Neoliberal Wellbeing: Exploring the Culture of Psychological Meritocracy in Australian Schooling and Education

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Abstract

The recent rise in wellbeing discourses in education can be situated more broadly in the rise generally of psychological and therapeutic interventions into schools in Australia. It also comes against the background of rising public concern about youth mental health. The heightened public concern, coupled with government, economic and departmental imperatives has led to a feverish rollout of wellbeing interventions, teaching strategies, documents, and research to tackle the problem of wellbeing. Within an educational context increasingly under pressure from neoliberalism, government funded secondary schooling also has often been held to democratic ideals about its purpose to produce certain kinds of young people. Wellbeing discourses have emerged in education policy, reports, and research and indicative of these discourses is a heightened focus on personal responsibility, individualised monitoring, and regulation of emotions and behaviours. Often these neoliberal forms of wellbeing subjectivity are sustained by mainstream psychological epistemologies and discourse. This project investigated the historical contingency and conditions of possibility that have given rise to neoliberal wellbeing subjectivities. Informed by historical thinking (Teo, 2015) and a critical community psychology focus (Fox et al., 2009; Kagan et al., 2011; Sloan, 2000) the project investigated the ways in which psychology as an epistemic institution co-constructs neoliberal wellbeing subjectivities that move beyond disciplinary boundaries and into policy and the Australian social imaginary to create certain human kinds (Hacking, 1986). Specifically, through post-structural critical policy analysis (Bacchi, 2009) of the key ministerial education declarations in Australia from 1989 to 2019, it is shown that certain kinds of young people are problematised as being risky citizens. It is demonstrated that wellbeing, as a problem representation in education policy, operates to individualise and responsibilise risk and to bifurcate educational success and failure according to a psychological meritocracy. Furthermore, it is demonstrated that neoliberal wellbeing

obscures factors such as social class which have long been indicators of educational marginalisation and inequity. For critical community psychology to be invested in a wellbeing which is responsive to notions of fairness, inclusion and agency, it is proposed that epistemic justice needs to also be included in research and praxis. An example of enacting critical praxis is detailed through an evaluation of a student engagement program for young people from the African-Australian diaspora. Centring the young people as epistemic agents was seen to be an important way to counter the majoritarian stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) of them being at-risk. Their stories offer important insights that disrupt the homogenising, acultural, class-blind neoliberal subjectivities which currently dominate and constrain the space of possibility for young people.

Student Declaration

"I, Samuel Keast, declare that the PhD thesis entitled 'Neoliberal Wellbeing: Exploring the Culture of Psychological Meritocracy in Australian Schooling and Education' is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work."

Signature: Date: 1/3/2021

Published Articles

The following articles have been published based on, or including aspects of, this research as a part of the requirement for thesis with publication which states that 50% of the outputs included need to have been accepted for scholarly publication after peer review at the time of submission:

Keast, S. (2020). Psychology education and the neoliberal episteme in Australia. *Theory & Psychology*, 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354320926574

Keast, S. (2021). On being useful and its problems. *Australian Journal of Community Psychology*, *30*(2), 54–68.

The following papers are under peer review at the time of submission:

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Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Student Declaration iv

Published Articles v

Acknowledgements vii

List of figures xii

List of tables xiii

Chapter 1: Introduction and overview 1

Wellbeing, psychology and education 1

Other psychologies and wellbeing 6

Subjectivities and psychology 15

Education and selfhood 16

Neoliberalism and forms of subjectivity 17

Research questions 21

Thesis Structure 22

Researcher positioning 26

Chapter 2: Theoretical frames 30

Historical thinking and contingency 30

'Kinds of people': moving targets of subjectivation 31

An epistemic intervention 34

Chapter 3: The epistemic shaping of psychology in Australia 36

Published paper: Psychology Education and the Neoliberal Episteme in Australia 38

Chapter summary 59

Chapter 4: Constructing psy-wellbeing(s) 61

The arrival of positive psychology/education in Australia 62

Critiques of positive psychology 68

Positive education, emotions and wellbeing 71

Critical psychology and emotions 75

The power of emotions and self-work 76

Measuring and reporting wellbeing 80

Normalising psy-wellbeing 95

Chapter summary 97

Chapter 5: Objects, subjects and critical policy analysis 99

Critical problematisation 99

Community psychology and critical policy analysis 101

Published Paper: On being useful: Problem-questioning approaches to policy analysis 105

Chapter summary 120

Chapter 6: Psychology as a Moralising Force in Education 122

Constructing youth 122

Paper in Review –The Moralisations of a Neoliberal Psychology in Education in Australia. 128

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019) 149

Youth, risk and employment 154

Chapter summary 158

Chapter 7: The ‘problem’ of disengagement 160

Program discourse and ‘logic’ 164

At risk of disengagement 165

Epistemic justice and values-based praxis 169

Journal Paper: Subjectivities and the Space of Possibilities in Youth Programs: Countering Majoritarian Stories as Social Change in the Australian Context 170

Chapter summary 185

Chapter 8: Discussion 189

The epistemic institution of psychology 192

Policy, problematisations and critical community psychology 194

The moralisations of psychological meritocracy 196

What's the problem represented to be? 200

Epistemic reflexivity and spaces of possibility 203

Chapter summary 205

Chapter 9: Limitations and future directions 208

Concluding Statement 210

Chapter 10: References 213

List of figures

Figure 1 Example of student identity map from youth program 181

List of tables

Table 1 Wellbeing measures publicly available for schools and education............................82

Chapter 1: Introduction and overview

Wellbeing, psychology and education

There has been a long history of psychology's involvement in the Australia government education system and thus psychological discourses have been a constant feature within its landscape (Campbell & Glasheen, 2017; McCallum, 1990; McLeod & Wright, 2013; Taft, 1982). However, the relationship between education and psychological knowledge and practice has not been without criticism, and one of the central criticisms of psychology's involvement in education is that it has sought to explain as problems of the individual what otherwise might be considered difficulties arising from social factors as problems of the individual (Fine & Burns, 2003; McCallum, 1990; Rose, 1998; Rose & Miller, 2013). The individualising of educational issues exists despite a substantial amount of research around social class, educational inequality and marginalisation both in Australia and internationally (Fine & Burns, 2003; Hetherington, 2018; Teese et al., 2007; Teese & Polesel, 2003a; Weis et al., 1992). One of the most regular findings around schools in Australia is that social stratification in the Australian education system is more pronounced than in several OECD countries (OECD, 2010). Along with this is a body of research which suggests that social determinants play an enormous role in the wellbeing of young people (Currie, 2012; Viner et al., 2012; Wharf-Higgins et al., 2009).

The recent rise in wellbeing discourses in education can be situated more broadly in the rise generally of psychological and therapeutic interventions into schools (Brunila, 2012; Svane et al., 2019; Wright, 2011) which is happening against a background of rising public concern about youth mental health. A Mission Australia Youth Mental Health Report (2017) documented that the number of young people aged 15 to 19 years who meet the criteria for having a probable serious mental illness has increased from 18.7% in 2012 to 22.8% in 2016. Such statistics provide a compelling case for policy and research aimed at improving youth

mental health. Often the terms wellbeing and mental health are used interchangeably throughout education research, policy and practice, yet wellbeing itself lacks a concrete definition, or a definitive way of spelling (wellbeing or well-being), and often relies on associations with other words (e.g. emotional wellbeing, psychological wellbeing) (Svane et al., 2019). The seriousness of youth mental health issues combined with the rise of therapeutic interventions and a "ubiquitous tendency to categorise people in formal education through cognitively-based labels of ability" has now grown to "to encompass an ever-widening spectrum of disorders, syndromes and 'emotional issues'" (Ecclestone, 2011, p. 105). Ecclestone (2011) also notes that in schooling environments this has led to

> an expansion of informal, often semi-serious everyday 'diagnoses' of a wide range of 'emotional issues'. These combine populist understandings of parts of conduct disorders or vaguer syndromes, such as having 'anger management issues', 'being a bit aspergers or ADHD', having OCD, attachment difficulties etc. or suffering from low self-esteem (p. 105).

Wellbeing has been described as a wicked problem (Bache et al., 2016) in that it lacks definition and a definitive or objective answer but nonetheless has occupied education policy and departmental imperatives (Svane et al., 2019). Heightened public concern, coupled with government and departmental imperatives has led to a feverish rollout of wellbeing interventions, teaching strategies, documents, and research to tackle this wicked problem (Svane et al., 2019). A current review of the evidence supporting wellbeing initiatives in Australian education found the lack of consistent definition along with other conceptual and methodological issues undermined the possibility of assessing their efficacy (Svane et al., 2019).

Wright and McLeod (2016b, p. 14) in their analysis of educational policy in Australia pose the question 'What does wellbeing do?' and in doing so draw "analytic attention to the

variable and unpredictable effects of wellbeing discourses and their connection to networks of enhancement agendas, both historically and in the present, particularly those that have targeted youthful population". Indicative of these discourses is a heightened focus on personal responsibility, individualised monitoring, and regulation of emotions and behaviours to engender positive emotions that ultimately are supposed to lead to increased productivity and wellbeing (Seligman et al., 2009).

Concerns regarding the wellbeing, particularly the emotional state, of citizens has become apparent in a number of western liberal democracies via a range of initiatives, including those in education (Ecclestone, 2012a). It has been argued that these "emanate from, and also fuel, a powerful cultural 'therapeutic ethos'" which underpins a shift from "discourses and associated practices of emotional and psychological well-being into a revival of an old discourse of character, and broader government interest in new ideas from behavioural science" (Ecclestone, 2012a, p. 464). Ecclestone (2012b) makes a distinction between wellbeing and psychological or emotional wellbeing and refers to the latter as "an umbrella that draws in an extensive set of 'constructs' amenable to development" (p. 464). Included within this umbrella are concepts such as: "resilience, stoicism, an optimistic outlook, an ability to be in the moment (or 'in flow') … skills of emotional regulation, emotional literacy (or emotional intelligence)" (Ecclestone, 2012b, p. 464). The shifts within the psychology of wellbeing are not simply objective discoveries or new concerns of the discipline, but rather this emerging science of wellbeing is increasingly invested in moral values and character traits particularly spurred on by positive psychology and the science of happiness (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Davies, 2016; Furedi, 2010; Greco & Stenner, 2013)

Furedi (2010, pp. 180-181) notes that the "therapeutic turn of education" is based on the notion that "attending to the emotional management of children is logically prior to

educating them" and is reinforced by a "sensibility of emotional determinism". The preoccupation with emotions and that they are perceived as the source of many social and personal problems has become a central part of western culture (Barbalet, 1998; Emery, 2016; Illouz, 2008); emotion has become an "object of cultural veneration" and their successful management is conceived as paramount to attaining educational success (Furedi, 2010, p. 181). Whilst educational specialists and policy-makers do not completely disregard a range of contextual factors that also impact educational success, such as socioeconomic or cultural background, it has been noted that throughout the early 2000s increasingly "policies and school practices are informed by the view that the problem that needs to be addressed is some type of psychological deficit" (Furedi, 2010, p. 181).

