts of public hedonistic behaviour such as the Ruthven Rush (Grant 2007, French 2009, 294-5), a student drinking activity that involved teams of students running from one pub to another drinking a beer and running on accompanied by navigator and a bucket holder, have been replaced by more private socially acceptable hedonism in restrained themed parties at the Student Club with police checks on drug use and security guard investigations of underage drinkers.

In theory, the physical presence of large residential colleges to accommodate students should lead to an active student life on-campus. While some of the more liberal experimentation may well take place within the privacy of the residential college, increasingly students are choosing to study off-campus with apparent concomitant impacts on traditional student life for the remaining on-campus students.

There may be a great many factors at play which affect student engagement in a broader campus life. Certainly the former Howard Government’s introduction of Voluntary Student Unionism was thought to have an effect on campus life and was the subject of much discussion (Richardson 2005, Rochford 2006). Again, during this same period of the Howard Government, the changing nature of work, the casualisation of the workforce and the rise of contracting and the ‘enterprise worker’ was significant (Hall 2006). Where before people may have had the same jobs or careers for their entire working life, that is no longer the expectation. This casualisation of work identity may also have played a role in shaping student identity, pushing it more towards a casual or less engaged approach in line with the changes in society more broadly. The contemporary student is likely to be undertaking some form of paid work (likely casual) while they are studying (Devlin, James, Grigg 2008) and this too plays a role in their identity as a student, as well as the time they have available to them to participate in campus life. For these students on-line teaching makes university life more flexible and easier to compartmentalise into the rest of their time demands. On-line teaching meets a need, but in doing so changes engagement and invites more distance between the student and the university.

On-line teaching is an exceptionally valid response to the broader changes in society and while the authors are at pains to note that on-line teaching is certainly not the only factor of change affecting engagement, we have chosen on-line teaching as a focus because it is a significant, clear and obvious factor that is not external to the university and that, therefore, the universities themselves do have some control over.

In their 2005 paper, Nelson Laird and Kuh discuss the potential benefits of students’ use of information technology and its relationship to other aspects of student engagement, but note that the evidence of a positive benefit was limited to date. They noted that students were using information technology more and show that from the mid to late 1990s student use of email grew 550%, and that nearly half of all courses surveyed had on-line content by 1998. “Students appear to use the Internet to communicate with others and to find materials and assistance with their coursework” (Nelson Laird and Kuh 2005, 212). This is unsurprising as it reflects the changes in society more broadly, towards a rapid adoption of information technology as a social and communication tool. While emailing the lecturer provides contact with the university and assistance with coursework, and the internet provides access to a vast
range of information of varying academic quality (including material to plagiarise), the student needs to be well equipped with the skills required to make judicious use of the technology and information to hand.

Nelson Laird and Kuh acknowledge that there was some debate about the benefits of the use of technology and that what studies there were had mixed results, including an apparent disadvantage to students of a lower socio-economic background (Nelson Laird and Kuh 2005, 212). These early studies were limited, often relied on students’ own self-reported perceptions of gains and tended to reflect upon the potential possible future benefits as they were seen at the time. The rise of web 2.0 and a more interactive on-line environment has quickly dated some of these earlier preliminary studies; however they do make the point that student engagement can no longer be considered a distinct issue from the use of information technology.

Most research studies treat student use of information technology as a separate form of student engagement. However, as Kennedy (2000) suggests, perhaps information technology is a vehicle by which students increase their engagement in areas such as active and collaborative learning or student–faculty interaction. “Used appropriately and in concert with powerful pedagogical approaches, technology is supposed to enhance student learning productivity” (Kuh and Vesper cited in Nelson Laird and Kuh 2005, 213)

The on-line university has tremendous positives in that it enriches and democratizes, and allows remote, disadvantaged and lower socio-economic students the option to study in their own time and place, whether in Byron Bay or Baghdad. It also allows potentially greater access to a range of reference sources through on-line scholarly journals. Conversely, the evolution of the on-line mode as a dominant discourse within a university has challenged the physical campus in its central position in the student experience. Increasingly compelled to respond to marketplace concerns, the corporate university is presenting a new learning experience that displaces students from the physical campus and allows them to embark on a fragmented part-time education where the learning experience may be compartmentalized, sidelined or marginalised to accommodate other pressing Gen Y concerns.

While certainly of immense value to distance students, the availability of comprehensive on-line materials for students enrolled on-campus negates the requirement to actually attend classes to receive the formal components of their study, and diminishes the rich, diverse experience of campus life. It is as if students appear to be saying that if they don't have to turn up to classes why leave the confines of the college or the rented flat to actually go to university, when it is easier to stay in your hyper-connected room and look at the on-line version offered. Consumerist values are also at play in reducing student presence. We live in a market dominated era where students perceive that they must work to obtain ever more material possessions, and so these work demands may mean younger local students increasingly take the on-line option, after doing perhaps a first year on-campus. The second and third year courses can be completed on-line, while still having the convenience of living in college or a student flat away from parental censure.

For better or worse, the physical campus is no longer central to the student experience of attending university. Student communities have become fragmented and student life lacks rich (inter)personal discourses expected. Indeed, the student clubs and societies on-campus are challenged by declining on-campus student attendees, and reduced student interest as students increasingly focus on private-sphere activities. Potentially, the institution has lost its
facilitative role in shaping the wider learning experience and moves this life-learning to the borderlands.

In the early 1970s students were enthusiastic supporters of the protests against the rugby tour by a racially selected South African team. Would students be at the protest today? Or would they be too busy serving the food and drinks during the game? They may well have social consciences, but this is developed externally to engagement in the university, and the university itself will be poorer for this. Diversity in social relations will not be fostered - when non-attending students want to socialise, they’re more likely to go out with their friends from work or school, rather than the diverse new friends they could have made at university. The enriching experience of talking to the overseas student before class, or the mature aged student and sharing in her life experiences will be gone. Our political life will be poorer also. Abbott and Costello were student union operatives – we won’t have them in the future, and neither will we have Stott-Despoja or Gillard. The leaders of tomorrow will get their management experience from McDonalds and Myers, not from running the Student Union, coordinating Amnesty, or organizing a protest.

The student experience and narrative have changed and become sanitised and depoliticised, and are in danger of reflecting instrumental values of credentialism with reduced scope for wider cultural learning. We consider that the removal of the student from the spaces of the campus has the potential to create an empty, credentialing, virtual institution with vastly altered learning experiences. The university, as it is traditionally understood, will change, and on-campus students will lose the chance to gain broader skills, knowledges and ways of seeing. The challenge then, for the on-line university, is to truly use digital delivery in ways where it does have advantages over printed materials. Technology should be seamless and invisible with the focus on the engaging content material, rather than the technology that delivers it. The on-line university must offer a diverse range of experiences and encourage more active involvement from the student body if it is to go some way towards replacing the broader social experience of campus life that has long been mythologised as being significant in an individual’s life-long development.

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Takin’ care of business: Collaboration, equity and respect for Indigenous culture in tertiary education

Nell Musgrove and Naomi Wolfe
School of Arts and Sciences, Australian Catholic University

We would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri and Wathaurong peoples who are the traditional owners of the lands on which the Victorian campuses stand.

Abstract: Takin’ care of Business. Including culture in the curriculum can be a challenge. How do an Indigenous unit and its staff respond to the myriad of responses to our culture? How can we stop culture, pedagogy and research from being done the wrong way without becoming marginalized or trivialized? The Centre for Indigenous Education and Research at Australian Catholic University has centres at all of its campuses and the Indigenous coordinators have many and varied roles. One such role is to work with faculties and their staff to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives are appropriately included. An example is the relationship that has built up over time between Indigenous staff and the Staff from the School of Arts and Sciences. This paper will discuss the experiences of the Indigenous staff and their interactions, the development of the relationship(s) and how these can be used as examples and models of collaborative and engaging partnerships that are culturally appropriate. It will discuss the rewarding but often rocky road that leads to authentic and continuing working relationships that are unafraid to discuss issues about culture and communication.

The inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in and across the curriculum is an ongoing challenge for tertiary educational institutions. There are both Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics that have long-standing commitments to this issue. Further, many Australian universities have made pledges to improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students, increasing the employment of Indigenous staff and reviewing the extent and nature of content relating to Indigenous peoples and culture across all disciplines. Nevertheless, in the period between 1990 and 2008 only 0.08% of University completions were Indigenous students (Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Committee 2010) and as of 2008 there were only 245 academics across Australian universities identified as Indigenous Australian (Page and Asmar 2008); thus there is clearly still work to be done. How do an Indigenous unit and its staff stop culture, pedagogy and research from being conveyed in a damaging way without becoming marginalised or trivialised? How can non-Indigenous staff make positive contributions that are not culturally appropriating or inappropriate? In short, how can we work towards making Indigenous voices and perspectives part of ‘a scholarly affair’ that is both passionate and enduring?

In 2008 the National Indigenous Higher Education Network (NIHEN) developed five determinations relating to the delivery of material relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the curricula of all Australian tertiary education facilities (The question of ‘Who should teach Indigenous Studies’?). They are forward-looking principles intended to lead people in the right direction, but they are not prescriptive. At Australian Catholic University (ACU), the Centre for Indigenous Education and Research (CIER) plays a guiding role in developing policy, practice and curricula that advance the NIHEN goals. CIER has
centres at all six of the ACU campuses, Jim-Baa-Yer being the Victorian unit, and the Indigenous co-ordinators of these centres have many and varied roles. One is to work with university faculties and their staff to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives are appropriately included in course work. This involves a university wide network of collaborations between Indigenous staff and the predominantly non-Indigenous academic staff. Another of CIER’s roles is ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people find the university an open and culturally appropriate space. The ultimate realisation of these goals, which are fundamentally entwined, will mean creating and sustaining a learning environment that is appropriate and engaging for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. This article offers some reflections on the work of CIER in the context of the broader NIHEN goals and argues that real progress begins with the establishment of meaningful partnerships built on mutual respect and collaboration, but that all achievements may prove ephemeral if they are not supported by formal structures within the university.

ACU has developed a specific Indigenisation Plan alongside its other strategic areas and has made a commitment to six strategic goals and fifteen performance targets for intervals during the life of the inaugural thematic plan (Australian Catholic University Indigenisation Thematic Plan 2009 to 2011, 2009). The University also has an established steering committee, comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous representatives, to support the Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator and to assist with the development and implementation of the ACU Indigenous Employment Strategy (Australian Catholic University Indigenous Employment Strategy 2009 to 2011, 2009). As recognition of the need for greater Indigenous Academic participation in its academic workforce, ACU launched the Indigenous Staff Research Scholarships which offered one full scholarship per faculty for Indigenous doctoral students (Australian Catholic University Staff Research Scholarships, 2010). The scholarships are available for all five university faculties—Business, Arts and Sciences, Health Sciences, Education, and Theology and Philosophy. Candidates are employed at an entry-level academic salary, have Indigenous and faculty mentoring, and are given opportunities for associated research and teaching whilst completing their doctorates. In February 2011, the first five Indigenous Staff Research Scholarship holders began their academic careers at ACU. Although the scholarship holders are members of the relevant ACU faculties, they will also have strong support through CIER. The CIER staff will provide mentoring as needed from a cultural perspective, and will also call upon the well-established links with Indigenous communities for additional support. This holistic approach is important, particularly since the students and staff often already know each other and share connections and commitments to local communities.