Inherent in the ideas of teaching the management of emotions is that certain emotions are presupposed as morally good and ultimately also lead to more moral behaviours, toward others and in society (e.g. Fredrickson, 2004; Norrish & Seligman, 2015; Seligman et al., 2009). This infers that the psychologisation of education through an epistemology of emotions (Ecclestone, 2011) is also a part of a larger sociocultural project to reinvigorate morals as a key governing strategy. This is evidenced in much of the positive psychology literature which refers to its own aims and ethos as working toward a better/good society (Fredrickson, 2004; Seligman, 2012). Positive emotions are seen as also good emotions and are not only positioned as a way to bolster a student's motivation and therefore educational success, but "the ascendancy of the project of happiness teaching constitutes one of the most vivid examples of the replacement of moral meaning by therapeutic values" (Furedi, 2010, p. 184). This however does not mean the pursuit of therapeutic values is without moralisations, but that they are obscured by the psychologisation that proceeds them.

There is however a contradiction within the concepts of teaching emotions in education. Teaching young people to divulge their emotions more frequently is often

proposed as a purely autonomous activity and one which teaches them how to express themselves freely, but often the instructions and teaching methods of emotional learning occur within the power structure of a school and thus can easily become a decidedly authoritarian enterprise (Ferudi, 2010). Ferudi (2010) offers this explanation of the technique of circle time, commonly used particularly among primary school students, where they are asked to share their feelings and problems whilst seated in a circle:

> Circle time is advertised as an effective way for motivating children to reflect and discuss their feelings about sensitive and difficult issues. Its advocates argue that it helps improve children's behaviour as well as their ability to communicate. Circle time is used to stimulate children to divulge their feelings in public. Its practitioners often remark that children's participation is voluntary and that participants are free to keep quiet if they so choose. But as one critic stated, 'most circle time manuals recommend that children are asked to explain why they do not wish to contribute'. Young primary schoolchildren are unlikely to challenge their teacher or stand up to the pressure to display their emotions. (p. 187)

Thus, within an epistemology of emotions there is the ability to be authoritative whilst at the same time appearing to empower individuals with the ability of subjective expression. This contradiction has been noted as having powerful consequences for the governing of people in that the emotionalisation of problems can be seen as a technology of the self (Foucault, 1988; Rose & Miller, 2013). Whereas previously teachers may have engaged in the shaping of students' conduct now increasingly they are required to engage in a "far more intrusive and coercive project than educating a pupil how to behave" and that is training them how to feel (Ferudi, 2010, p. 187).

Efforts to operationalise emotions such as happiness belong to a long history dating back to at least the 1920s when subjective measures began arising in educational and

personality psychology (Agner, 2011). The technologies developed for its measurement were later shaped by "the epidemiology of mental health, gerontology, and the social indicator movement in the 1960s and 70s, as measures of happiness and satisfaction were recruited as proxies for mental health and wellbeing in large, representative samples" (Agner, 2011, p. 5). Agner (2011) points out that the development of the subjective measures for wellbeing came out of the applied rather than theoretical branches of social science and principally arose from a moral impulse to improve society and that the operationism and quantification of wellbeing was intended to make up for the perceived inconsistencies and unreliability of human observation and judgement. Despite the ongoing lack of agreement about the nature of wellbeing this did not hinder continued efforts to measure it: "indeed, in time, there was considerably more agreement about how to measure wellbeing than about how to define it" (Agner, 2011, p. 5).

Other psychologies and wellbeing

There are areas of psychological knowledge outside the more mainstream ones that have sought to construct wellbeing in ways that avoid an overly individualised perspective. Community and critical psychologies have long been working toward wellbeing being understood in more contextualised ways that have sought to embrace the sociopolitical, geopolitical and economic realities that impact wellbeing on a number of levels (Barbieri, 2015; Duckett et al., 2008; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Prilleltensky, 2008b; Sonn, 2016). Whilst much of this work still constructs a psychological component of wellbeing (often specified as subjective wellbeing), there is substantially more attention given to things like the material conditions and the relationships people have (to others, communities, institutions and organisations). As a result a range of sub-categories of wellbeing has emerged - relational wellbeing, community wellbeing, organisational wellbeing, political wellbeing, communal wellbeing, collective wellbeing, wellness, and environmental wellness/wellbeing to name a

few. There has also been specific attention paid to the wellbeing of certain groups or communities of people such as those from migrant and refugee populations (Li et al., 2014; Luque-Ribelles et al., 2017; Prilleltensky, 2008a; Sonn et al., 2017), Indigenous communities (Quayle & Sonn, 2019; Tomyn et al., 2017) and multi-ethnic communities (Barbieri, 2015) in a variety of geographic and contextual locations. Wellbeing in many of these instances often intersects with culture and politics and so social inequality and justice have also become an important part of wellbeing within critical community psychology scholarship and praxis (Fox et al., 2009; García-Ramírez et al., 2014; Prilleltensky, 2008b, 2013; Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007; Sloan, 2000).

The complex interrelated elements of wellbeing as seen by critical community psychology is highlighted in a piece of research which looked at the ways in which the school context is involved in sustaining wellbeing in a UK secondary school (Duckett et al., 2008). Their research scope included "the social and emotional health and well-being of pupils in schools; how schools can promote health and well-being; notions of pupil participation; and, equality and power processes as negotiated between teachers and students" (p. 93). A key element of their research was to locate students' knowledge and experience at various levels and across various domains (e.g. interpersonal, inter-group, organisational, environmental and cultural).

Their findings highlight the importance of the school context to wellbeing, and the ways it created both positive and negative wellbeing for students. Positive wellbeing was associated with "socially supportive relationships with peers and teachers that were caring, valuing and reciprocal and social conditions that engendered respect and trust" (p. 95). It was also found that curriculum played an important role in enabling "opportunities for the growth and sustenance of friendships between pupils and resourcing that created well-equipped teaching and well-maintained physical environments" (p. 95). Participation, involvement in

decision making, and a sense of control more generally "increased opportunities to participate in the life of the school and led to pupils attaining increased social opportunities where socially supportive relationships could be nurtured" (p. 96). While there were a range of things found to be a factor in negative wellbeing, generally they related to feelings of pressure and expectation to achieve academic success. Students also noted that schools were highly regulated and when rules or regulations were unjust or illogical it also negatively impacted students' wellbeing. This research highlights the complexity and contextual nature of wellbeing but also it details "the contrast between the messiness of real-world social science research and the often sanitized nature of its reporting" (p. 89). In doing so, it brings out the importance of things such as epistemic agency, place, power, politics, culture and sense of community to the concept of wellbeing.

Sense of community has long been a feature of community psychology and early research sought to connect sense of community and wellbeing (Davidson & Cotter, 1991). However, wellbeing in this instance was construed as psychological health which in turn was interpreted and operationalised as subjective wellbeing (Davidson & Cotter, 1991). Davidson and Cotter (1991, p. 247) assert that people who score high in subjective wellbeing "say they are basically happy, excited, cheerful, and pleased (positive affects); they claim to be relatively free of excessive worry, sadness, anger, and guilt (negative affects); and they believe themselves to be competent in handling their lives (perceived efficacy)". While their overall findings from the survey and statistical analysis support the positive relationship between subjective wellbeing and sense of community, the strongest and most reliable finding was the relationship between sense of community and happiness.

Other research on sense of community and wellbeing proposed that based on the McMillan and Chavis (1986) model, links could reasonably be made between some of its components and subjective wellbeing, specifically emotional safety as an element of

membership and also shared emotional connection (Pretty et al., 1996). The primacy given to emotions/affect in terms of wellbeing, and particularly positive ones, can be seen in the findings here: “The subjective well-being data show a significant association between sense of community and affective aspects of well-being, i.e., more happiness and less worry, as well as to assessment of one's coping efficacy” (Pretty et al., 1996, p. 375). A focus which tends toward framing things in only positive terms does lead to the possibility of failing to capture instances where there can be a psychological sense of community that still leads to positive outcomes for people (Brodsky, 1996).

Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2007, p. 37) warn against focusing solely on subjective factors and measures of wellbeing, because in doing so “we fail to question the impact of contextual dynamics” and are not able to conceive something like organisational or communal wellbeing. A focus on subjective factors of wellbeing also means there is less ability to explain cases where there is an incongruence between contextual factors and wellbeing i.e., subjective reports of high wellbeing despite disadvantaged living or working conditions (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2007). The importance of conceptualising wellbeing as multidimensional and needing to measure it across multiple levels or domains is evident across much of the community psychology literature.

Wellbeing has also been linked to other concepts such as social capital and the importance of social networks, relations, civic participation, trust and reciprocity (Sixsmith & Boneham, 2007). The utility of social capital as a concept for wellbeing is that it able to encompass a more heterogeneous perspective of communities and what is required to support and maintain wellbeing (Sixsmith & Boneham, 2007). It has been noted that there is a danger that when social capital is utilised by policy makers, an “absence of social capital can be construed as the fault of the community” for not having taken up community activities or interventions thereby resulting in community level victim blaming (Sixsmith & Boneham,

2007, p. 88). Sixsmith and Boneham (2007) also note that government and policy makers could deploy social capital as a means for justifying a reduction in welfare services.