One question that remains is how well-equipped the faculties and schools are to make the most of the presence of the Indigenous Staff Research Scholarship holders. In the remainder of this article we consider this issue by taking an example from the Melbourne campus. Over time, a strong relationship has been built between Indigenous staff and staff from the School of Arts and Sciences in Victoria (SAS(VIC)), and we offer a critical reflection of our achievements framed around the five NIHEN determinations of 2008. We want to celebrate some successes, but also openly acknowledge that our work is far from complete—and there is never any room for complacency. It is a rewarding yet often rocky road that leads to authentic and continuing working alliances in which people are unafraid to confront issues about culture and communication. In our experience there have been times of struggle and frustration that have been felt on both ‘sides’ of the table, and a great deal has been asked of those involved. We have committed ourselves to more than just professional development. In the end, we are seeking to change the way people think, both about their relational identity and their authority as intellectuals.
The inevitable overlap between professional and personal for Indigenous academics has been well expressed in scholarly literature (Smith 1999; Page and Asmar 2008; Nakata 2004). While CIER staff, along with other Indigenous staff at the university, see their involvement with teaching Indigenous content as a contribution to extending cultural awareness amongst the wider community, it is a fraught activity. Culture is personal, and so Aboriginal academics teaching Indigenous content are required to be both personal and professional at once. This is difficult at the best of times, and made more so when students express views that denigrate Aboriginal people and culture. Even students with ‘good intentions’ can put Indigenous academics in precarious positions because in their zest to ‘learn everything there is to know’ these students become consumers, and Aboriginal staff objects of consumption. An appreciation of the full meaning of this must take into consideration the historical colonising function of education as well as the long history of white knowledge systems and ‘experts’ objectifying and dehumanising Indigenous peoples. Finding ways of teaching that break this mould and foster more productive types of student engagement is no small task. Most importantly, we argue, this journey must involve both Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics, and that non-Indigenous academics need to bring their whole selves (not just their professional selves) to the table. Culture is intrinsic to the human condition, and if we are to understand one another’s culture without paternalism ruling, we must communicate with each other as whole people. We also need to create spaces in which we feel free to be honest. Cultural considerations are often forgotten in the haste of some non-Indigenous academics who seek to ‘get it right’ and who are ‘passionate’ about ‘Aboriginal issues’. The frustrations often felt by Aboriginal academics as they try to work with non-Indigenous academics are seldom expressed in the public or scholarly domains, but discussing the fallout is integral to an open communication between non-Indigenous and Indigenous staff.

The first NIHEN determination states that it is ‘no longer acceptable that non-Indigenous academics teach Indigenous Studies content if there is a qualified Indigenous academic that can do so’ (The question of ‘Who should teach Indigenous Studies’?). There are, currently, no SAS(VIC) staff who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Identification as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander within the ACU Human Resources system is voluntary and while most Indigenous staff choose to identify there are some who are hesitant to do so. Such reluctance is often centred around issues of personal identity for the individual, not wanting to be treated differently from colleagues and peers, and sometimes a general weariness of filling out yet another statistic or ‘ticking another box’. There are some signs of interest in increasing the representation of Indigenous people on the SAS(VIC) staff. Informally, the school’s professors have a demonstrated commitment to mentoring Indigenous postgraduate students. This is a significant step towards increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed as academics, but past experience across Australia has shown that the attrition rate of Indigenous scholars from the tertiary sector is alarmingly high without formal structures for bridging the gap between completion of higher degrees and employment as academics (Andersen, Bunda, and Walter 2008). ACU’s Indigenous Staff Research Scholarship programme is one initiative that seeks to establish a foundation of Indigenous academics throughout the faculty.

The work aimed at increasing the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who are beginning their academic careers at ACU is important, but we also need to question why we have not attracted higher-level Indigenous staff to SAS(VIC) despite a university-wide Indigenous employment strategy. In part, we can identify issues around recruitment; for instance, academic positions are not typically proactively advertised in Aboriginal media outlets unless they are Indigenous-identified jobs. We also need to ask ourselves some more difficult questions. Despite ACU’s explicit commitment to social justice, does it remain an
institution where Indigenous academics face ‘a harder path’ (Fredericks 2009)? Scholars examining the intersection of critical race theory and critical pedagogy have highlighted the persistence of ‘invisible’ racism across all levels of education (Parker and Stovall 2004), and Stella Coram (2009) argues that supposedly objective academic employment processes ‘underpinned by merit embed the marginalising of the “other”’. The extent of institutional racism in Australia remains a contested question (Coopes 2010), but during the first decade of the twenty-first century Aboriginal people were significantly under-represented as undergraduates, postgraduates and staff at Australian universities (Andersen, Bunda, and Walter 2008). One positive step that could be made towards improving this situation is recognising the value of Indigenous cultural knowledge when assessing candidates for both study and employment. There may be some cases in which this occurs, but without formally incorporating it at the level of policy, the application of this equitable approach will remain ad hoc in its application (Gunstone 2008).

Another factor that influences the attitudes of Indigenous academics to working in universities is the extent to which Indigenous-related content is included and the ways in which this material is delivered (Page and Asmar 2008). Indigenous academics face a constant battle to be included on issues, for example policy and curriculum development and Indigenous related research, that have a direct impact on their community life and also, in many cases, on their professional life. While much progress has been made over the last decade, there is certainly much more that needs to be done. In 2002 the then Australian Vice Chancellors Committee (AVCC) accepted that ‘the principle that all Australian higher education students should receive some understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems, cultures and values as an integral part of their studies’ (Australian Vice Chancellors’ Committee 2002). The AVCC argued that there are ‘tangible benefits to be obtained in greater numbers of students gaining an understanding of Indigenous issues’, and indeed that including this within tertiary curricula would provide students with ‘some generic skills for living in our society’ (Australian Vice Chancellors’ Committee 2002). Precisely how this change should be brought about was not articulated and it remains something that is pedagogically fraught. For more than a century universities and their concomitant colonial knowledge and power systems have normalised epistemologies of learning that reinforce inequitable cultural relationships (Nolan, Hill, and Harris 2010). Consequently, the challenge we face is not merely one of reconsidering the content of tertiary education but also its mode of delivery and assessment.

Mindful of the absence of Indigenous lecturers, yet desirous of real change, staff from CIER and SAS(VIC) staff have developed strong collaborative relationships which have helped us enact some working responses to the second and third NIHEN determinations which call for training of non-Indigenous staff in discipline-specific content and in cultural competency respectively. The environment which makes these relationships possible and sustainable is the product of conscious creation. Staff within Jim-Baa-Yer actively try to balance the cultural needs of Indigenous students and community members who access the centre with maintaining a spirit of openness for non-Indigenous students and staff. The Academic Co-ordinator tries to organise as many different events and workshops as possible to cater for the diversity within pedagogy, curriculum and staff interest. Open house morning teas and specific focussed events (for example inviting all those with an interest for Indigenous research to come to Jim-Baa-Yer and meet with Elders and staff) have been very popular. These events are seen by some within the university community as incidental but they are part of a developed programme that actively seeks to provide opportunities for engagement with Indigenous people and cultures. It is hoped that such a welcome will appeal to non-Indigenous academics and encourage them to seek assistance with their academic unit development and any Indigenous related research. There is some change of culture within
Over the past few years the number of lecturers asking CIER staff for feedback on their course content has increased, and this is no small accomplishment. Most academics have been educated in university systems that position the lecturer as an assumed authority in the classroom and as an expert in their field, and assume this ‘expert position’ automatically (Lampert 2003). Many lecturers feel great unease about answering ‘I don’t know’, and more than one student has replied, ‘But you’re the lecturer, you’re supposed to know everything’. Unlearning this model, making the request for input from Indigenous staff part of the work process, and becoming open to unconventional approaches is something that takes time.

While the model in place at ACU is bearing fruit, we also want to consider its weaknesses. The progress we have made has only been possible because those involved have been willing to meet each other on equal terms and find ways of reaching mutual understandings. This takes a good deal of time in a world in which people are time poor. It relies on the good will of the existing Indigenous academy, the willingness of Indigenous community members to share their cultural expertise and proactivity of individual non-Indigenous academic staff. There are very few SAS(VIC) subjects that require the lecturer to include Indigenous content or perspectives, and where it is a part of the unit description, there is no formal requirement that the lecturer consult with CIER staff. Additionally, there are no structured alternatives. There are working examples of how institutions can support the delivery of useful professional literature to staff. Charles Darwin University has available a website specifically designed for accessing information about culturally appropriate care of Indigenous people (Sharing True Stories). The possibility of devising new methods of engaging non-Indigenous and Indigenous staff and students with additional and enhanced resources has been an ongoing challenge for CIER staff.

It is important for academics to be consulting the right kinds of professional literature, and for them to be guided by CIER staff in their selection of topics covered within each unit, but without cultural competency training it is very possible that lecturers may deliver the right material in culturally inappropriate ways. Once again, at ACU this is an area in which there is good will but little structural support. An introductory Aboriginal cross-cultural awareness course is offered to staff, but it is not compulsory. Since it is optional, it often fails to reach the people who most need it, some of whom continue to expect individual Indigenous academics to provide a ‘one-stop-shop’ approach to Indigenous cultural awareness. It is hoped that the new Indigenous Employment Strategy and the Indigenisation Thematic plan will bring together existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness programs and foreshadow a new era in the development and implementation of Indigenous cross cultural education. For those staff willing to make time for this kind of professional development, it would be ideal to offer progressive levels of workshops which help people unpack more sophisticated issues such as unexamined privilege and institutional racism, but as yet this has not been established.

The lack of formal processes for extending the reach of NIHEN determinations two and three within the university poses some potential problems. We are proud of the working relationships that have grown between SAS(VIC) and CIER staff, but we are also conscious of the instability of this arrangement. We don’t ask each other for ideas and assistance because ‘it is our job’, but because we have come to know each other and realise that we have common goals and interests—and we have also created a space in which we trust we will be treated with respect as individuals and intellectuals. We all do it because we share an ethical commitment to creating a culturally inclusive educational space, and the Indigenous staff are also motivated by obligations to community, but the reliance on relationships is apparent. If key people leave, the collaborative space we have established may have to be built again. We
also acknowledge that there are staff that, for whatever reasons, opt out. Some academics never think to include Aboriginal content because they cannot see its relevance, others avoid the area because they do not feel they have the necessary knowledge, but the end result is the same—Aboriginal content becomes ghettoised in specialist subjects or in the units offered by those staff who voluntarily engage. We need to strengthen the reach of both subject-specific and cultural competence education across Australian universities to help academics in all discipline areas understand that their current practices may well be perpetuating the colonising force of tertiary education (Hart 2003).

The fourth determination of NIHEN (2008) specifically recognises the trauma that has occurred systematically across Australia since colonisation. Indigenous academics, their families and communities have been affected and this has been the result of direct and indirect past Government policies and practices. NIHEN recognises that Indigenous Academics teaching outside of their subject field, while having valid and extensive cultural knowledge, may need and want additional educational qualifications in the field to assist them with curriculum service and delivery. Indigenous academics also need to be supported by their university in striking a balance between community life, academic life and professional educational aspirations. As more than one Elder has remarked, ‘being an Aboriginal Academic is a 24/7 job with two bosses, your community and then your university’. Therefore, the demands that universities place on Indigenous academics need to take this dual obligation into account. At ACU, with Indigenous staff in so many different locations, this means remembering that there are Indigenous academics working within multiple communities and who have connections to many more.