Evans and Prilleltensky (2007) use the concept of sites of wellbeing to investigate where wellbeing is situated. Specifically for youth, they suggest that while elements can be distinguished, they are highly interdependent and that “none can be subsumed under the others nor can they exist in isolation” (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007, p. 682). Regarding wellbeing in this way means that communities can be considered sites of wellbeing and therefore things such as the material conditions, the physical space, resources and relationships within them can be considered as supportive or not of wellbeing. In trying to evaluate whether or not a site is experiencing wellbeing there are three domains proposed: the personal, the relational, and the collective. For young people it was found that the most prominent signs of personal wellbeing were “self-determination, a sense of control, self-efficacy, physical and mental health, optimism, meaning, and spirituality” (p. 682). Signs of relational wellbeing were “caring, respect for diversity, reciprocity, nurturance and affection, support, collaboration, and democratic participation in decision making processes” (p. 682). Collective wellbeing was indicated by “fair and equitable allocation of bargaining powers, resources, and obligations in society; gender and race equality; universal access to high quality educational, health, and recreational facilities; affordable housing; employment opportunities; access to nutritious foods at reasonable prices; safety; public transportation; a clean environment; and peace” (p. 682-684).

Key to attaining wellbeing framed in this way is attaining a synergy between the elements so that no one element is promoted or supported over another. These findings also highlight how important having a sense of empowerment, respect and control within their environment is for young people and their wellbeing. This is in contrast to the more

individualised, psychologised versions of wellbeing which tend toward a sense of empowerment and control over the self.

Other community psychology research has sought to bring happiness as a construct to wellbeing within a more social/contextual perspective (Arcidiacono & Di Martino, 2016). Arcidiacono and Di Martino (2016) offer a critical analysis of some of the ways in which happiness and wellbeing have been constructed previously and offer a number of possible ways to conceive them from a critical community psychology perspective. From reviewing more individualised conceptions (positive psychology), to feminist economics, to quality of life models their review ultimately calls for “a further concept of happiness, a deeper understanding of how people’s enjoyment of life is connected to the features of the environment, focusing not only on which one affects which, but also on their mutual interactions” (Arcidiacono & Di Martino, 2016, p. 24).

This focus on emotions does leave some questions unanswered. Firstly, why happiness? There is an assumed primacy about this disposition/emotion and in line with much of the positive psychology perspective it is also imbued with a moral position of goodness for both individuals and for communities (Eckersley, 2000). Does this focus perpetuate a kind of emotionalisation and the psychologisation of life and its vicissitudes? This also has the potential to fall into a kind of “operationism” which is unique to the discipline of psychology whereby the practice defines the concept (Danziger, 1996). Danziger (1996) highlights that the theoretical discourse of psychology is often reduced to the “interrelationships among operationally defined theoretical entities” and that these relationships are “entirely defined by the interventions of the psychologist” (p.19). Emotions, such as happiness, are operationalised and naturalised through the psychological idea that they are inherent within everyone which disregards both their historical and cultural construction (Danziger, 1997; Gergen, 1995).

By operationalising emotions, the researchers obscure the sociocultural assumptions of a given context. For instance, research has found that exposure to a mainstream culture for new immigrants results in emotional acculturation (De Leersnyder et al., 2011) which suggests that there are dominant cultural norms which shape how people understand emotions and the expression of them in a given context. It was also found that for Korean and Turkish immigrants in Belgium "it may be easier to learn, and adapt to the new culture's emotional patterns in positive than in negative emotional situations" (De Leersnyder et al., 2011, p. 460). While some of this indeed may be individual adaptation to a new context, it was also noted that emotional acculturation took place irrespective of whether immigrants were more or less personally inclined toward acculturation, suggesting some influence of exposure to the host/mainstream culture in the adapting of their emotions (De Leersnyder et al., 2011). This raises questions about what lies behind the cultural specificity of emotions and wellbeing, but also about the cultural moment of prioritising certain emotions over others.

There is undoubtedly a focus in critical community psychology research and praxis to include broader, macro level influences on wellbeing, and there is good support for the relationship between a psychological sense of community and "subjective, psychological, and social well-being among individuals of a wide age range, and in a variety of countries and community settings" (Stewart & Townley, 2020, p. 172). While sub-disciplines like critical community psychology seek to question mainstream psychological knowledge, it has been previously suggested that community psychology itself is not always entirely divorced from many mainstream Western ideologies (Dutta, 2018; Seedat & Suffla, 2017).

An important example of wellbeing from a different ontological position in the Australian context is the development of a framework that emphasises the "holistic and whole-of-life definition of health held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples"

(Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017, p. 3). This also involved the decolonising of psychology to develop a uniquely Australian Indigenous psychology and approaches to mental health and wellbeing (Dudgeon, 2017; Dudgeon et al., 2020; Dudgeon & Walker, 2015). Through extensive community consultation and research, a framework of social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) has been deemed the most culturally appropriate approach to conceive and address Indigenous mental health issues and is described by the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing* (Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017) in a model with seven overlapping domains: body, mind and emotions, family and kin, community, culture, country, spirituality and ancestors. Central to SEWB in this model is culture, cultural identity and the ability to practice culture which can involve "a living relationship with ancestors, the spiritual dimension of existence, and connection to country and language" (Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017, p. 6). Other important elements of SEWB are "individual and community control over their physical environment, dignity and self-esteem, respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights and a perception of just and fair treatment" (p. 6). Within the domain of "connection to mind and emotions" in the SEWB framework these protective factors are noted:

- education,
- agency - assertiveness, confidence and control over life
- strong identity (p. 8)

Mental health problems are distinguished from SEWB problems in the framework (although it is acknowledged they are interrelated) and that even with a strong SEWB, issues of mental health can still arise. The framework has also been a part of adapting more mainstream psychological resources and practices for Indigenous youth to ensure they are culturally appropriate (e.g. Ralph & Ryan, 2017; S. Smith et al., 2017).

In this selection of wellbeing research from other psychologies it is evident there is no consistent manner in which to conceptualise or measure it or its components. As noted by Stewart and Townley (2020, p. 181) in their review of wellbeing literature "conceptualizations of well-being were not always explained thoroughly, and the semantics around well-being were at times muddled (e.g., mental illness is different from well-being, but that was not always clear in a given article)" and they concluded that there is still insufficient research evidence to understand the relationship between a psychological sense of community and wellbeing. Questions were also raised in their review about the dominant forms of methodology being grounded in positivist and post-positivist assumptions which are unable to develop a nuanced understanding of how context, psychological sense of community and wellbeing intersect (Stewart & Townley, 2020).

Perhaps the one feature to be highlighted in this section is that wellbeing cannot be disconnected from contextual factors. This means not only the context most proximal to the people or communities whose wellbeing is being considered, but also the cultural context which gives rise to variations in the construct of wellbeing itself. For instance, in research that looked at subjective wellbeing surveys across 55 countries with a total sample of over 100,000 respondents it was found there were three concepts that had strong relations with subjective wellbeing: income, individualism, and human rights (Diener et al., 2009). It maybe that these findings reflect the global impress of capitalism and Western cultural norms, but it may also suggest that wellbeing is something less psychological and more about the importance of material conditions in which people feel they are able to live well, a point made by UNICEF in their report *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries* (2007):

When we attempt to measure children's wellbeing what we really seek to know is

> whether children are adequately clothed and housed and fed and protected, whether their circumstances are such that they are likely to become all that they are capable of becoming, or whether they are disadvantaged in ways that make it difficult or impossible for them to participate fully in the life and opportunities of the world around them…and whether the family and community are being supported in this task by public policy and resources. (p. 7)

It is evident from this review that wellbeing has been constructed in a number of ways, across different areas of psychology in order to capture something that is meaningful and has utility. However, there is no escaping the operationism of many of these, and it is through the measuring, categorising, and reporting that wellbeing subjectivities come into existence. Ways of being-well are co-created by the instruments, measures and psy-discourses around wellbeing.

Subjectivities and psychology

The term subject, in a Foucauldian sense, has two meanings, both of which relate to forms of power which subjugate and make subject to (Ball & Olmedo, 2013). The first relates to "the state of subjection to someone else by control or dependence", and the second "refers to the self-configuration of an identity by a conscience or self-knowledge" (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 87). This dualistic meaning sets up the intractable relationship between power and selfhood. This is not to suggest that the relationship is deterministic or top-down, but rather that it is an ongoing project in flux where the "subject is the result of endless processes of construction of identities that are to a greater or lesser extent, but never completely, constrained by the contingencies of the particular historical moment in which they are inscribed" (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 87). Conceiving subjectivity in this way enables it to be seen as a process of becoming that centers around the idea of what we do rather than on what we are (Ball, 2013), or, as described by Rose (1998), the work of the care of the self.

Basic notions of subjectivity, such as things being related to personal experience, are broadly discussed in scientific psychology, but “its epistemic status is puzzling because a general scientific theory of subjectivity does not exist” (Teo, 2017, p. 282). As an area of interest within empirical work subjectivity is taken up by a number of subdisciplines of psychology, but they generally focus on it in a psychologised manner with topics such as consciousness, awareness, cognition, emotion, and motivation, where “the concept of subjectivity is hardly mentioned” (Teo, 2017, p. 282). The need to embrace subjectivities in a more complex way that interrogates the relationship to power and knowledge has been proposed within community psychology (see Burton, 2013; Sarason, 1984; Serrano-García, 2013). Feminist scholarship has a long history of interrogating the notion of subjectivities (e.g. Butler, 1997; Henriques et al., 1998; Layton, 2010; Rutherford, 2018), as have areas outside psychology such as philosophy (Taylor, 1989) and education (Ball & Olmedo, 2013). The absence of subjectivities within psychology is both strange, given its claims are quintessentially about the development of personhood, but not so strange, given that that development is most commonly framed in terms of essentialised, internalised objects which are conceived and constructed as psychological objects (Teo, 2017).

Education and selfhood

Conceptions of self in education psychology have not remained static, and, as Martin and McLellan (2013, p. 49) have detailed, in the 1960’s there was a “marked growth in psychological oriented studies of the self within educational contexts”. Psychinfo database analyses carried out have shown that prior to 1950 the total number of writings containing the word self in the title amounted to only 1,434, whereas in the period between 1990 and 2001 there were 18,774 (Martin & McLellan, 2013). Closer investigation of studies relating specifically to education from 1960 to 2000 saw 14,686 articles containing the word self and furthermore “the four top areas of specific study were self-concept (1540 entries), self-esteem

(1379 entries), self-efficacy (503 entries), and self-regulation (234 entries)". When growth patterns were examined for each of these four types of self research it showed an ongoing pattern of significant growth, with "work in the areas of self-efficacy and self-regulation more than doubling during the 1990s" (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 49).

Martin and McLelland (2013) identify two underlying conceptions of selfhood from a close reading of a representative sample from the database entries, which they refer to as the expressive self and the managerial self. It is to be noted that these individualising selfhoods were found wanting by some educational psychologists and toward the end of the twentieth century there emerged "calls for a more communal, less individual conception of selfhood" which were "answered by a growing body of work…based not only on Vygotsky's sociocultural historical activity theory…but also on Deweyan and Median pragmatism and symbolic interactionism" all of which culminated in the expanding of methodologies and epistemologies informing education and psychology (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 55). In addition to the previous conceptions of selfhood, they add a third, the communal self. These selfhoods or subjectivities emerging throughout educational and school focused psychology provide an interesting starting point for considering some of the practices which make up what Foucault (1988) termed technologies of the self, or techniques of the self. These are techniques for "examining and evaluating the self: modes of self-inspection, vocabularies for self-description, ways of rendering the self into thought" (Rose, 1996, p. 121) The techniques of the self can entail "*attending to different aspects of the self* - thoughts, feelings, posture, tone of voice - ways of marking differences and making them notable" (Rose, 1996, p. 12).

Neoliberalism and forms of subjectivity

Neoliberalism exists beyond an economic rationale and is understood as a system of norms that ultimately serves to "generate an 'accountable' subjectivity by systematically creating competition between individuals" (Dardot & Laval, 2013, pp. 57–58). To more

accurately map the shifting nature of neoliberalism and the common political mechanisms which enable it, Davidson (2017) proposes three distinct time periods of neoliberalism: vanguard neoliberalism (1979-1992), social neoliberalism (1992-2007) and crisis neoliberalism (2007-current), which he describes in this way:

> vanguard neoliberalism established this phase of capitalist development, and social neoliberalism then consolidated it. The current period of crisis neoliberalism is primarily defensive, an attempt to preserve the now decaying order through ever more generalized attacks on the subaltern classes – not as ‘occasional’ incursions to enable budget cuts here or prevent industrial action there, but as permanent aspects of the political regime. (p. 617)

The progression through these neoliberal periods can be marked as ones where “there is a change in how class interests are being deployed through the state to stabilise capitalist accumulation” (Humphrys, 2019, p. 70). These are useful distinctions to make as often neoliberalism is portrayed as a uniform, singular political rationale, which it is not. Often scholars have approached neoliberalism as an “as overarching hegemonic global discourse or ideology” (Türken et al., 2016, p. 33). Türken et al. (2016) suggest that there are moves away from the hegemonic conception of neoliberalism, and that looking at local variations of it may be more relevant. Needless to say, the common thread running through many of the conceptions of neoliberalism is that it works by “installing in society a concept of human subject as autonomous, individualized, self-directing decision-making agent who becomes an entrepreneur of one self; a human capital” (Türken et al., 2016, p. 33).

A feature of neoliberalism in Australia has been the ways in which it has emerged “alongside and through corporatism” (Humphrys, 2019, p. 37) and educational institutions have not escaped either neoliberalism nor corporatism. Connell (2013, p. 102) describes the redefining of educational institutions under neoliberalism as industries that “have been forced

to conduct themselves more and more like profit-seeking firms". In addition, it has been shown that while policy changes have been made by both state and federal governments and in different forms across the education sector they all "move in the same direction – increasing the grip of market logic on schools, universities and technical education" (Connell, 2013, p. 102). The impact of neoliberalism on education systems has been well documented in Australia and also in other western liberal democracies (e.g. Cassell & Nelson, 2013; Giroux, 2008; Lakes & Carter, 2011; Sellar, 2013), and efforts to understand educational inequality have often pointed to the impacts of neoliberalism and the marketisation of education (Connell, 2013c; Croxford & Raffe, 2007; Perry & Southwell, 2014)

One of the mechanisms of neoliberalism is to inscribe a certain kind of selfhood in the social imaginary, and this neoliberal self is "individualized, disciplined, self-interested, and responsibilized", and conceived as ultimately being "fit for 21st century economic and educational environments, which can be construed as rapidly shifting, competitive, and replete with choices" (Vassallo, 2014a, p. 145). In the development of a neoliberal agenda by governments from both sides of the political divide in Australia since the 1980s, dominant narratives about what it means to be fit for the 21st century have become culturally normalised (Connell, 2013c). These neoliberal forms of subjectivity (Teo, 2018) are supported and reproduced through a range of discourses that paint a picture of those who attain proficiency in the management and regulation of the self as those who will reap the rewards of society (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Vassallo, 2014a).

One of the central governmentalities of neoliberalism is competitive, economic exchange (Attick, 2017; Binkley, 2014; Sugarman, 2015). This feature of neoliberalism gave rise to Foucault's term *homo economicus*, which sought to capture the idea that neoliberalism "made economic exchange the driving force behind all political, personal, and social relationships" and in turn that it "rendered every human endeavor a competitive, economic

action, thus, human beings were recast as homo [*sic*] economici; rational economic beings focused primarily on personal economic gain" (Attick, 2017, pp. 37–38). However, for neoliberal economies to work, it is not enough for each single person to be an economic agent in the processes of economic exchange in the market, each individual must become their own market (Attick, 2017). According to Foucault (2010, p. 226) this is achieved when an individual becomes "an entrepreneur, and an entrepreneur of himself". What evolves is a complex co-construction of subjectivities with competitive, market economics as both the background to possible selfhoods, and that which is to be internalised.

Neoliberal selfhood should not be considered a singular homogenous category as it can be constituted of various entrepreneurial subjectivities (Scharff, 2016). Scharff (2016) drew on 60 in-depth interviews to develop 10 contours of entrepreneurial subjectivity that she sees manifested within neoliberalism. The 10 contours identified in Scharff's (2016) research are:

- the self as business,
- constantly active and still lacking time,
- embracing risks, learning from knock-backs and staying positive
- surviving difficulties
- hiding injuries
- negotiating competing discourses
- disavowing inequalities
- anxious, self-doubting and insecure
- competing with the self
- establishing boundaries and blaming 'others'

Scharff (2016) draws on Butler's (1997) notion of psychic life as it expresses the dualism of subjection. It situates attributes under neoliberalism as existing both out-there and internally,

which highlights the way in which a subject is both a state of subjection, and a self-configuration of identity. This is quintessential neoliberal governmentalities as defined by Binkley (2009):

> neoliberal subjects work to optimize, individualize and entrepreneurialize themselves and their conduct—a program of subjectification centered on the vitalization and responsibilization of a dependent subjectivity, but also one shadowed by a certain ambivalence and instability, a technique of subjectification that remains open to the potential for being otherwise practiced. (pp. 63-64)

Scharff (2016) is quick to identify that their sample, representatives of the classical music profession, is almost exclusively white and middle class. While it would be easy to dismiss these findings as anomalies, other work establishes that many of the foundations of neoliberalism are grounded in middle class values (Flanagan et al., 2003; Harvey, 2005; Hodgetts & Griffin, 2015). It has been suggested that entrepreneurialism is tied to inherently masculine traits. Scharff (2016) refutes this, stating that women are in fact entrepreneurial par excellence and have long been the subjects of neoliberalism's self-care and self-transformation, a contention supported by other feminist research (Rutherford, 2018; Walkerdine, 2015).

Research questions

Fine (2012, p. 416) has called for a resuscitation of critical psychology and research that "both documents the collateral damage of neoliberalism and generates alternative visions of democracy and justice". This project seeks to investigate the ways in which mainstream psychological discourse, technologies and practices serve to co-construct neoliberal forms of subjectivity through the psychologisation of wellbeing in education. The education system in Australia continues to cleave student outcomes along lines of social class (Teese, 2005; Teese et al., 2007; Teese & Polesel, 2003a) and given the predominance of psy-discourse around

schooling and young people and in education policy, questions arise about its epistemic power to engender wellbeing subjectivities and what this means for students who may not fulfil the democratic ideals of education.

This project draws from critical psychology where “one must know much more than psychology, in particular, one must be aware of political theory, history, sociology, and certainly philosophy” (Teo, 2005, pp. 182-183). As such, this project will build on the work of critical theorists in a range of areas relating to psychology, education, and policy analysis. With this multidisciplinary focus the project will answer the following research questions:

1. What has been the role of psychology in the co-constitution of neoliberal forms of subjectivity around young people’s wellbeing with regard to their schooling and education in Australia?
    a. Who or what has been made a problem for neoliberal forms of wellbeing subjectivities to be the solution?
    b. How have neoliberal forms of wellbeing subjectivities been contingently constructed for young people and their schooling and education?

Thesis Structure

The format of the thesis follows the requirements for a thesis with publication (as required by Victoria University). The requirements are that the scholarly publications included herein must represent original research, have been subject to academic peer review and have been published within 10 years before the date of the submission of the thesis for examination. In addition, at least 50% of the outputs included need to have been accepted for scholarly publication after peer review at the time of submission. It is also required that a thesis with publication must include additional framing and linking material as part of the thesis submission to ensure a coherent intellectual project. This thesis is centered around four

main papers, two of which have been published at the time of submission, whilst the other two are currently in review.

Chapter 2 focuses on explaining the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the project. The purpose of this chapter is not simply to provide an account to justify the process, but it forms part of the rationale for the themes, directions and criticality of the project. Included here is an examination of the analytic frames and methods used within the project.

Chapter 3 provides an historical context about psychology as a discipline and the ways in which it is being shaped by the philosophic tendencies of neoliberalism in Australia. This chapter is an important starting point for the project by highlighting the social, political, historical and economic forces that have led to the dominant forms of psychology, and the epistemic power it is able to maintain. The role of psychology education in establishing this power is also examined in this chapter. Central to this chapter is the published paper titled *Psychology Education and the Neoliberal Episteme in Australia*. Through examining the conditions of possibility for the kinds of psychology in the Australian context, the paper also proposes what might be some justifiable epistemologies to consider in light of neoliberalism.