This critical appraisal of the ways in which the work of the CIER and SAS(VIC) staff has made progress towards realising the NIHEN determinations would be incomplete without mention of one further matter. NIHEN determination five states that ‘A partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics in the teaching of … subjects is desirable to model to students effective and respectful working partnerships’ (The question of ‘Who should teach Indigenous Studies?’). J. Thomas (2008) writes that ‘the teaching and undertaking of an Aboriginal course can be confronting for both the Non-Indigenous teacher and student as it entails a venturing into a space that cannot be experienced directly by the teacher or the student. The best one can hope for is that both the teacher and student gain an understanding, respect and appreciation for Aboriginal people and culture’. A respectful and collaborative approach, from the informal ‘round the table’ brainstorming, to curriculum development and the implementation of said curriculum, is one small step to ensuring authentic and culturally appropriate pedagogy within academia. This is no easy feat. It involves a willingness to venture into unknown territories if non-Indigenous staff are to actively work to include another world view and, more importantly, to stand beside an Indigenous academic. Indigenous academics have to actively cut across the disappointments of previous years, the fatigue of frustration, and boldly stick their feet right in the middle of the western academic patch. For both, it can be both an exhilarating and a daunting time. However, we can draw strengths from our shared histories although we should be mindful of the history of misappropriation and the misrepresentation of Indigenous knowledges by non-Indigenous academia (Nakata 2004).

We believe that our team approach to the delivery of the SAS(VIC) Aboriginal history unit provides an example of how successful such partnerships can be. This subject, ‘HIST106: Australia’s Indigenous Peoples: Past and Present’ is one of two first year units for students studying a History major within a Bachelor of Arts, but is also a compulsory unit for Bachelor of Youth Work students and pre-service education students within the Bachelor of Education
and the Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Arts degrees. Other students may opt to take the subject as an elective, course schedule permitting. Thus the student population is varied from semester to semester, and from year to year, and this brings with it certain complexities. Within the general ACU cohort, there are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and International students. For many Indigenous students, the meeting point between knowing their culture and being taught about it in HIST106 (especially by non-Indigenous lecturers) can be a challenging experience. International students invariably make comparisons with their own country’s situation and history. The majority of students who study this Aboriginal history unit are relatively recent graduates of Australian high school systems, though there is great variety in the extent and nature of their familiarity with Indigenous issues. Given the differing demographics and backgrounds of students, along with the sizeable collection of disciplines and degrees they represent, it is not surprising that students have a range of responses to information presented during the unit. It has to be stated that HIST106 is not a pedagogical unit per se, rather it is a survey unit that hopes to inform, engage and equip students with a foundation for future knowledge acquisition, including within professional-practice and discipline-specific units.

In this core unit we have established the practice of seeking active participation and critique from Indigenous academics and from local Aboriginal Elders to ensure that the unit is culturally sensitive, respectful and has included some local perspectives to complement the national focus of the unit. Therefore, the unit development takes into account that it is being delivered on two campuses in the lands of two different Traditional Owners. The process of collaboration allows for the inclusion of input from Jim-Baa-Yer staff in online forums. To assist non-Indigenous students to ask the questions that they are too hesitant to ask in class, we established the ‘myths board’, an online and anonymous question forum where we encourage students to ‘ask away’. We establish rules of mutual respect and all staff, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, contribute to the answers. This is done for several reasons. Firstly, it actively models respectful collaboration between staff; secondly, it allows for a wide representation in answers. Questions range from the standard myths surrounding Aboriginal people and supposed ‘special treatment’ to more pertinent questions about interacting with Indigenous Australians.

Although only two of us are signing our names to this article, we want to acknowledge that the model of collaboration which has been an integral part of running a successful Aboriginal history unit has required the participation of many people over a sustained period of time. We appreciate the willingness of Elders and community people to deliver talks and guest lectures, and to be part of the Elders in Residence programs. The generous support of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporation (VAEAI)\(^1\) Catholic Education Specialist representative, Aunty Delsie Lillyst, has been an invaluable support for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff. We also take time to acknowledge the long-standing relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff involved, particularly those associated with the development of the unit (which has been running now in various incarnations since 1995). As authors we present this account with the support and input of our colleagues and most importantly we acknowledge the ‘hands on’ work of Elders and community members, including ACU Indigenous students, who help not only to shape particular academic units but help to grow and strengthen the partnerships between Jim-Baa-Yer and SAS(VIC) staff. Without their constant guidance and critique, we would not have something that we are proud to own together, nor something we are committed to improving.

\(^1\) The VAEAI is the peak body for all Aboriginal Education within Victoria.
Within our collaborative work, there is an understanding of the socio-political factors of the relationship; we recognise that there are underlying tensions at the nexus of faculty and Indigenous education unit, and that the hegemony of a faculty does not always relate or acknowledge fully the cultural epistemologies of Indigenous knowledges. Academic units are ‘owned’ by faculties and delivered by schools—Indigenous units have no ‘ownership’ and are reliant on the commitment of community members and culturally-sensitive staff. Thus the links between academic schools and Indigenous unit are tenuous and a tension between the cultural and academic agendas is inevitable. This tension is not an easy thing to discuss, nor is there always time for such conversations amongst time-poor academics, but our experience is that differences in cultural perspectives need not be insurmountable if everyone concerned is prepared to be honest and receptive to others’ perspectives. The collaborative process means engaging on an effective level rather than seeking to protect academic or cultural territories. Martin Nakata (2004) wrote of the possible imbalance if Indigenous voices are ignored resulting in cultural appropriation but also pointed out that non-Indigenous voices need to be included in the dialogue if collaboration is to have any chance of success.

The existing collaboration needs to be recognised as having strength in terms of praxis and pedagogy, and to be encouraged as a model of co-operation, a tangible commitment to educational reconciliation and an enhancement of existing embedding of Indigenous perspectives throughout ACU’s curriculum. However, if collaborative arrangements are to become standard and automatic, then they will need to be formalised and prioritised as an active part of curriculum development documents and policies at ACU. The establishment and growth of CIER is a welcome opportunity for further development of Indigenous perspectives across ACU’s varied curriculum. Positioned, as it is, within the purview of the university’s academic administration, CIER has the potential to co-ordinate a centralised focus, drawing on the strengths of the individual units (such as Jim-Baa-Yer) on each campus, in order to bring depth, cultural knowledges and understandings, and a relevancy that can only enhance the academic delivery of Indigenous subjects and related fields.

There is a long way to go. Indeed, we begin losing ground the moment we stop seeing ourselves as works in progress and consider our task complete. We see room for improvement in much that we do, but also believe in the positive impact of the collaborative partnerships we have developed. There are other examples of good practice out there, and we need to hear more about them; this is just one example of how Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics can effectively educate. We certainly would not suggest that one size fits all, be we have found that authentic partnerships have made for a richer environment that benefits the Aboriginal community around ACU, Indigenous and non-Indigenous students studying at ACU and the staff that participate in the development and delivery of units. The ability to suspend ownership of subjects and combine cultural knowledge, hesitancy, academic expertise and enthusiasm, makes for a heady mix and a roller coaster ride for all those involved, but a ride that at the end makes participants want to take the next trip.

References


Imagining decolonisation: Decolonising the mind - minding the gap

Julie-Ann Paredes
School of Arts and Social Sciences, Southern Cross University

Abstract: This paper explores connections between an interpretation of decolonisation as a paradigm of change and the ongoing and seemingly inscrutable gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Australia. This approach has arisen from my developing thesis, The Exemplary Life of Tess Brill’s Activism: Decolonisation as Social Justice, which exposes the life of activist Tess Brill, who in the 1950s, saw the gap first hand from the train as it passed an Aboriginal reserve at Tuncester on its way to Sydney. Minding the gap, Tess Brill was moved to begin a personal journey of de-colonisation. Historically the term "decolonisation" described processes of removing colonial rule but this paper suggests – following the writings of Thiong’o, Freire, Nandy and Dascal and in consideration of Birch’s suggestion that Australia is ‘a nation yet to escape its colonial psyche’ – that the effects of colonisation on formerly colonised populations are ever-present and ongoing as they are maintained in thought patterns which support privilege and inequality. This is a timely premise as there is no current effective solution to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancy, levels of education and employment opportunities. By recognising the underpinnings of cultural practices as still connected to colonial values, we may be able to rethink, re-assess and re-structure approaches to Indigenous inequality today while extending the current debate of decolonisation – its meanings, its applications and its potential to change the way we think about our world.

Introduction

An official acknowledgement to country and to Indigenous elders past and present is a protocol often practised before conferences, presentations and events in Australia. For myself, it has become a continuous and silent acknowledgement of the place where I was born: the country of the Bundjalung nation, which surrounds Lismore on the Far North Coast of New South Wales. It is an area I feel privileged to be able to call home, but I am also aware that this country has been well traversed and transformed by a colonial footprint. In the early 19th century, cedar-getters searching for “red gold” had, by the early 20th century, clear-felled the Big Scrub, a subtropical rainforest which covered some 75,000 hectares of the Far North Coast, paving the way for the dairy industry to flourish (Big Scrub Landcare; Vader 2002, 91).

Considering this history which changed the landscape and the lives of the local Aboriginal population irrevocably (Lippmann 1973, 81), has meant that acknowledging country has become an envisioning of ‘others’. This is not an imagining which Indigenous artist Vernon ah Khee calls “images of the noble savage...anchored in a utopian world” – a world that he doesn’t believe could have existed (ABC-RN:Hindsight, November 7, 2010; Berndt 1988, 517). Rather, I walk in the present conscious of a ‘before’, engaged in a process of reflection within the development of a ‘belonging consciousness’ (Offord 2008, 7). While imagining encourages a consideration of ‘other’ histories, I am also aware though, that my imagining is...
interpreted through a white cultural prism imbued with the historical baggage of my own genealogical past which I find renders me somehow complicit being a descendent of both invader and immigrant who came to this country.

Eisenstein has observed that once she sees that ‘interpretation is already embedded in the very process of thought’ she recognizes that there is a ‘before’ that she cannot ever completely know or recover (Eisenstein 2004, 24). I too cannot completely know or recover a non-colonised before but this reflective engagement is a phenomenon which philosophers, social theorists and writers have described as a ‘double’ or ‘counter’ consciousness which can be applied to the concept of white privilege and has been described within the paradigm of decolonisation (Constantino 1978, 82; Tomlinson 1991, 29-30).

My focus in this paper is imagining the agency of personal self-reflexivity as an act of decolonisation, an imagining which has been formulated in part in response to Tony Birch’s suggestion that Australia is a ‘nation that is yet to escape its colonial psyche’ (2007, 105). Riggs deems that reflexivity is a significant and appropriate research method as it describes the author’s ‘engagement with their own location and histories as well as the potential for using particular theoretical approaches’ to highlight certain social conditions. More importantly, he deems reflexivity ‘fundamental’ when considering ‘colonial practices and elaborating modes of resistance’ (2007, 6) which is especially pertinent if one accepts that ‘colonisation is ubiquitous to the human condition’ (Offord, 2010, 46).

Consequently this paper will firstly discuss decolonisation, its historical groundings and how its project may be imagined as an issue of consciousness, before making links to an ‘echo factor’ of the colonial encounter: the ongoing ‘gap’ of disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. While this gap is itself a site worthy of contemporary critique, it connects to the history of a white woman, Tess Brill, who in the 1950s, saw the gap as a lived reality when passing an Aboriginal reserve on the outskirts of Lismore. Minding this gap, she was moved to become an activist, working firstly for Indigenous communities for fourteen years. During this time, she not only came to appreciate an Indigenous worldview, but engaged in a process of self-reflexivity as she re-assessed her white society: its rhetoric, racism, religious ideals and government policies.