Chapter 4 presents some of the details of psychology in relation to schooling and education in Australian with a focus on the concept of wellbeing. It details the arrival and promotion of positive psychology and positive education as an important juncture in how education and psychology were being conceived at the time. Also detailed here is the very public nature in which positive psychology was promoted and thus the normalisation of that particular psychological knowledge and discourse. As emotions are an important aspect of positive psychology, a critical examination of the role of emotions in psychology and education is also included. The chapter concludes by reviewing a selection of measures and reports that have sought to construct and capture wellbeing in a range of ways. These reports

offer a useful example as to how subjectivities are constructed through the operationalising of wellbeing.

Chapter 5 draws on the Foucauldian notions of genealogy and problematisation as analytic methods to investigate education policy and its roles in governmentalities or the "conduct of conducts" (Foucault et al., 1991). The main published paper is titled *On being useful: Problem-questioning approaches to policy* which works through a critical policy analysis of three key ministerial education documents. Bacchi's (2009) specific method of policy analysis is detailed both as useful to the project and also it is suggested as a beneficial form of analysis for community psychology. Through the analysis some of the ways in which wellbeing problematises young people and some of the conditions which have enabled this problematising are evidenced. The chapter highlights that there have been a range of contextual factors which have led to constructing youth and educational success in certain ways, and that mainstream psychology has played a central role in the co-creation of the wellbeing subjectivities.

Chapter 6 continues the focus on how youth and adolescence have been constructed and psychology's role in this. The critical policy analysis in this chapter focuses on a genealogy of moralisations. The central paper is titled *The Moralisations of a Neoliberal Psychology in Education in Australia* and details the discourses and truth-claims of psychology as a moral project. Explored in the analysis are the ways in which wellbeing can be used to construct what the paper calls a psychological meritocracy, whereby those who have educational success are seen to be those who have attended to their psychological/moral self in the appropriate ways. Detailed in this paper is also the ways in which the network of moral subjects (teachers, parents, school leadership) are involved in the process of creating and maintaining the dividing practices of the moral boundaries, and the role of psychological knowledge and discourse is shown to be central to this. The chapter closes with further

details about the ways in which youth subjectivities are constructed as risky and suggests that much of the public anxiety around risk relates to youth unemployment. It reaches the conclusion that, given certain groups of young people are more likely to face un- or underemployment, moralising categories are deployed both to justify the failure of education to meet democratic ideals and also to problematise certain groups of students.

Chapter 7 turns to the ideas of epistemic justice and the ways in which critical praxis can address some of the ways in which young people, particularly those from the African-Australian diaspora, are problematised. There is a detailed description of the ways in which epistemic institutions, such as psychology, particularly within youth development programs, are involved in this problematisation. The paper in this chapter is titled *Subjectivities and the Space of Possibilities in Youth Programs: Countering Majoritarian Stories as Social Change in the Australian Contex*t and is focused on the application of critical problematising and praxis during the evaluation of an after-school program developed for young people from the African-Australian diaspora. Detailed in this paper are some of the ways in which psychological discourse contributes to the promotion of neoliberal forms of subjectivity within youth programs and the ways in which well-intentioned service provision within the not-for-profit industrial complex serves as an epistemic authority for these subjectivities. It is proposed that through Evans' (2014) notion of the community psychologist as a critical friend organisational change within the program can occur. In addition, some of the more creative methodologies employed in the evaluation are detailed and suggested as ways in which to return some of the epistemic power to young people. Empowering young people to challenge dominant or majoritarian stories about them and their communities is proposed as both a way of expanding the space of possibilities for young people and also as a way of instituting social change within youth-focused organisations.

Chapter 8 is the discussion section and returns to the research questions and revisits each of the chapters and develops some conclusions as relating to their findings and the literature reviewed. Chapter 9 details some of the limitations of the project and offers some suggestions for future research.

Researcher positioning

I come to this project as a white, gay man and as such have been afforded a number of unearned privileges, but also have felt some of the ways in which being outside norms can get under the skin. I have enjoyed the privileges of a comfortably middle class upbringing which until delving into scholarship that interrogates power, whiteness and social class I was largely ignorant of. My journey through undergraduate study and into critical community psychology has been an important factor in raising my critical consciousness around privilege and this education journey has also offered some liberatory moments.

My own education

My main schooling began in 1978 after I had spent two years at a local primary school when at seven years old I began an 11 year stretch at an all-boys private school in a wealthy Melbourne inner suburb. A commonwealth scholarship had afforded my father a place at this school, one that otherwise would have been entirely out of reach for his single mother at the time. There was also an extended family history on my mother's side of boys attending the same school. My early years were filled with the usual coming to terms with all the socialising aspects of a big school, developing friendships, understanding playground rules and generally settling into one's position.

It wasn't until I was in about grade seven that things changed. Many of the things that I now know were at the source of my challenges at school I simply did not have a language for at the time. How does a 13-year-old explain the ever-present overtones of Presbyterian morality, and the ways in which it reinforced a culture of heteronormative masculinity?

Cemented in every corner of the school's 120-year-old traditions were ideologies and norms that resonated with ideas of power and success in the outside world. But a 13-year-old doesn't have the words to explain how these might intersect to sustain a culture which normalises certain ways of being, he just has a sense that there are big, heavy, immovable things around him at school that build a confusing picture of who he *should* be. Shotwell (2017, p. 194) suggests that "not having the concepts and language to account for an experience, or not having one's words taken seriously are certainly forms of epistemic injustice".

This experience of schooling has formed a large part of both my political identity, my sense of justice and also my conception of education, institutions and the impact they can have. This is not to say I see them only as oppressive structures, but that I have experienced the ways in which schools do more than just teach in classrooms. It is the transmission of cultural norms and ideologies that are socialised through the hidden curriculum (Giroux, 1983). So, from as early as I can remember during those 11 years at school, I was trying to navigate that hidden curriculum and it was not until I reached university some twenty years later that I would find some concepts and language that could account for my experiences in very different ways.

It was in my second year of undergraduate study that I took a minor in sociology where I was exposed to a sociological lens for the first time. Here there were concepts and theories which were not focused on individualised notions of selfhood, but described culture, structures, systems, power, and discourse. They described how discourses construct subjectivities, and how these subjectivities form a background against which we reflect our own selfhoods. Suddenly I was developing knowledge and language that was quite liberatory. I was able to see those awkward, isolating school days as belonging to a time when I was very much at the mercy of a hidden curriculum that was over 100 years old. I was developing

a language that seemed more able to explain the weight of an institution and discovering theories that shed light on how inseparable we are from our context.

This new sociological lens resonated with how I'd experienced the world in a way that mainstream psychological knowledge had not been able to reconcile for me. Through a combination of my own research and the sheer luck of being at Victoria University (VU) I came across critical community psychology. The more I investigated this psychology the more it seemed to have in common with the sociological lens I was developing. I remember very clearly sitting at my masters intake interview at VU and telling them I wanted to do community psychology to understand more about what institutions and organisation do to people. What I should add here is that although this pathway sounds very seamless and considered, it was not, and it still is not. Part of the pleasure of delving into areas of critical scholarship which try not to create an artificial distance between subject and object, ones that try to be more invested in what philosopher Sarah Harding (1992) calls strong objectivity, is that it also throws up a whole lot of challenges for how we might have previously conceived things. In some ways this requires an undoing or unlearning of things which have seemed natural, normal or common sense.

While I was spared many of the tortures inflicted on others at school for not fitting in, I became very adept at camouflaging myself and but like many young LGBTIQ people I still presumed that it was something about *me* that was causing the poor fit. If only I could fix me and assimilate more, then things would be ok. Surely fixing *me* would improve my sense of belonging? Obviously, there are many more layers to this story, but what I'd like to suggest is that what I had begun in these early days was what anthropologist David Graeber (2015, p. 28) calls interpretive labour and he suggests that "within hierarchical relationships or systems, individuals in an inferior position have to constantly imagine, understand, manage and care about the perspectives and points of view of those in more privileged positions".

This concept is not necessarily a new one and has a long history articulated by many feminist standpoint and critical race theorists (e.g. Harding, 1992; hooks, 1992; Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Sullivan & Tuana, 2007) but it is one that has informed how I come to my position as a researcher, and how I see that position within the hierarchy of systems and structures.

When I reflect back on the ways in which I felt injustice in my school environment and the ways in which gaining the language and concepts in my later education felt liberating in some ways, it is not so surprising that my choices led me to community psychology and an ongoing interest in the values of fairness, justice and inclusion. I think we choose theories and methodologies in the hope they will do the job or task we are applying them to, but they also resonate with us personally in some way. They make sense of the world in way that appeals to us and our personal ontologies. Whilst this is only a brief account of some of the influences and experiences that have led to my current researcher position, given the critical nature of this project it is important to establish that I am not a value-free, ahistorical, apolitical object simply deploying useful methods to answer research questions. Rather, I come with epistemological positions, political inclinations and privileges that have all been shaped by a personal educative history. All these have influenced the conception and creation of this project and the questions it seeks to answer.

Chapter 2: Theoretical frames

Historical thinking and contingency

This research is one of historical thinking (Teo, 2015). Firstly, the study adopts a kind of historical approach to psychology which "uses history in order to understand psychological subject matter as inherently temporal" (Teo, 2015, p. 146). Secondly the approach is more a Foucauldian "history of the present" which refers to "an approach that attempts to understand the present, not by recreating a past from the perspective of the present, but instead, by reconstructing the elements, processes, decisions, and so on that led to the present" (Teo, 2015, p. 139), or as it is more specifically known, a genealogical method. This method is a "methodology of suspicion and critique, an array of defamiliarizing procedures and reconceptualizations that pertain not just to any object of knowledge, but to any procedure of knowledge production" (Hook, 2005, pp. 4-5). This method is not itself designed primarily for the discovery of truth and therefore is not directed towards cultivation of knowledge per se but rather towards the development of critique (Foucault, 1977; Hook, 2007; Koopman, 2013). Genealogy is concerned with "power and history, and the historical constitution of knowledge. In this process, there is, however, no integrative principle and no essence" (Olssen, 2003, p. 193). A genealogical method is about uncovering the things which have become cemented as ubiquitous and accepted in a society or culture, but finding that these positions are socially and historically contingent (Foucault, 2010).

This project is not a theoretical one which remains distanced from practical applications. The genealogical method had its genesis in fierce political resistance. Foucault sought to fight the ways in which governing occurred at all kinds of levels and the ways in which the power of institutions and knowledge could constrain, criminalise, moralise, and subjectivise through truth-claims (Foucault, 1988, 2010; Foucault & Gordon, 1980). Foucault (2010) who devoted much of his work to uncovering the ways in which psychiatry and

psychology established certain concepts related to ways of being, describes the genealogical method in this way:

> My question was not: Does madness exist? My reasoning, my method, was not to examine whether history gives me or refers me to something like madness, and then to conclude, no, it does not, therefore madness does not exist. This was not the argument, the method in fact. The method consisted in saying: Let's suppose that madness does not exist. If we suppose that it does not exist, then what can history make of these different events and practices which are apparently organised around something that is supposed to be madness? (p. 3)

Therefore, the genealogical method is not simply to uncover the validity of constructs, but to detail the ways in which it has been possible for them to come into being as an object. In doing so, the genealogical method hopes to open the possibility of other ways of being, other kinds of subjectivities.

Further details around how this method has been used for this project and its rationale are provided in Chapter 5, which contains a journal article. Specifically, the focus of that article is to argue why the genealogical method ought to be afforded more consideration by community psychology, given the discipline's concern with intersections of knowledge, power and subjectivities.

'Kinds of people': moving targets of subjectivation

A central feature of the analysis in this project is the ways in which subjectivities around young people and education both arise and function. This has been largely informed by Foucauldian perspectives that conceive the processes of subjectivation falling along three axes: the epistemological, whereby people become the foci of knowledge; the normative-political, wherein people acquire a subjective identity through the objectification of power

relations; and the ethical, in which the subject position is reinforced via certain practices or techniques of self (Foucault, 1982b). One of the critiques of this analytic frame is that it fails to encompass both intrapsychic aspects and the ways in which people are agentic in the relationship to their subjectivities (Brinkmann, 2008; Butler, 1997; Davies, 2006). Others have however also suggested that refocusing on personal agency and autonomous choice is complicit with, rather than critical of, "neoliberal discourses that see individuals as entrepreneurial actors who are rational, calculating and self-regulating" (Gill, 2008, p. 436). Gill (2008, p. 436) suggests that analyses that are overly focused on the autonomous choices of people in terms of subjectivities "simply sidestep all the difficult and complex questions about the relationship between culture and subjectivity". While these are important considerations, this project aims to sit somewhere in between these and knit together a picture of the ways in which certain subjectivities have been able to be constructed at a certain time, in a certain sociocultural and sociopolitical context, and psychology's role within all this.

Hacking's (2006) theoretical focus, which is centred on the ways in which people are categorised, or as he has termed it "making up people", is useful here. Rather than taking the seemingly top-down view of the more Foucauldian approaches, Hacking (1996) suggests that there is an interaction between people and their categories, which he terms looping effects, which (re)shapes the person and the category in a more agentic fashion. Hacking (1991) draws on a Foucauldian perspective in this way:

> people are affected by what we call them and, more importantly, by the available classifications within which they can describe their own actions and make their own constrained choices. People act and decide under descriptions, and as new possibilities for description emerge, so do new kinds of action. (pp. 254–255)

His main point is that new designations do not necessarily refer to social behaviour that had not previously existed, but that they provide new ways to be a person, or new conditions for

personhood. In this way, he suggests they are also “moving targets” because “investigations interact with the targets themselves, and change them” (2006, p. 293). This dynamism is also an important feature of this type of analysis, in that it is not attempting to generate anything like universalising categories. Hacking (2006) has called what underpins his kind of approach dynamic nominalism. For this he offers a framework which consist of five “key players, in looping effects and making up people” and they are *a)* classification, *b)* people, *c)* institutions, *d)* knowledge, and *e)* experts. He describes the interaction of these key players in this way:

> *e)* the experts or professionals who generate or legitimate the knowledge (*d*), judge its validity, and use it in their practice. They work within (*c*) institutions that guarantee their legitimacy, authenticity, and status as experts. They study, try to help, or advise on the control, of the (*b*) people who are (*a*) classified as of a given kind (p. 297)

This framework offers a map of discursive formations and practices where one might find certain truth-claims at work making up people. This is a critical feature of discourse in a Foucauldian sense in that it is about the nexus of knowledge and power, and how that power operates to govern people (Dean, 2010; Foucault & Gordon, 1980; Rose, 1996). As opposed to other kinds of discursive analysis, a genealogical method puts the emphasis on power and practices rather than the specifics of language (Olssen, 2003).

These philosophical and theoretical underpinnings are captured within the specific method of analysis predominantly used here which is Carol Bacchi’s (2009) post-structural critical policy analysis. Her analytic method titled, *What's the problem represented to be?* (WPR) utilises a series of six questions to guide the process of problematisation and genealogical analysis. Again, the details and rationale for this method are explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

An epistemic intervention

The aim of this project can be regarded as an epistemic intervention, one that seeks to bring to light the mechanisms of mainstream psychology as a dominant epistemological institution (Pohlhaus, 2017) in the Australian context. As an intervention it will explicate the ways psychological discourse and knowledge empower a network of agents, authorities and policies to have the epistemic power to make claims about young people and their education. The capacity of mainstream psychology to speak about education and the futures of young people needs to be understood in terms of the socio-historical and political contexts that enable and reinforce its authority. In addition, this epistemic intervention seeks to call attention to the ways in which this kind of psychological knowledge and psy-subjectivities has the potential to perpetuate a range of epistemic injustices and violence (Pohlhaus, 2017). Pohlhaus (2017, p. 46) suggests that these kind of dominant philosophical traditions (such as the Euro-American ones underpinning mainstream psychology) are framed as "wholly representative of experienced reality toward which all other experiences of reality must bend." This is a kind of epistemic injustice, which Pohlhaus (2017) identifies as such, because it "simultaneously hierarchizes without warrant what is epistemically significant or worthy of epistemic attention (i.e. the world as experienced by this particular set of knowers and not another) and who counts as an ideal epistemic agent (i.e. those who experience the world in this particular way, not another)" (p. 46).

In this light, the critical policy analysis and elucidation of problem representations at the centre of this project is about showing the apparatus and technologies of epistemic institutions and their role in governing young people.

Although Foucault is not traditionally regarded as a theorist of epistemic injustice, Allen (2017) argues that three key elements of Foucault's work legitimise it as such: first, his detailed and comprehensive theorisation of power; second, "his specific analysis of

power/knowledge regimes and how these shape what it means to be 'within the true'" (Allen, 2017, p. 361); third, his method of genealogy as it "provides a compelling model of resistance to epistemic injustices" (Allen, 2017, p. 316). Foucault (1998, p. 441) emphasises that the aim of the analysis of power is to offer a "rational critique of rationality", which Allen (2017) describes in this way:

> For Foucault, the dangers and historical effects of forms of rationality consist primarily in their entanglements with relations of social power, relations that subject individuals in both senses of the term: constitute them as subjects in and through their subjection to prevailing regimes of 'power/knowledge'. (p. 361)

Chapter summary

The theoretical framing outlined in this chapter has been chosen as a way of approaching psychological knowledge, discourse and power and will guide the research through the ways youth and wellbeing have been constructed and problematised. Historical thinking, informed by a range of interdisciplinary knowledges, aims to show how it has become possible to talk about certain kinds of young people through the psychologisation of wellbeing and education. The critical nature of this inquiry and its methods are fundamentally political in that they seek to understand the operations of power. The aim is to show the repercussions of certain classifications/categorisations which problematise students through the epistemic power of psychologisation; a power which not only exists within the discipline of psychology itself, but is buttressed by other epistemic institutions and authorities to create a network of knowledge/power. The outcome of this inquiry is to unsettle the authority often exerted by deterministic and reductionist explanations of youth and development. However, these methods are designed not only to describe how people and communities can become marginalised through classifications, but also to bring to light the possibilities of liberation from them (Montero, 2010) and to reinforce criticality in community psychology praxis.

Chapter 3: The epistemic shaping of psychology in Australia

Over the past ten years I have been able to engage with psychology from a number of different positions; as an undergraduate student, a secondary (high) school teacher, an undergraduate tutor at university, a postgraduate student of community psychology, and as a PhD student. While the focus of the following paper is mainly on psychology within higher education, it is worth briefly mentioning secondary/high school psychology education as this is where many students get their first taste of psychology and make decisions to continue on to study psychology at university. While it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many students are studying secondary school psychology throughout Australia, needless to say, it is a significant subject within the secondary education system (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2017) and this early psychology education sets some of the epistemic foundations of mainstream psychology (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010). Mainstream psychology is defined as "an academic field of study as taught and researched in North American and European institutions such as universities" (Teo, 2009a, p. 35). I want to offer a short reflection from my teacher training as I think it is analogous to some of the ways in which mainstream psychology education sets these foundations.

During my secondary school teacher training we were placed in a school to do both observations and teaching under the supervision of a qualified teacher. For my first placement I was part of a year 11 psychology class. The teacher had taught psychology at this level for many years. The teaching I observed was enthusiastic, and followed the state sanctioned curriculum and corresponding text book strictly. I was instructed by my supervising teacher that when it came to the weeks that I would be teaching, I would also need to follow these.

As a part of the introduction to psychology for this year level, students spend a brief moment going over examples of what the textbook considers pseudo-science. In the class I

was observing the examples were palmistry, phrenology, astrology, and numerology and students discussed why they might not be regarded as scientific. At some point during this, a student raised his hand, “Excuse me miss, don’t some people say psychology is pseudo-science?” I immediately thought, what an opportunity to discuss some of critiques surrounding psychology, now *that* would be an introduction to psychology. But as quickly as the question was asked came, “No, Tom, psychology is a science” and the door to any further critique of psychology’s epistemic claims was swiftly closed. It is worth noting that this small introductory section, which involved a cursory glance at the philosophy of the scientific method, has subsequently been removed from the psychology curriculum here in the state of Victoria (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2017).