This history may seem disconnected from issues of national consequence but Inga Clendinnen sees the examination of such ‘small long-ago events [and] the close analysis of past situations’ as having great significance. She believes that it ‘liberates our imaginations to taste experiences other than our own [and] expands our moral comprehension’, while crediting such analyses with the potential benefit of knowing ourselves ‘more exactly and more critically’ (Clendinnen 1999, 6-7). It is this stimulus to know ourselves through reflecting on our history, and how we may understand the mechanisms supporting the ongoing privileging of whiteness in Australia, which connects Tess Brill’s history to an interpretation of decolonisation as a process of reflexivity.

Furthermore, adopting this stance endorses Kuan-Hsing Chen’s supposition: that as cultural studies practitioners we should regard ourselves as the ‘articulating agents and linking points’ of decolonisation in order to continue the path of critical cultural studies and that our research and discursive practices should form the ‘critical forces of [the] incomplete project of decolonisation, at least to decolonise ourselves’ (Chen 1997, np).

In an historical context, decolonisation refers to processes of contestation and removal of colonial rule but it has been identified that the ‘emergence of a decolonized nation-state was
not often accompanied by a transformation in the social structure of that nation state’ (Morton 2007, 169; Ashcroft 2001, 43). Freedom from colonial rule did not alleviate colonial hegemonies which were preserved through residual systems of language, governance, law, land tenure and religious tenets (Biermann 2011, 389; Ferguson 2008, xxiii). Consequently a body of influential writing has evolved, collectively forming the theoretical platform of postcolonialism, from which all dimensions of colonialism may be reconsidered (Le Sueur 2003, 3), not only its oppressive form and inherent injustice but its psychological ramifications (Chakravarty 1985, np; Galbo 2007, np). Nandy contends that ‘colonialism is not just the conquest of space...but that it forms the content of cultures and societies, becoming...a mindset’ (Nandy 1983, 11) and there is much literature to support his contention.

Decolonising the mind
Even before the ‘half-century time span’ (1947-1997) of political decolonisation began (Betts 1998, 98), Mahatma Gandhi recognised the psychological effects of colonisation. Regarding colonialism as a moral issue and judging it by Christian values, he critiqued British rule in India and determined it to be ‘an absolute evil’ (Nandy 1997, 176). While Ashis Nandy describes Gandhi as an ‘uncolonized mind’ (Ibid., 176-7), Gandhi’s Hind Swaraj (1909), a ‘polemical critique of Western civilisation’ and ‘proclamation of ideological independence’, offers an early and eloquent insight from a ‘colonised’ position from which he concludes that ‘colonialism was something to be overcome in our own consciousness first’ (Gandhi 1998, 19; Heredia nd, np).

In The Wretched of the Earth (1963) Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist, political activist and writer, explains the oppressive ‘mechanism’ of colonialism. Having treated those who suffered the effects of French colonial rule in Algeria, he advocated ‘the need of a complete calling in [to] question’ of colonial situations (Fanon 1963, 37) identifying that ‘colonial oppression works at the level of psychology as well as in material form’ (Young cited in Sartre 2001, xii). Fanon’s oeuvre has been described as ‘the most well-known of psychological attempts to theorize the effects of colonialism’ (Ward 2007, 193) and connects to that of Gandhi as both treat ‘the project of national liberation as an imaginative pretext for cultural self-differentiation from Europe’. This vision of exceeding, surpassing and improving upon the ideal of Western civilisation maintained a defiant refusal to accept the premise of lack or deficiency which both Gandhi and Fanon recognised as the ‘historical predicament’ of the colonised (Gandhi 1998, 19-20).

Drawing inspiration from Fanon’s work, Kenyan writer, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, felt impelled to write of his lived experiences of colonisation (Capeheart 2007, 120). Educated in English from the age of six and forbidden to speak his native Gikuyu, his treatise Decolonising the Mind outlines the deleterious consequences such an education had on connections to his own culture, observing that the effects are far-reaching and culturally destructive leading to a ‘colonisation’ of thought and mind (Thiong’o 1986, 10-13).

Paulo Freire’s pivotal work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, corroborates these observations identifying that teaching strategies mirror a colonial ideology of oppression through the ‘preservation of cultural hegemony’ (Mkandawire 1975, 73-74). It can therefore be understood how persistent ‘colonial hierarchies of knowledge and value’ work to support what Edward Said refers to as ‘the ‘dreadful secondariness’ of some peoples and cultures’” (cited in Gandhi 1998, 7).
Leela Gandhi advocates postcolonialism as a ‘disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and crucially interrogating the colonial past’ and within its discourse, concludes that in its ‘reflective’ mode, postcolonialism offers the ‘possibility of thinking our way through and ... out of the historical imbalances and cultural inequalities produced by the colonial encounter’ (Gandhi 1998, 176). This invokes the notion of anti-colonial agency: the possibility of thinking our way out of structural imbalances by engaging in processes of mental decolonisation, and not only connects to the current postcolonial space of Australia with its ongoing gap, but also to the case study of Tess Brill who found herself ‘minding the gap’ in the 1950s.

Minding the gap

If power is ... the qualitative difference or gap between those who have it and those who must suffer it, it also designates an imaginative space that can be occupied, a cultural model that might be imitated and replicated. (Gandhi 1998, 14)

In 1951 Tess and Vic Brill moved to Meerschaum Vale on the Far North Coast of NSW with their young family. Vic had been transferred to teach at the local school and in the holidays they would travel back to Sydney to visit family, taking the train from Lismore.

Seven kilometres West of Lismore, sited only metres from the track, was an Aboriginal reserve called Cubawee, and from the train window Tess Brill could see the harsh reality of disadvantage. In this post-WWII era, Australians were enjoying increased prosperity and affluence yet Tess could see ‘a double standard’ and wondered how or why it continued (Morgan 2006, 43). She was motivated to become a committee member of the Lismore Aboriginal Welfare Committee when it formed in 1958. This group folded after a few months, but Tess decided to continue in an individual capacity, spending the next three years investigating conditions and resources available for various reserves and missions in the area, particularly Cubawee reserve which had no electricity, no fresh water supply or sanitation service.

Tess worked with Aboriginal people approaching government departments and agencies, asking questions and gathering information, and began to understand how difficult it was for the families living on the reserve to access social services, approach departments for information or to achieve change. She saw that dealing with bureaucracy was challenging, frustrating, at times demoralising and how queries and requests by the community were obfuscated and ignored. She discovered that departments deferred their responsibility to the Aborigines Welfare Board (AWB) and that their attitudes lacked what she considered to be Christian or humanitarian sensibilities.

As a result of these experiences, Tess could appreciate the situation at Cubawee from an Aboriginal perspective and this was a crucial difference between her and other white members of the Lismore Aboriginal Advancement League (LAAL) which she was instrumental in establishing in 1961. Tess held the position of Honorary Secretary and member responsible for reporting on health. The LAAL disbanded in 1964 when the Cubawee residents moved into new housing closer to Lismore. Nevertheless, Tess continued helping individuals and communities at their request until 1971 when ill health forced her to rest.

I met Tess Brill through my research of Cubawee, and what caught my interest was the respectful way she spoke about individuals, families and communities, describing her desire to work for Aboriginal people helping them to achieve what they wanted to achieve. I felt that this stance demonstrated an ethical integrity to her activism and that her views reflected a
comprehension of the complexity of Indigenous – non-Indigenous relationships which I considered worthy of greater attention. What also became apparent within transcripts of earlier interviews held in 2003 with Rob Garbutt – another local who had been researching the Aboriginal presence in Lismore – was her comprehension of the intrinsic nature of local Aboriginal culture and the significance of its connectedness to land.

Reading between the lines of these interviews, I could see that Tess Brill had earned the respect and trust of the Aboriginal people she worked with. She had been asked to help with many specific grievances such as improper use of AWB land by white farmers, issues of police brutality and aiding workers at Baryulgil asbestos mines, and maintained that through helping resolve these problems, she never imposed her will on those seeking advice. Instead, she saw a greater benefit in encouraging, advising and supporting Aboriginal people to say what they wanted to say.

It was through such efforts, as well as her experiences with the LAAL, that she came to see another side of her own culture and how it operated finding that white privilege and a system of disadvantage was supported by the AWB with its aims to enforce the federal government’s assimilation policy. This policy, which professed to improve the prospects for Indigenous people, simultaneously denied ascribing value to or recognition of Aboriginal identity or cultural practices, effectively offering equality at the cost of Aboriginality. Furthermore, the practice of ‘pepperpotting’ Aboriginal families into single houses surrounded by the white community relegated them to a lonely urban segregation which the families at Cubawee opposed.

Tess Brill consciously realised that the government policies and religious ideals which her white society advocated could never be achieved as a lived reality and, as a consequence, began a process of personal self-reflexivity and re-assessment of the meanings systems and epistemological foundations of her own life. This process, which also catalysed the democratic principles she believed were worth defending, set her apart from acceptable ‘white’ behaviour and thinking of the time (Garbutt 2006, A3-5).

I was not there as their spokesman [sic]...I wasn’t a welfare officer...I went to the Aboriginal people [and said] “I don’t understand [the problems] but if I can help”...so I always had to listen to them and go from their experience, that’s where I had to learn about the politics so...when they would say to me “Thank you for coming out Mrs Brill, thank you...” I would say, “No. Thank you for what you give to me”, because in the course of understanding them I had to learn about our own society...in a way that I’d never thought about it before.

When asked by the interviewer whether her involvement affected her sense of Australian identity and citizenship, Tess replied,

How [Aboriginal issues] affected me was...what I was learning...It changed my image of justice and equality. I really believed in that. I was very patriotic. I still am. But I was seeing a side that I didn’t know existed and the injustice in the laws. That’s what I learnt about, the Act itself...this special set of laws...the only way I can describe it – it’s like being in a prison without walls. You couldn’t see them, [the Aborigines] couldn’t see them. They were within the prison. [White people] couldn’t see it at all. All they could see was Aborigines and “It was their fault. All they had to do was live like us and everything would be fine.” So what I was learning about was the Assimilation Act.
Thus, while McCalman’s research determines that Tess Brill’s contemporaries were ‘an idealistic generation...determined to make an end to war and injustice’ (1993, 299), Tess discovered the disjunction between idealism and realism.

What I was also learning and understanding [was] the reality of the society and it was a contradiction of my religious [views], because...[while] one was an ideal and very good principles involved...the reality was that you could never reach that ideal – the reality wouldn’t allow it – it would always be an ideal. It took a couple of years to work my way through that till I could finally throw off the expected justice in the present world...it wasn’t easy – it was an internal battle. What I felt [through being involved was that] you have to do a lot of self-analysis [and] I did a lot of self-analysis.

Self analysis, an element of reflection, is regarded by Constantino as the antidote to bigotry and leads to greater awareness, with ‘continuous self-analysis...rather than lead to introspection and pre-occupation with self...in fact, make [one] more acutely conscious of the larger problems (1978, 298).

The gap of Indigenous disadvantage is one such larger problem which ‘diminishes all of Australia, not only the...communities in which it is most apparent’ (Ken Henry cited in Dillon and Westbury 2007, 175). Yet, as Hunter’s study concludes, ‘it is not sufficient to measure the various aspects of disadvantage...we need to understand the pathways into [it] and the evolution of more sustainable positive outcomes’ (2007, 185).

Imagining decolonisation

The value of reflecting on history in order to understand our present postcolonial situation cannot be overstated. By researching the local encounters between whites and Aborigines in the 1950s, reflecting on the history of Tess Brill and regarding her activism as anti-colonial not only serves as a model for engaging in self-reflexivity but offers the possibility of change. It must be acknowledged that Tess Brill would never articulate her experiences in the theoretical language of postcolonialism. Terms such as anti-colonial acts and decolonisation did not exist in the 1950s.