This chapter investigates the dominant forms of psychology in the Australian context and provides some broader historical information about psychology education and psychology as a discipline. Through historical thinking it develops a picture beyond that of the traditional, linear history of psychology often presented in textbooks and connects psychological knowledge, discourse and authority to the sociopolitical context. In doing so, the chapter brings to light the ways in which psychology is being shaped by the philosophical tendencies of neoliberalism in Australia, and the ways neoliberalism is buttressed by the dominant forms of psychological knowledge.

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Psychology education and the neoliberal episteme in Australia

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Abstract

This article investigates some of the ways in which neoliberalism and mainstream psychology intersect to maintain a dominant episteme in psychology education within the Australian context. It is argued that the ubiquity and logic of neoliberalism and the philosophical inclination of mainstream psychology create a "culture of positivism" and epistemic deceit within psychology education. Some of the features of psychology as it has developed in Australia are offered to more clearly define what mainstream psychology is, before outlining the current regulatory, political, and economic forces shaping psychology education and the neoliberal university. The article concludes by proposing some of the consequences for a psychology education system that does not interrogate the origins of epistemic power and proposes that a greater focus on epistemological ethics and historical–hermeneutic elements in psychology education may offer some resistance to the neoliberal episteme.

Keywords

epistemological ethics, neoliberalism, pedagogy, philosophy, theory

Analyses of neoliberalism that lean too heavily toward notions of hegemonic control risk being unsupported by the ways in which it lands differently in specific contexts. Equally, critiques that lean entirely toward the contextual specificities raise questions about the validity of neoliberalism as an analytic construct. Peck et al. (2018) suggest neoliberalism can be separated into neoliberalism as ideology and "actually existing neoliberalism." Actually existing refers to the "contextually embedded, institutionally grounded" (p. 10) nature of neoliberal transformations. This conception of neoliberalism recognizes that processes of neoliberalization are contradictory, ongoing, incomplete, and uneven

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but ultimately it seeks to identify the change processes rather than simply the outcomes (Peck et al., 2018). These contextually embedded processes are, however, informed by the dominant ideologies of neoliberalism, chiefly those centred around the idea that economic markets are the potential source of human flourishing (Harvey, 2005). But as noted by Cosgrove and Karter (2018), the market under neoliberalism is not simply an economic well to be drawn upon "but is in effect an epistemological machine that produces new modes of subjectivity" (p. 670). Seeing neoliberalism as a range of systems and processes rather than as a singular economic imperative is key to the analysis here, and that the epistemological machine not only produces new modes of subjectivity but also favours certain ways of producing and maintaining knowledge. This paper seeks to investigate both neoliberalism as ideology and as actually existing in relation to psychology education and training in Australia.

This article concurs with Adams et al. (2019) that "psychological science is far from monolithic. The relationship with neoliberalism may be more precisely evident for hegemonic forms of psychological science" (p. 190). Similarly, psychology education is not monolithic, and thus reference to the term *mainstream psychology* herein is intended to reflect the psychological knowledge that is most dominant in the education setting, one that is shaped by a particular episteme. Here episteme is defined as "the 'apparatus' which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterised as scientific" (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 197).

The concerns around the dominance of mainstream psychology are evident in the work of critical psychologists both here in Australia and internationally (see Coimbra et al., 2012; R. Fox & Fryer, 2018; Kagan et al., 2011; Parker, 2007; Sloan, 2000; Teo, 2009). Critical psychologists have outlined how mainstream psychology has historically been a cultural product and producer within Western capitalism (see Kagan et al., 2011; Ratner, 2014; Roberts, 2015) and more specifically neoliberal capitalism (Ratner, 2019; Sugarman, 2015; Teo, 2018). There is ample evidence to suggest that psychology and psychological knowledge have played an integral part in the production of neoliberal subjectivities and that neoliberal ideologies have played a role in the shaping of psychological knowledge (Adams et al., 2019; Binkley, 2014; Rose, 1998; Rutherford, 2018; Sugarman, 2015). This dynamic relationship is self-reinforcing and engenders the normalizing and socializing of neoliberal forms of subjectivity supported via hegemonic forms of psychological science that are maintained within higher education (Adams et al., 2019; Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010).

The impacts of neoliberal ideologies have affected higher education systems in several ways; ways that are related to the management and marketization of courses in general, but also how these market-focused ideologies favour certain epistemic traditions (Abendroth & Porfilio, 2015; Adam, 2012; Connell, 2013). In addition, the neoliberal university posits students as customers who are replete with choices about their futures, and higher education staff are increasingly required to deliver satisfaction to customers (Abendroth & Porfilio, 2015; Marginson, 2002; Sellar, 2013). This is further complicated in the Australian context where more than half of university revenue comes from government grants or the government-funded student loan scheme (Norton et al., 2018). And while universities in Australia see themselves as self-governing communities and

education ministers have no immediate operational control, federal regulation occurs via conditions on grants, which are currently declining (Norton et al., 2018).

Informed by a social-constructionist perspective, this article is led by critical psychology approaches both specific and general (Teo, 2009). General in that it seeks to provide critical evaluation of mainstream psychology education's subject matter, methodology, and praxis (Teo, 2009). Specific in that it also seeks to critically evaluate some of the "ethical-political dimensions of praxis" (Teo, 2009, p. 37). It should also be stated that there are multiple conceptions of critical psychology and that an amount of intellectual debt is owed to academics and researchers from the global south who fostered many of the ideas that engendered critical psychology to focus on "transforming the discipline of psychology in order to promote emancipation in society" (Sloan et al., 2006, p. 42).

This article is an investigation of some of the factors within the Australian context that preserve a mainstream psychology episteme within psychology education. It is argued that the ubiquity and logic of neoliberalism and the philosophical inclination of mainstream psychology make it difficult for psychology education to avoid the tendencies of neoliberalism. The paper will first outline some of the historical features of psychology as it has emerged in Australia to give a sense of the philosophical underpinnings and its relationship to the sociopolitical context. It will then consider some of the ways neoliberalism has been conceptualized, both generally and relating to higher education. The paper will then knit together some examples of the intersections of actually existing neoliberalism in psychology education in Australia and its dangers, and will conclude with some ways of reconceiving psychology education so that it may foster alternatives to the neoliberal episteme.

Psychology in Australia

Early intellectual streams

In 1893, Henry Laurie, the chair of Mental and Moral Philosophy at Melbourne University, gave an address to the newly founded Mental Science and Education Section of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science in which he defined psychology as "the science of the facts of mind" and described it as "like other natural sciences" (Taft, 1982, p. 31). There were two main intellectual streams from Britain that provided the roots for the growth of psychology in Australia (Taft, 1982). The first was around the 19th-century philosophies of John Stuart Mill and Alexander Bain (Taft, 1982). Mill was a utilitarian, a liberal, and a naturalist, and his work explored the consequences of a thoroughgoing empiricist outlook (Macleod, 2018). Mill claimed that human beings and their minds are inseparable from nature, and as such, they are subject to the same causal laws as the rest of the natural world (Macleod, 2018). An associate and friend of Mill, Bain was interested in establishing empirical laws with respect to the contents of the human mind and anti metaphysical inclinations led him to push method in a much more strongly empirical direction (Graham, 2002). The second intellectual stream was one focused on such thinkers as Darwin, Spencer, and Galton and saw the beginning of a long-held desire for psychology to be positioned amongst biological sciences and medicine (Taft, 1982).

The convergence of these two intellectual streams can be seen in the work of three of Australia's most influential psychologists. Bernard Muscio was a graduate in philosophy in Sydney and studied psychology at Cambridge (Taft, 1982). His lectures on Industrial Psychology delivered in 1916 were the first of their kind in making the case for the "application of 'the science of psychology' not only to industry but also to Education (e.g. factors affecting learning), Law (e.g. punishment testimony) and Medicine (e.g. psychosomatic factors in illness, 'lunacy', psychoanalysis)" (Taft, 1982, p. 32). Elton Mayo, who trained in both philosophy and psychology in Adelaide, became a professor of philosophy at the University of Queensland, and practised clinical psychology after the First World War (Taft, 1982). His fieldwork and research went on to gain international recognition and was instrumental in the emerging field of industrial and organizational psychology (Trahair & Zaleznik, 2005). Stanley Porteus studied at Melbourne University and in 1916 was awarded a research scholarship to work in the department of anatomy on brain size and intelligence (Day, 1988). Porteus became widely known for his development of the Maze Test, a nonverbal intelligence and temperament test that was devised to identify "feeble-mindedness" in children, and one which his Melbourne clinic used for "subnormal and maladjusted children" (Taft, 1982, p. 32). His most notorious publication is *Temperament and Race* (Porteus & Babcock, 1926), in which he sought to develop biologically determined relationships between race, intelligence, and a range of characteristics that fell under the ill-defined concept of temperament. These figures shaped many of the foundations of psychological thinking in Australia, but it was in the 1960s that psychology would be shaped by legislation.

Legislating against pseudopsychology

In the state of Victoria in 1965 the Psychological Practices Act was passed by the state government (Cooke, 2000). This legislation was fuelled by a growing concern about pseudopsychological practices, particularly those of Scientology. In 1963, the Board of Inquiry into Scientology was founded. The one-man board of inquiry led by QC Kevin Anderson asserted that "Scientology is evil; its techniques evil; its practice a serious threat to the community, morally and socially" and his desire was that the inquiry would lead to the banning of Scientology in Australia (Anderson, 1965, p. 1). The concerns about the transgressions of Scientology into the realm of psychology represented a broader concern the profession had about "fringe practices" and "fringe organisations" (Cooke, 2000). In his report, Anderson (1965) recommended that provisions to protect psychology needed to be stronger than even those governing medicine to "curb the emergence of a class of unqualified pseudo-psychologists of whom Scientologists are the prime examples" and that "in order to adequately control the practice of psychology, the board considers that measures of a regulatory and economic nature are necessary" (p. 170).