Judging assimilation to be inherently unjust, it was the recognition of a system which promoted the creation of 'lesser beings' which stimulated Tess Brill to reflect on her society, to reject its premise of equality through assimilation and her subsequent years of activism which may be understood as the result of a mind engaged in an ongoing process of decolonisation. It is this process which connects her story to the postcolonial landscape of today as she is exemplary of someone who worked to decolonise spaces. While the circumstances of her activism cannot be replicated, anti-colonial acts can though, and by necessity should, take many and varied forms. Thus, it becomes an individual project for Australians to consider how to engage in a process of decolonisation, accepting that this is not an achievable state, rather an ongoing and valuable process of imagining cultural change.

References


Why bother with a gender perspective in peacebuilding?

Elisabeth Porter
University of South Australia

Abstract: 2010 marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on ‘Women, Peace & Security’. This was a historic resolution, the first to address the specific needs of women and girls in conflict-affected countries. My paper explores why this resolution is so important. In the past ten years, there has been significant progress in increasing the representation of women at all levels of decision-making in peacekeeping operations, peace agreements and in post-conflict reconstruction. The resolution (and subsequent ones 1820, 1888, 1889) have focused attention on the need to prevent conflict, protect women and girls during conflict and increase the participation of women in peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding and also to prosecute gender-based war crimes. Yet women still suffer horrendous abuses and are excluded or marginalised from decision-making positions in conflict-affected countries where socially inclusive practices are not the norm. This paper highlights comments by peacebuilders gained from interviews in Timor-Leste, Fiji and with Sri Lankans. In listening carefully to the voices of those who know suffering at first hand and are responding to such, what we heard demonstrates: first, the importance of a gender perspective in peacebuilding; second, the importance of adapting culturally-appropriate approaches to the full gamut of peacebuilding processes; and third, critical scholarship in this area may be a challenge to political organisations. I also give an overview of what lessons the Australian government can learn from such research. The overall argument is that without a consistent incorporation of a gender perspective in peacebuilding, fundamental issues of gender equality, gender justice and women's empowerment are undermined and there is minimal engendering of peace and security. Gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding requires commitment to adjust to local contexts in engaging with local communities.

This conference urges us to rethink our space as scholars. As part of this rethinking, I often wonder why Peace Studies is such a rarity in Australian Universities while Security Studies is the norm. This feature extends wider to global priorities. World military expenditure in 2010 is estimated to have been $1630 billion with the US accounting for 43 percent of the global total. Yet work on peace gets merely $6 billion funding and only $.6 billion is spent on conflict prevention so that while peace research could prevent conflicts and help rebuild communities after war, for every one peace researcher, there is estimated to be more than 1,100 researchers for weapon development. My focus in this paper brings together ‘peace’ and security’ and I explain these concepts in more detail later. The year 2010 signals the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on ‘Women, Peace & Security’. This historic resolution was the first to address the specific needs of women and girls in conflict-affected countries. It focuses on: prevention of conflict; protection of women and girls during conflict; increasing women’s participation in

1 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) 11 April 2011.
2 What’s up Youth? http://www.wupy.org/
peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding; and given additional UN Security Council resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1889, it seeks also the prosecution of gender-based war crimes. These four resolutions are now referred to as the resolutions on ‘women and peace and security’.

In this paper, I make 3 arguments. First, the protection of women is part of a broader agenda around the prevention of conflict. That is, a prime part of protecting women is to prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SG-BV). Also, sexual violence is not merely a women’s issue, but it is a security issue. By this I mean that all forms of violence have to be stopped in attending to human security issues. Second, inequality remains a key obstacle to women’s inclusion in peace and security matters, hence sweeping away (all forms of) inequality is fundamental to all aspects of political life, whether in peacebuilding or in the corridors of Universities. Third, valuing women’s peacebuilding involves more than simply applying a gender perspective. Incorporation of a gender perspective can be done mechanically, to adhere to a bureaucratic requirement of a gender mainstreaming mandate, which is not the same as a genuine commitment to equality that recognises women’s rights and different contributions women make to peace processes, such as an emphasis on victims, land ownership, education and health. My recent research has assessed the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the Asia-Pacific region and I use some examples of our research in this paper.3 In fostering a regional women’s media network of Fiji, Tonga, Bougainville and Solomon Islands, femLINKpacific suggest that UNSCR 1325 is a framework for making women and a gender perspective relevant to all aspects of peace and security. They suggest it should be used:

as a key to open doors into negotiations, as a loud hailer to have their voices heard, as a pen to inscribe their issues onto the agenda, as a mirror to hold up to governments to remind them of policy and budget commitments, and as a lens to help see security through women’s eyes (femLINKpacific 2008: 5).

Protection as prevention of conflict
The first point I want to make is that sexual violence is not merely a women’s issue; SG-BV happens to men as well as to women, boys and girls and thus is a security issue, because people do not feel safe. In militarized cultures, ‘protection’ of women always remains problematic because SG-BV is part of the remaining ‘structural violence’ (Vlachová and Biason 2005). A key advantage to the additional UNSCR 1820 is that it urges ‘equal protection under the law and equal access to justice’ (1820 OP4)4 because the failure to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice is a main reason for continuing violence against women.

Undoubtedly, protection from abominable human rights abuses including SG-BV is necessary. The obvious extent of sexual violence and the urgent need to attend to human suffering has to some degree taken attention away from the idea that the four UN Resolutions on ‘women and peace and security’ are concerned with the prevention of all types of conflict and strive to increase women’s participation in all peacebuilding processes. ‘States are far more willing to dedicate policy and resources to combat sexual violence than they are to 3

3 The fieldwork was conducted with Dr Anuradha Mundkur of the Gender Consortium, Flinders University, South Australia. The research was commissioned by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) on ‘Women, Peace & Security in AusAID partner countries: Analysis of the UNSCR 1325’. See Porter, Mundkur & Every (2010) and Porter & Mundkur (2012 forthcoming).

4 OP is Operating Paragraph for this resolution and will be used throughout the paper.
promote women’s substantive participation in peace negotiations’ (Thompson 2010: 2). Strategies to address the protection of women and girls are urgently needed. I support Torunn Tryggestad’s argument that: ‘Issues of equality with men, and women’s participation in decision-making, have traditionally been more contested than issues of women's protection’ (2010: 161).

If there was equality between men and women, there would be a profound sense of shame from men in abusing women, rather than women feeling shame at being abused. A Member of Women’s Action for Change in Fiji told us: ‘I don’t think you can stop violence until you start looking at conflict transformation’. My first claim is that more attention to the prevention of conflict and early warning devices minimizes the need for protection from escalated violence. Protection from violence and an awareness of rights, improves the chance of women and girls in accessing resources, making decisions, living without fear and realizing their rights to participate as equals. How well are we succeeding on equality? This is a large question that affects us in different ways.

Sweeping away inequality

As one possible response to this question, I propose the second main point in this paper, that sweeping away inequality is essential to increasing women’s involvement in peacebuilding. This is a massive task. Interestingly, ‘equality’ is not mentioned in any of the 18 operating paragraphs (OP) in UNSCR 1325. In the preamble it stresses: the importance of women’s ‘equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security’ (S/RES/1325/2000). This peace is more than what Galtung (1996) refers to as a ‘negative peace’, a mere cessation of violence, but it addresses root causes of the direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence to begin the groundwork for the long process of building ‘positive peace’ which is a sustainable peace that transforms injustices, inequalities and insecurities.

We know that inequality prevails wherever there is insecurity. This is an obvious point. Despite UN resolutions and international conventions that promote gender equality, difficulties in implementation arise because of indifference or misinterpretations or too often are dismissed as irrelevant in terms of history, culture, religion or patriarchal traditions. The Fijian Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International recommended to us the need of their community to examine ideals that perpetuate inequality and demoralize human dignity as a way of ‘shattering that myth of [equal rights] being an external import of western view’. Similarly, a member of the Association for War Affected Women in Sri Lanka told us: ‘One of the reasons why we have conflict is that there is no respect for human dignity and when this is combined with persistent inequalities it becomes a deadly mix’.

We often proudly remind ourselves that western feminism has a long tradition of dealing (well) with equality and difference, otherness, post-colonial recognition of equal difference and equality within multiple diversities (Benhabib 2002; Phillips 1993; Young 1990). Yet, gender equality still sits awkwardly within male-dominated community traditions. Practically, gender equality can represent different things. For example, women and men need equitable access to education, economic resources, assets of land, property information, income, financial services and skills in leadership and training (AusAID 2007: 8-9). Indicators of

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5 And related to the theme of this conference, the life and practice of academia and cultural pursuits.
6 Conventions that address women include CEDAW (1979), the Beijing Declaration and PFA (1995), the Optional Protocol to CEDAW (1999), the Windhoek Declaration (2000) and UNSCR 1325 (2000).
Gender Equality Strategies (Dijkstra 2002) draw on instruments of well-being such as education; life expectancy; labour force involvement; and numbers of women in Parliamentary seats. Ways to improve gender equality are vital given that ‘there is no region of the world where women enjoy equal rights and benefits of development’ (AusAID 2007: 7). As a Fijian faith-based worker told us:

You can’t have security if women are not given equal rights…we can’t have peace and security if equality is not emphasized. If we are not treated equally, women will not be at peace – they will be insecure – insecure in the church, insecure in the family, insecure in every sphere of life. There will be insecurity everywhere. Because I’m not respected – how can I feel secure?

For many women, security and sustainable peace are inextricably connected and are grounded in the everyday realization of feeling safe and being able to meet mundane human needs. Practically, security and peace can mean something as simple as being able to walk to collect firewood or water without fear of being raped. Peacekeepers, increasingly aware of this, sometimes set up patrols to increase women’s security for these everyday tasks. The first recommendation from the Second International Conference, ‘Women for Peace’ held in Dili, Timor-Leste, in 2009, was for an understanding that: ‘Peace is not just the absence of war but also requires that people have food and shelter, are healthy, educated and secure’. Human security, practical measures needed to build peace with justice and equality, and broad parameters of peacebuilding are interconnected (Porter 2007). Given these tight links between the realization of human security, justice, equality and rights, attention must be given in peacebuilding efforts to both the universality of equality and rights and to the particularity of gender equality where the opportunity for men and women to exercise rights in different cultural contexts generally is not equal.

What then is a concrete example of a peacebuilding attempt to overcome inequality? Timor-Leste is often upheld as a successful case of including gender perspectives. Since 1999, the UN has had five consecutive peacekeeping missions. In the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste, established in 2006, the Security Council called upon this operation to develop gender equality strategies in collaboration with national authorities. This ‘was the first globally…UN peacekeeping operation with a specific mandate to work together with United Nations agencies, funds and programs, to support the development of a national strategy to promote gender equality and empowerment of women’ (UN Security Council 2010: 17). The Timor-Leste Constitution’s recognition of the principles of gender equality as fundamental rights and citizenship (Article 17) and equal participation of women and men as fundamental to democracy (Article 62) has translated into significant progress.

At the time of writing, in Timor-Leste, women comprise 20 percent of the police force, a Vulnerable Persons Unit deals with gender-based crime and is made up principally of women police officers. The 2007 Parliamentary elections saw women return 29 percent of seats in Parliament with three significant Ministerial positions held by women, in portfolios of finance, justice and social solidarity; as well as the Prosecutor-General, Vice-Minister for Health and the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality; and a Parliamentary Women's Caucus ‘to mainstream gender in the work of the national parliament’ (UN Secretary-General 2010: 18). Yet domestic violence and poverty remain as major social ills, part of the structural violence that hinders security and thus sustainable peace.

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7 See also Mary Caprioli (2004: 418-421) where she offers practical gender equality measures to measure gendered insecurities.
However, gender equality is not clear-cut anywhere. It depends on: ‘the institutional framework of post-conflict governance, including power-sharing arrangements’, social power relations of class and clan and the degree of ‘international support to gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding’ (Nakaya 2004: 147). Structural reforms that try to sustain group equality can be tricky when antagonistic relations have not fully broken down. For example, in post-genocide Rwanda, the recruitment of Tutsi women for high-level government positions were not perceived as gender equality for Hutu women. In listening to the varied experiences of local women who live through conflict and develop new competencies as well as occupy positions previously filled by men who were absent in war, we hear ways in which women prioritize distinct issues that enhance gender equality. For example, it was important for women in Bougainville that communication and transport services were restored and that church groups should participate in the rehabilitation program (Chinkin 2003: 14). The 2001 Afghan Women’s Summit for Democracy ‘urged provisions on education, media and culture; health; human rights and the constitution; refugees and internally displaced women’ (Chinkin 2003: 14). For women in Burundi, equality issues include the protection of women and girls, the prosecution of crimes of sexual violence, access to education for girls and legislation of women’s rights to inherit land. In South Africa, Cambodia and East Timor, women’s groups organized to develop Women’s Charters to ensure the centrality of equality to peacebuilding.

The first stage in overcoming gender inequality is to enshrine the principle of equality in constitutional, electoral, legislative and judicial reforms. Where gender equality does not translate into actual leadership, equality is enshrined in beautifully worded Constitutions, policies and laws that in reality do not amount to much change. Gender capacity-building with men and women helps to tackle cultural practices that cement inequalities, but as our fieldwork in Timor-Leste showed us, ‘human rights’ and ‘gender equality’ are not always well understood in some cultures; they ‘are perhaps the most contentious, confusing and challenging for customary approaches’ in terms of differing interpretations and practices of justice (Brown 2009: 154-5). It is often better to talk about men’s and women’s equality because a ‘stress on equality makes sense only as a way of attending to differences’ (Volf (1996: 18). Adopting a gender perspective in peacebuilding should heed how these differences translate in practice and what policy, legal or political changes are necessary for substantial equality to be realized.

A gender perspective is useful but not enough

This leads to my third argument that women’s peacebuilding involves more than applying a gender perspective. Gender mainstreaming slips too readily into a tick-box mentality where the inclusion of a token woman can be seen to fulfil the requirement of a gender perspective, the one lonely woman on a peacekeeping mission. Gender mainstreaming has to mean more than that. UNSCR 1325 is based on the premise that women’s participation in all aspects of conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding improves the quality of inclusive, sustainable peace. This is more than simply gender mainstreaming or adding a gender perspective. It is not simply about including women. It is recognizing that gendered experiences lead to different views and thus often to different priorities. Part of the point of bothering with gender equality is the potential for different frameworks to emerge. For example, the women’s movement in Fiji has played a significant role in shaping the country’s political history. As a member of a Fijian faith-based NGO told us, ‘I think women highlight

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8 Or on a University Committee.
9 A similar point could be made about the needs and views of diverse ethnicities, religious groups and marginalized groups.
things that men do not realize – do not understand. There are always loopholes when there are no women… when women are there, they actively contribute a lot to what the men don’t see’. A member of femLINKpacific also told us, ‘we know that women mobilize, but how do we take it to that next level – how do we get into the formal spaces’?

One area where a gender perspective has made a significant presence is in elected representation. 2010 statistics from the Inter Parliamentary Union of women in national parliaments show the world average in both lower and upper houses combined is 19.2 percent. When we just look at the lower house, Rwanda has the highest statistics with 53.6 percent, Timor-Leste has 29.2 percent ahead of Australia with only 27.3 percent. When we look at countries that have been affected by conflict with less than 10 percent in the lower house this includes Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Algeria, Congo, Nigeria, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Lebanon. There are no women in some lower house in the Pacific islands including the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.10

While we read frequently of women’s roles in grassroots peace processes in brokering peace and in rebuilding conflict-affected societies, it is widely accepted that this expertise is not similarly recognized in formal peace negotiations and processes. Rather, women are alarmingly absent from high-level peace processes. There have been no involvement of women in Angola; Bosnia; Cambodia; Ethiopia; Guinea; Nepal; and Tajikistan (Caprioli, Nielsen and Hudson in Hewitt, Wilkenfeld and Gurr 2010: 25).11 This absence from peace tables is of profound concern. In a sample of 24 major peace processes since 1992, UNIFEM found that while data is not always easy to collect accurately in war zones, ‘only 2.5 percent of signatories, 3.2 percent of mediators, 5.5 percent of witnesses and 7.6 percent of negotiators are women’ (UNIFEM 2010: 3). Where no women were involved, most of the agreements have been rejected by various political parties. This provides a significant reason for adopting a gender perspective as a requirement in all stages of peace processes.

It is true that ‘typically peace agreements are framed in gender-neutral language’, given the assumption that the contents are ‘equally applicable to, and equally appropriate for, the needs of both women and men’ (Chinkin 2003: 2).12 We have bleak reminders that ‘there is no peace agreement that provides an overall model for appropriate provisions for ensuring that the needs of women within the conflict zone are served alongside those of the men’ (Chinkin 2003: 2). But, there are persistent key proposals that women’s groups want incorporated into peace agreements, namely ‘statutory guarantee of women’s rights and equal treatment’; a minimum 30 percent quota for women in decision-making processes; special measures that ensure the safe return and reintegration of displaced women; women’s rights to property ownership and inheritance; and the end of impunity (Nakaya 2004: 144).

To conclude, why bother with a gender perspective in peacebuilding, or, in different contexts, in university and cultural pursuits? It is quite simply about equality and difference and improving the quality of sustainable peace. Caprioli, Nielsen and Hudson in the ‘Peace and Conflict Ledger’ (in Hewitt, Wilkenfeld and Gurr 2010) suggest that when women are

10 These statistics are valid as of 31 July 2010, from the InterParliamentary Union, www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm (accessed 19 October 2010). In Tonga, while no women were elected in 2008, one woman was appointed to the Cabinet and thus she is one of 32 members who sit in Parliament.
11 These authors base their analysis on data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2008) on peace agreements.
12 Chinkin notes ‘the tension between gender mainstreaming and women-specific provisions’ in the content and implementation of peace agreements (2003: 9).
included in peace processes, prospects for more durable peace agreements improve. There has been formal or robust informal involvement of women in agreements still mostly in force in Afghanistan; Burundi; Democratic Republic of Congo; East Timor; El Salvador; Indonesia; Kenya; Liberia; Mozambique; Northern Ireland; Philippines; Rwanda; Sierra Leone; South Africa; and Uganda Tajikistan (in Hewitt, Wilkenfeld and Gurr 2010: 25). What this reveals is ‘that the higher its level of gender inequality, the greater the likelihood that a state will experience intrastate conflict’ and also that ‘peace agreements are more durable when women formally participate in their negotiation’ (UNIFEM 2010: 25).

Authors in the UNIFEM Report on Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations (2010) emphasize women's demands in peace processes and we see the added value of their perspectives. For example, on security and protection, when women demand that sexual-based violence be understood as a violation of the ceasefire, a range of security issues are introduced, such as the need for gender-sensitive security sector reform and special measures to protect women refugees and internally displaced persons. When women demand both a seat at the peace table and increased political participation post-accord, attention to quotas, affirmative action measures, non-discrimination guarantees and gender machineries at Ministerial levels are more likely to be introduced. When women are involved in peace processes, their attention to socio-economic empowerment and recovery is likely to emphasize land and inheritance rights, access to credit, access to education, investment in skills training and capacity-building and the special needs of ex-combatants and female-headed households. Involvement of women in peace processes generally means that attention to justice and reparations seek accountability for crimes of sexual violence, and impunity and the payment of reparations that are practically meaningful to victims.

The UNIFEM authors suggest that ‘there is a correlation between more inclusive and open models of negotiations and a higher likelihood that the outcome agreements will hold and conflict will not return’ (2010: 3). Prospects for successful peacebuilding ‘are generally better in societies where women have greater levels of empowerment. Women's status in society reflects the existence of multiple social networks and domestic capacity’ (Theodora-Ismene 2009: 505), such as women in Sierra Leone mobilizing resources to rebuild schools and Rwandan women forming networks from both Hutu and Tutsi communities to reconstruct local services. Shadia Marhaban, writing on the marginalization of women in Aceh, says, ‘the practice of democracy cannot be “given”; one has to embrace it’ (2010: 1). Participation means lots of different things, it can include women as mediators or members of mediation teams, as delegates of negotiating parties, as all-female negotiating parties representing a women's agenda, as signatories, as witnesses, as representatives of civil society groups, as gender advisers to mediators, facilitators or delegates, as members of technical committees devoted to gender issues (UNIFEM 2010: 5-9).

At the 2010 UNSCR 1325 Open Days in 25 conflict-affected countries, (UN DPKO, UN DPA, UNIFEM, UNDP 2010: 3) more than 1,500 women met with high-level UN officials to talk about progress and gaps. Despite different contexts, conflicts and cultures, three common messages emerged from these days; that women's peace and security priorities revolve around: first, the need for participation; second, the importance of justice, protection

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13 The report was drafted by Pablo Castillo Diaz with contributions from Samina Anwar, Hanny Cueva Beteta, Colleen Rosso and Stephanie Ziebell.

14 Open days were held in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Iraq, can you, Kosovo, Lebanon, Liberia, Morocco, Nepal, occupied Palestinian territories, Pakistan, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan and Timor-Leste.
and security; and third, the urgency for economic resources and support. While gender mainstreaming has ‘limitations, on the ground it appears that civil society actors are employing gender mainstreaming as a gender equality initiative to secure women's empowerment’ (Barrow 2009: 52).

I have stressed the need for equality and visibility, but we cannot simplistically assume that the inclusion of women will always make a substantive difference. We must be aware that simply adding a gender perspective can undermine meaningful participation. For example, Shadia Marhaban was the only Acehnese woman in the nine-member negotiating team for the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding that ended three decades of war between the government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement. She writes, ‘women are given token seats in official bodies such as the Parliament, in order to adhere to the Indonesian electoral regulation that calls for, but does not oblige political parties participating in elections to include at least 30 percent of women candidates’ (2010: 1).

Such an integrationist model of a gender perspective ‘is underpinned by an “add women and stir approach”’, but in failing to address ‘how structures and decision-making mechanisms often fail to account for the experiences of both men and women’, this model ‘falls short of redressing gender-blind peace and security processes’ (Barrow 2009: 66). In contrast, ‘an agenda-setting mainstreaming model’ is ‘transformative, particularly in the aftermath of conflict when a window of opportunity exists to re-orient gender-blind security paradigms’ (Barrow 2009: 66). The argument that ‘women should participate because they bring different perspectives to the substance and process of negotiations and can make positive qualitative differences to the outcomes’ is a powerful one ‘because it suggests the possibility of transformation for peace, political and social relations, and women’s status’ (Anderlini and Tirman 2010: 22).

There are reasons for optimism. The UN Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment - UN WOMEN has the explicit mandate of improving gender equality. The 2010 Report of the Secretary-General contains a detailed action plan with seven commitments to work toward overcoming inequality and value women’s participation in peacebuilding (2010: 3, S/2010/466). The approved indicators (S/2010/498) give clearer benchmarks and ways to measure the efficacy or the shortfalls of the four UNSC resolutions on women and peace and security. To conclude, why bother with a gender perspective? It is fundamentally about changing the way we rethink the gendered experiences and differential needs that women and men require in order to enjoy peace and security. Men who have been warlords, tribal warriors and ex-combatants have taken for granted their roles in negotiating peace processes. There is increasing evidence to support the claim that ‘women’s inclusion -- their presence and participation in the process, their perspectives, and their contributions to the substance of talks – will improve the chances of attaining viable and sustainable peace’ (Anderlini and Tirman 2010: 9).

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15 The Indonesian government did not include any women in its negotiating team.


Just playing? Using Bakhtin’s theories of ‘super genres’ and ‘carnival’ to explore pre-adolescent children’s shared knowledge of popular culture

Catharine Ann Simmons
The University of Newcastle, Australia

Abstract: This paper reports on findings from a study which investigated pre-adolescent children’s collective use of their knowledge of popular culture when they were in engaged in improvised drama in the School setting. It considers the idea of a ‘shared popular culture prop box’ to explain how children draw on and collate their creative ideas from ‘props’, such as plots from The Simpsons, to confirm their subculture. Bakhtin’s theories on language and carnival are used to explain this finding. The paper shows that for children, stories and texts learnt from films and television, work in a similar way to Bakhtin’s idea of ‘super-genres’. The shared pop cultural knowledge in the prop box are like super-genres - part of children’s shared consciousness and are drawn on collectively when they are being creative. Bakhtin’s carnival theory is used to explain how children use their shared knowledge of popular culture in devising drama sketches to perpetuate their own subversive subculture, through the use of carnival-like humour and their knowledge of popular culture. The paper reveals how, through drawing on existing knowledge (super genres) to create a carnivalesque culture, children gain moments of power in the classroom over those who hold the most power in their lives - adults. This research demonstrates how the notion of a shared pop culture prop box enables subversive ways for sub cultural groups to empower themselves within the dominant culture.

Negotiating popular culture in childhood

Most studies of children’s reactions to and with popular culture have focused on the individual as an audience to these texts. That is, researchers investigate a child’s relationship to, and use of meanings children draw from popular texts. Typically, these studies are conducted among younger children and not older children who are beginning to make transitions between childhood and adulthood. In this transitional stage, often referred to as ‘tweenies’, pre-adolescent children are likely to be involved in identity formation and developing their own sense of independence in a time when social interactions are more prevalent and assume greater importance. Studies of younger children seldom address ways in which those meanings are adopted or adapted when applied to group interactions and relations. For instance, Nilan (2004) asserts the role of popular culture needs to be considered within group contexts, as the meanings from these cultural texts are often collectively negotiated, shared and discussed.

The term ‘popular culture’ as Barker (2000) explains, refers to those themes and characters adopted from popular texts including, television programmes, films, popular music, toys and magazines. The main debate within Cultural Studies on the effects of popular culture on children is whether these texts have a positive or negative impact in children’s lives. The negative perspective, which is illustrated from the theoretical perspectives developed by Adorno (1941) and Horkheimer (1972), argues that popular culture, in particular television,
turned children into passive beings: depleted their learning; reinforced gender roles; promoted consumerist ideals, as well as encouraging aggressive and violent behaviour (Kline 1993; Palmer 2006; Postman 1983).

In contrast, an alternate viewpoint was developed in the 1980s, to suggest that popular culture is used creatively and thereby gives people life-enhancing pleasure. This positive perspective argues that what people do with mass-produced products is unpredictable (Fiske 1989; Hall 1980; Hodge and Tripp 1986; Nightingale 1996). In this viewpoint, forms of popular culture are not mass-produced and uniform and audiences are seen as actively interpreting, resisting, appropriating and obtaining pleasure from popular culture on their own terms. For instance, audience studies on childhood have investigated the messages and meanings embedded in texts of popular culture and explored how meanings are actively interpreted by children (see Hodge and Tripp 1986).

Popular texts and mass media for children are explicitly linked to children’s imagination, and to varying degrees, have replaced the traditional storyteller (McDonnell 2000). These popular texts provide children with an endless supply of stories that have as their basis an archetypal formula of the journey (Bromley 2002; Hilton 1996; McDonnell 2000; 2006). Quite often these stories enter play time for children and feed into their imagination. For instance, McDonnell (2000, p.29) describes socio-dramatic play of children aged from three to eight, as “making narrative” by drawing on the characters and stories they consume from popular culture for their play scenarios. Similarly, Paley (1984) observed children in her kindergarten class regularly using popular culture as inspiration for their play scenarios, with movies, such as Star Wars, television characters such as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and with Barbie dolls; all being combined with other classic children stories, such as fairytales, to make an imaginative mix of play stories. There is a substantial body of research on younger children’s imaginative play which suggests objects, such as toys, inspire younger children to think of play scenarios. For instance, Garvey (1990) found when young children aged between five and seven years of age engage in imaginative play, objects can either be a prompt for their chosen roles and subsequent play, or they can be a prop after an idea is planned. Furthermore, objects are transformed into other objects, such as a broom becoming a guitar.

However, these researchers on imaginative play, including McDonnell (2000) and Paley (1984) have, like many audience studies, focussed their research on younger children’s culture and play and how they play individually. Few studies have specifically examined the social play of pre-adolescent children in a group context, as advocated by Nilan (2004). Researching older children may be more problematic: younger children are familiar with, and their play is not necessarily influenced by the close presence of supervising adults, whereas older children are likely to expect supervising adults to distance themselves from the intimacies of shared imaginative play. Improvised drama may share many of the characteristics of younger children’s socio-dramatic play with a primary difference being the performer-audience relationship (Grace & Tobin 1997). When studying older children, such as those in pre-adolescence and aged ten to twelve years of age as a group, factors, not dealt with by researchers of popular culture and younger aged children’s individual play, become apparent and need to be taken into account, such as the culture of childhood.

Opie and Opie (1959) demonstrated in the 1950s how children create their own language, rules, and dress codes. They argued that children re-work the commodities in their culture to create new meanings for themselves; a process later defined by sub-culture theorists, including Grossberg (1992); Jenkins (1998) and Willis (1978, 1990). Opie and Opie (1959) collected schoolyard rhymes to uncover children’s shared cultural knowledge. Their main
focus was on the sayings that children quoted which had been passed down and transformed, sometimes over centuries. Consequently, they highlighted how children collectively create their own culture through a sharing of games and knowledge drawn from history and culture (Opie and Opie 1959). Similar to sub-culture theory, as outlined, Opie and Opie revealed how stories, games and riddles are constantly reworked and transformed by children and made their own.

More recently to Opie and Opie, McDonnell (2000, 2006) similarly argued that children have their own culture and share a world of secrecy, consisting of knowledge which has been passed down from friends and older siblings. McDonnell compared the culture of childhood explained by Opie and Opie (1959) with the adolescent subcultures described by Hebdige (1999) and Willis (1990) to conclude that children’s culture shares “a subversive sense of humour, a delight in mocking and actively undermining the powerful oppressive majority” that is, adults (McDonnell 2000, p.28). To support this argument, McDonnell (2000) asserts that when children subvert jokes, rhymes, songs and popular culture they are confirming and reinforcing their own culture. Further, when children change or parody literature for humour they are exerting power over the dominant respectable culture of parents and teachers in their largely powerless world. For instance, an altered rhyme, such as the classic “Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream, chuck your teacher overboard and listen to her scream” can serve this purpose, argues McDonnell (2000, p. 32).

Children’s use of humour and subversion of language in order to gain power through, for example rhymes and stories, can be explained from the perspective of Bakhtin’s theories on language. Bakhtin (1986) draws on semantics and linguistics to explain his analyses of the notion of texts, novels and speech patterns. He asserts verbal texts, defined as utterances, within the human sciences are problematic suggesting there are multiple ways a text can be expressed and interpreted and that there also are a plethora of factors that can influence an utterance. For example, the people present in a conversation and their life histories can impact on how an utterance is played out. Therefore, Bakhtin (1986) suggests there are multiplicities of meanings within readings of texts and that, ultimately, there are no original texts that stand alone. Instead, he argues, all texts parody other texts or are rehashed from the past. According to Bakhtin, the information imparted in a novel becomes embedded in human experiences (see also Holquist, 2002). In addition, outstanding novels, can be described as ‘super genres’ as they can become part of a shared heritage, culture and ultimately a shared consciousness.

Bakhtin (1968) links his theory of language and speech patterns to sixteenth century carnivals, explaining how the public shares different ways of communicating during carnival periods. He probes the roots of carnival; especially of folk and village humour and the history of laughter through Rabelais. Bakhtin (1968) states that during carnival the public are given license to behave differently from normal life where the public make parodies of officials and the Church for laughter. Here, laughter acts to temporarily re-arrange the power structures that are prevalent in everyday life between those in authority and the public. An application of Bakhtin’s (1986) theory of speech genres and utterances is most appropriate when exploring the interconnections of popular culture and children’s imagination when developing their own performance ideas. Furthermore, Bakhtin’s (1968) theory of carnival potentially provides a context for explaining children’s use of humour and parody as a rebellion against adult power, those with authority, within a broader social framework.
Methods

The purpose of the PhD study was to investigate how pre-adolescent children collectively use their knowledge of popular culture in play settings and to establish the impact of popular culture on their social interactions and relationships. The research drew upon an interpretive ethnography as it examined how the children used their knowledge of texts from popular culture in their interactions during improvised drama lessons. Pre-adolescent children’s social play/drama within a school class was also selected as this is an important site to observe how negotiation of ideas and group dynamics occurs, when teacher-student roles are minimised. A post-structuralist theoretical perspective was used for the methodological framework to interpret the children’s perceptions and interactions with popular culture texts. This theory allows for the interpretation of language as a system which underpins the key findings reported in this paper, drawing on Bakhtin’s (1986, 1968) theories of language. The methodology chosen further positioned children as active audiences who are capable of interacting creatively with the meanings provided to them by their media surroundings.

The research was conducted at a primary school located in an inner-city suburb of New South Wales, Australia, with the researcher visiting a composite fifth and sixth grade class of children who were aged ten to twelve-years-old over a year. The primary research method used was participant observations of the children’s drama sessions, during which detailed observation notes were made. The researcher visited the class to conduct participant observations on average twice a week for half a day over the school year. This timing coincided with when the students had improvised drama and often worked in small groups on play ideas without the teacher’s input. During these drama sessions the children had access to a drama prop box supplied by the children and parents. The box was an old trunk filled with objects, such as plastic fruit, fake money, hats, bags, dress-up clothes and wigs.

Focus groups were also conducted to map the children’s entertainment preferences, to discover what particular meanings these texts held for the children, and to understand how these were interpreted in a group context. In addition, some of the children’s drama improvisations were filmed and then replayed to the group. Discussions of their self reflections were further recorded, the aim being to understand the children’s creative processing and to gain their views through their own reflections. The methods and theoretical framework allowed for a detailed exploration and understanding of children’s group interactions when they were being creative.

The research was set up in negotiation with the principal and class teacher. The parents and children were informed of the research and researcher’s role in the classroom in accordance with ethics protocols. There were more girls than boys in the class which averaged twenty-five children over the school year, beginning from February until early December. The class was multicultural, and students were from varied socio-economic backgrounds, typically found in inner city environments. Furthermore, children in the ten to twelve age group were chosen because of the transition faced in their development as they move from childhood into adulthood.

Results and discussion

What was central to the findings was children’s adoption and adaptation of popular culture material in their social interactions. To understand this process, the idea of a ‘shared popular culture prop box’ will be introduced to explore how children in the study select, collated, negotiated and constructed their own storylines, tropes, and characters from popular cultural ‘props’ and secondly, how such collations of texts and utterances were integrated into their
sub-culture. The following findings and discussion will be discussed under the headings ‘the shared popular culture prop box’, and ‘pre-adolescent Childhood as a subversive sub-culture’ to coincide with the major findings in the PhD study: namely ‘The Shared Popular Culture Prop Box: Children Operating a Subversive Subculture’ to explain how the children in the study selected, collated and negotiated their knowledge of popular culture.

The ‘Shared Popular Culture Prop Box’

The research revealed that, like objects in the drama prop box, the participants all adopted and adapted themes from popular culture to instigate their play ideas, like props. For instance, during one improvised drama session the participants decided to use the movie *Cast Away* (2000) for a play backdrop, but did not use the movie’s story line. A shared knowledge of popular culture was also demonstrated by the participants when they were developing their play ideas and using popular culture. For this, the idea of a ‘Shared Popular Culture Prop Box’ is used to explain how pre-adolescent children drew on and collated their creative ideas from a metaphorical shared prop box of popular culture knowledge. For instance, during a drama session, the teacher sent a group of four children, two boys and two girls, to the library with the drama prop box to come up with a drama sketch to be loosely themed on the topic ‘something that happened at the beach’. It was found that the ideas the children came up with during this session illustrated that children’s creativity was collectively activated by objects in their vicinity, such as those found in their drama prop box, and certain themes they had learnt from popular culture, such as storylines from television programmes, movies. The following excerpt from the participant observation notes is indicative of this process.

**Play Context:** Geri pulls open the lid of the drama prop box then spots a black and white checked chef’s apron which she pulls out and puts on.

**Geri:** (calls out generally towards the group) Why don’t we do a cooking show or something? I know *Huey’s Cooking Show*.

**Mick:** Oh I know! You could have like *Surprise Chef* (He sets off with this idea) Oh what do we have here in the pantry? (He walks over and leans down and pretends to open cupboard doors) Snails? (He looks to the pretend audience raising his eyebrows questioningly. He pretends to go to the next cupboard) Seaweed?

Everyone laughs at his joke. (Participant Observation Notes)

In the Australian television programme *Surprise Chef*, a chef uses whatever a stranger has in their shopping trolley and pantry to make up a meal. In this example, the *Surprise Chef* theme was drawn from the shared popular culture prop box by Mick for a joke as he combined this program with the theme of the beach. This example shows how the children used an object (the chef’s apron) that then instigated their use of television shows from their shared popular culture prop box, *Surprise Chef* and *Huey’s Cooking Show*. Here, imagination slips seamlessly between objects and popular culture, and, in this particular moment in the drama session, two popular cooking television programmes were drawn upon and later used for their final performance.

Sometimes the participants displayed instantaneous knowledge of the shared popular culture prop box, as described in the following interaction:

Mick sets out to save the teddy bear found in the library ‘Wilson’ (named after the ‘basketball’ from the movie *Castaway*) this time he makes his ‘surfboard’ (a bench in the
library) fall onto the teddy bear’s neck. Geri, seeing this, runs back over to the prop box and picks out a red scarf. She proceeds to squat over the soft toy teddy bear and positions the red scarf at the teddy’s neck. Geri then curls the scarf around on the floor to make it look like a stream of blood.

Mick is sitting up, leaning back on both his arms with his legs out straight in front of him. He casually looks over his shoulder at Geri’s display. He then joins in with her to position the scarf. When they have finished positioning the ‘stream of blood’, she and Mick, in unison, do sound effects for it. The sound effects they make are a screeching ‘rah rah rah’. It sounded like a muted version of the violin music from Alfred Hitchcock’s movie, Psycho, that accompanied the blood spiralling down the shower drain. This scene from Psycho is also parodied in an episode of The Simpsons, where Maggie, the baby character, attempts to murder her father Homer. The edits and music from Alfred Hitchcock’s movie Psycho are reproduced for this scene in The Simpsons. (Participant Observation Notes)

This scene initially displays Geri’s effective use of objects for play when she instantly transforms the red scarf into a blood spiral to add to the gruesome effects of the teddy’s decapitation. Geri and Mick also responded to inter-textual references in the contemporary television series, The Simpsons. In this example, both Mick and Geri knew at exactly the same time what sound effect prop was needed to accompany the visual blood effect Geri created, again their actions revealing the shared popular culture prop box in action.

Bakhtin’s theory of language (1986) and in particular speech and super genres is most useful in understanding these actions by the participants. Bakhtin (1986, p.91) suggests that “each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account”. Furthermore, outstanding novels can become part of a shared heritage and culture, defined as ‘super genres’ (Bakhtin 1986). In Geri and Mick’s interactions above, their actions and utterances instantly triggered shared forms of knowledge. In this example above the inter-textual props from The Simpsons were triggered and used. There are no completely original ideas here. Episodes from The Simpsons and the knowledge surrounding this cartoon, such as the storyline and music has become a ‘super genre’ for the participants as it informed their shared culture and even a shared consciousness. These examples of Geri and Mick’s transformation of objects and the use of popular culture happened repeatedly by them and other students in the class drama sessions throughout the year. They show that a shared knowledge of popular culture can be extended to understand the part played by popular culture in pre-adolescent children’s imaginative play and creativity.

Pre-adolescent childhood as a subversive sub-culture

The children in the study further used popular stories and music from the popular culture prop box and parody of adults to reject the adult viewpoint and positioning of themselves as innocent children by asserting their own subculture within the classroom. For example, in another sketch, the participants, three boys and one girl, were asked by the teacher to come up with a sketch to farewell the Principal. The following excerpt illustrates the children developing their play idea with props drawn from popular culture.

**Mick:** I know. You could have like in that KFC ad. and have us trading Mashies (fried potato nuggets).

**Me:** Nah maybe don’t trade Mashies because it is too much like the TV ad.

**Mick:** What about (trading) ‘chicken-pork’ then?
(The three boys, Kieron, Mick and Deon separately act out secretly having a chunk of chicken pork under their jackets.)

**Deon:** (Transforming the song lyrics from ‘The United States of Whatever’) So I was at school trading chicken-pork and Mr. Jenkins (The Principal) comes up to me and I’m like, ‘Whatever’ (he continues with the idea). Then we shove it into his face and get another lot of chicken-pork from under our jackets.

**Kieron:** Then another teacher can come up and we could say it all again, like Mr Rolland or someone.

**Deon:** … and then you could get something else from out of your jacket.

(Participant Observation Notes)

In this example, to begin with, the group’s drama idea, drawn from their popular culture prop box of trading Mashies, is clearly copied from a KFC television advertisement. The television advertisement involves a group of high school children in the playground huddled together trading, looking suspiciously as if they are involved in a drug deal. In the advertisement, a boy exclaims, looking over his shoulder to make sure no one is around, “So you’ve got them?” Another child produces a bag of Mashies from under his school blazer for the group to share and everyone is excited. A male teacher however, comes up to the group and chastises them for illegally eating Mashies at school and confiscates the packet which he then secretly eats. Then another member of the group of high school children gets a new packet of Mashies from under his jacket for the group to share and they all laugh proudly at their victory over the teacher. The participants also draw on a popular song. The original version of the song “My United States of Whatever” contains miniature speech vignettes that all finish with the phrase ‘and I’m like whatever’ followed by heavy metal guitar. The original line from the song that the participants use is “and then I was throwing dice in an alley and Officer Leroy comes up to me and he’s all ‘I thought I told you not to’ and I’m like whatever!” Both these storylines, the KFC advertisement and popular American song, display forms of teenage resistance to people in positions of power, in particular, teachers and police.

The participants use and transform the KFC advertisement’s narrative and popular song, and alter these for their own purposes. In the participants’ new scenario the Principal, Mr Jenkins gets food shoved in his face, thereby belittling the face of authority. This action is significant because it shows the children playing with the authority of the Principal, who is a powerful person in their everyday lives, through slapstick-style humour. The children in the examples above use and transform these popular culture props to resist the full embrace of the institution by mocking people, such as Principals, who hold power in their lives and drama provides them with an avenue to express this power.

Bakhtin’s carnival theory is useful in explaining these specific aspects of children’s shared use of their knowledge drawn from cultural texts. Bakhtin (1968) exposes some of Rabelais’ creative writing as the ‘uncrowning’ of objects, where objects are transformed for humour and are thus given a different meaning. He suggests that this sort of carnivalesque humour is found in other ‘comic popular genres’ where the “object or person is assigned an unusual, even paradoxical role... this situation provokes laughter” (1968, p.374). Thus the humourous displays depicted in Rabelias’ writings provide a sense of renewal as it makes people laugh at themselves and, therefore, see the world and all its different possibilities, consequently instigating change. Indeed, Emerson suggests that Bakhtin’s theory of carnival is actually a
theory of creativity implying that “those who cannot laugh will have trouble knowing and creating” (Emerson 2002, p.52).

As in the ‘KFC sketch’ above and on a number of other occasions the children in the study used laughter, popular culture, anti-authoritarian statements, acted out deviant activities and ‘uncrowned’ objects, to create a carnival-like atmosphere that Bakhtin defines. This process ultimately allowed the participants to gain moments control in the classroom setting. Furthermore, the popular culture the participants used were largely from adult popular culture. These stories also worked to give the participants adult power as they did not identify themselves as children. Instead, by choosing these adults texts, they could define themselves as adult, mature, and sophisticated. Further, it can be argued that the popular cultural texts the children chose to quote, mix, and transform from their shared popular culture prop box defined their identity as a group (see also Nilan 2004; Willis 1990). Hebdige (1979) sees this as the primary function of bricolage. He asserts that the ability of sub-cultural groups to mix and change objects and to remove or subvert their original significance is a powerful tool which defines a group as separate and different from the mainstream culture (Hebdige 1979). Consequently, the creation of drama performances in a group is a collective, humorous, playful, and deviant process, which acts to confirm the children’s subculture. Several authors, including Grace and Tobin (1997), Newkirk (2002) and Wolfenstein (1954) have also documented these connections between children’s use of parodying adults and humour to regain power over adults. Nevertheless, these authors do not show how children are highly inventive and create their own subculture during these interactions. This process, defined in these examples, shows that children’s drama is more than ‘just playing’. Here, popular culture and drama allows children to gain a space and a momentary power balance within a realm, the school curriculum, where they are predominantly positioned as powerless.

Conclusion

This paper has revealed that not only do pre-adolescent children transform objects, such as items in their play vicinity, around them during dramatic play to suit their own creative purposes; they also transform their popular cultural knowledge through parody, jokes and laughter. Here, the objects as well as their knowledge of popular culture are both given new meanings and become prompters for their creativity. This manipulation of knowledge shows that pre-adolescent children are highly selective when choosing to incorporate specific images and themes from popular culture. These findings emphasise that children are creative users of the knowledge they learn outside the curriculum.

It was further found that children’s shared knowledge of specific themes from popular culture is similar to ‘super-genres’ as defined by Bakhtin (1986). This super genre knowledge is shared and drawn upon collectively when children’s creative ideas are expressed to their peers. Like carnival folk culture, described by Bakhtin, and the culture of childhood by Opie and Opie, pre-adolescent children use humour and subversive acts to gain moments of power for themselves in the institutionalised school setting, when they fleetingly blur the lines between those in authority and themselves and at the same time, consolidate their own subculture. The findings highlight the avenue for potential future research on adults and popular culture, to see if adults similarly manipulate their knowledge of popular culture in a similar way to pre-adolescent children.
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