The attack on Scientology was about defining and legitimizing psychology in the process: "Of prime importance in any system of registration would be the meaning to be given to the word 'psychology'. It would need to be defined in terms which ensured that Scientology techniques came under control" (Anderson, 1965, p. 171). The passing of the Psychological Practices Act was not unanimously endorsed by all psychologists at the time and was seen to have unfavourable consequences, such as the loss of professional authority over how psychology should be defined (Cooke, 2000).

Along with this newly legislated position afforded to psychology, there was an ever-increasing interest in more practical applications (Bucklow, 1976; Taft, 1982). Some have argued that more applied versions of psychology arose after it was deemed that earlier versions were overly focused on epistemology (Bucklow, 1976; Taft & Nixon, 1976).

An industry of applied psychology

By the early 1900s, psychological knowledge was being applied in medicine and "saw spectacular developments in the application of psychology to problems of education, mental retardation and other guidance and clinical problems in children" (Taft, 1982, p. 35). The application of psychological and psychometric testing in education became a cornerstone for the development of psychology in Australia, and a way for the relatively new science to strengthen its legitimacy as an applied discipline (Wright, 2011).

After the First World War, psychology also became increasingly used to assist in vocational guidance and counselling for children in schools (Bucklow, 1976). The Australian Institute of Industrial Psychology was established in 1927; a centre which saw the development of psychological assessments including "physical assessments, biographical, school and parents' reports, and interviews with the child and parent" aimed at vocational guidance (Bucklow, 1976, p. 25). The work of the institute "laid a very sound foundation of psychological practice which, with some modifications, was adopted by the Armed Services during the War and which has since become the dominant feature of vocational guidance in Australia" (Clark, 1958, as cited in Bucklow, 1976, p. 25).

The Second World War saw a great acceleration of applied psychology in the area of Australian industry, mainly due to the increased number of workers required for expanding munitions and other industries (Bucklow, 1976). Many of the workers were young women entering the workforce for the first time and the government saw a need to control the supply of labour, so established a division that employed 12 psychologists to

> work on a program to select and place women process workers for the expanding munitions factories. Programs were later developed for canteen managers, apprentices, industrial welfare officers and other types of workers. This represented the first large-scale use of tests in a wide range of occupations in Australian industry. (Bucklow, 1976, p. 27)

This brief outline of some of the historical factors influencing the trajectory of psychology in Australia highlights how it exists within and responds to sociopolitical and economic contexts. Although new factors are currently shaping this trajectory, residue of this history remains in some of the ways in which psychology and psychology education is currently shaped and regulated.

Disciplining the discipline: Psychology and higher education today

All psychology undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Australia must be accredited by the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC, 2019a). The main function of this body is to develop standards around the education and training of psychologists

for approval by the Psychology Board of Australia. While they do not provide accreditation for individual units of study, nor recommendations for study or program design, they do publish accreditation standards and conduct ongoing audits and site visits to ensure standards are being met. Under the domain of "Program of study" the standards state, "Psychology as a science-based discipline using an evidence-based approach and a coherent educational pedagogy informs the documented program design and delivery" (Australian Psychology Accreditation Council [APAC], 2019b, p. 9). Listed under the foundational graduate competencies are the topics that need to make up the "coherent body of knowledge" that students will be able to apply using a "scientific approach" such as: individual differences, psychological health, psychological disorders and evidence-based interventions, learning and memory, cognition, language and perception, motivation and emotion, neuroscience and the biological bases of behaviour, lifespan developmental psychology, social psychology, culturally appropriate psychological assessment and measurement, research methods and statistics (APAC, 2019b, p. 11).

There is mention in the standards of the need for "cultural responsiveness" as a learning outcome and that graduates should be able to comprehend and apply "the history and philosophy underpinning the science of psychology and the social, cultural, historical and professional influences on the practice of psychology" (APAC, 2019b, p. 11). But as others have noted, this version of history and philosophy of psychology is rarely more than a timeline of the male protagonists and their theories from the past rather than a truly critical engagement with psychology and its epistemic foundations (Harris, 2009; Newnes & Golding, 2018).

In Australia, there are approximately 365 accredited undergraduate psychology programs (including honours level) and at the postgraduate level, there are 122 different programs—of those, 84 are designated as having clinical psychology as their focus (APAC, 2019a). Although clinical psychology is defined in various ways, the two main membership organizations in Australia describe clinical psychologists as having "expertise in the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of psychological problems and mental illness" (Australian Psychological Society, 2019, para. 1), and that "clinical psychology is a science-based profession that integrates theory and clinical practice to understand, prevent, and relieve psychological problems or disorders whether they are mild, moderate, severe, chronic, or complex" (Australian Clinical Psychology Association, 2019, para. 2).

A desktop review was undertaken of the five largest universities in Australia (by total student numbers, ranging from approximately 41,000 to 59,000) and the accredited undergraduate and postgraduate psychology course content (Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2019). While this review is not a complete summary of psychology education in Australia, it does point to a discipline that continues to focus very much on being clinically applied. Research profiling the training and education of Australian psychologists confirms postgraduate training is largely focused on mainstream psychology and the greatest number of Masters or Doctorate places being made available to students is in clinical psychology (Grenyer et al., 2010).

The review also found that most undergraduate courses do not offer a breadth of epistemologies or methodologies as a part of their core subjects. This was found in subjects directly related to research methods, but also within other core psychology subjects. For

instance, with a few exceptions (see R. Fox & Fryer, 2018; R. Fox et al., 2019), qualitative methodologies were not a part of the core subjects for undergraduate psychology training. This epistemic dominance has been noted in previous research, including calls for the governing bodies of the discipline to more explicitly address the "enduring hegemony of positivism" so that psychology can "genuinely understand the antecedents of, and provide meaningful sustainable solutions for, complex human issues" (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010, p. 67).

The concern around the dominance of certain orientations has been voiced by the ruling membership organization, the Australian Psychological Society, whose executive director at the time lamented that there have been "unintended consequences" to Australian psychology education becoming so dominated by mainstream clinical psychology, and it has been "at the expense of other programs, which has resulted in the closure of non-clinical postgraduate psychology programs" (Littlefield, 2017, p. 8).

The dominance of mainstream clinical psychology may also be explained by the way in which psychological services are co-funded by the government health care system (Medicare). As a part of Medicare, the Better Access scheme was implemented in 2006 and it enables clients on a mental health plan to claim rebates from Medicare (Parliament of Australia, 2011). Currently, rebates for psychological services offered by a registered clinical psychologist are $124.50 AUD whilst for psychologists registered as generalists are $84.80 AUD (Parliament of Australia, 2011). This has created a two-tiered system that prioritizes clinical psychological knowledge and practice as only certain modalities are registered as items under the scheme. This two-tiered system has shaped a hierarchy of psychological knowledge in Australia.

Evidence in this context would suggest there is a strong relationship between mainstream and clinical psychology. But perhaps a more accurate assessment would be that mainstream psychology is synonymous with utilitarian thinking (Adams et al., 2019) and that behind the dominance of mainstream, clinical psychology is what Fowers (2010) calls a "quest for effectiveness," an orientation that has been a "ubiquitous and driving aim in psychology" (p. 102). This quest has emphasized a range of methods and strategies that can result in desired effects and "serves the societal and professional project of maximizing control and mastery" (p. 102). This singular focus on effectiveness can be thought of as means–ends or instrumental rationality and has dominated research, practice, and training discourse within psychology (Fowers, 2010). As the dominant metatheoretical assumption, it is rarely stated explicitly and thus it tends to remain almost invisible, as are the positivistic assumptions often underpinning it (Fowers, 2010).

A culture of positivism

The term positivism can often become a stand-in for a range of concerns and issues around mainstream psychology but may not offer enough conceptual clarity alone. And while there has been no doubt of its historical emergence (Bailey & Eastman, 1994; Teo, 2005) and its shaping of psychology (Michell, 2003), others have cautioned against its use as a catch-all critique of mainstream psychology (Martin, 2003). Positivism, as defined here, is the philosophical position that understands reality as external, objective, and measurable and one that can be captured by natural–scientific, empirical–statistical

methodologies (D. Fox et al., 2009). Positivism proposes that through context-free generalizations, the true causal nature of human behaviours can be known (D. Fox et al., 2009). Michell (2003) suggests that these characterizations of positivism are too blunt, and perhaps what is being described is more akin to what he calls the "quantitative imperative," one that does not necessarily belong to the positivist position.

The concerns about the reductive nature of positivistic orientations are by no means new. In their seminal work, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer (1947/2016) embarked on a critical assessment of modernity and a "critique of historical progress and civilisatory rationality that they call the critique of instrumental reason" (Grumley, 2019, p. 72). Their overarching argument was that the civilizatory process has produced a dangerous imbalance between the reflective and instrumental aspects of rationality that were perceived originally as a unity (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1947/2016). In it, they offer a searing assessment of positivism, "The blindness and dumbness of the data to which positivism reduces the world pass over into language itself, which restricts itself to recording those data" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1947/2016, p. 196). It has however been argued that their assessment of society, although insightful, was excessively one-sided, pessimistic, and did not account for the possibilities for resistance and change (Grumley, 2019). In terms of mainstream psychology, maybe positivism does not strictly represent the philosophical category as it is historically understood, and this lack of conceptual clarity may be part of the elusiveness that enables it to flourish.

Critical pedagogue Henry Giroux (2011) makes the distinction between the specific philosophic movement of positivism and a form of cultural hegemony, the culture of positivism. He suggests that this is an important distinction as it "shifts the focus of debate about the tenets of positivism from the terrain of philosophy to the field of ideology" (Giroux, 1997, p. 9). For Giroux (2011), the biggest concern from a critical pedagogy perspective is that a culture of positivism has the effect of obscuring critical consciousness, and it does so through asserting "its superiority through its alleged suprahistorical and supracultural posture. Theory and method are held to be historically neutral" (p. 28). If one considers Giroux's (2011) notion of culture as a legacy, we begin to see a more complex array of elements that coalesce to form a cultural hegemony within education, rather than the more simplistic idea of a ubiquitous epistemology.

One of the reasons this hegemony has been sustained within psychology education is due to the version of positivism that is perhaps more correctly termed logical positivism. In their review of logical positivism, Costa and Shimp (2011) suggest that "contemporary psychology may still be in an 'unenviable position' in which it is beholden to a former philosophy that grounded empirical science in non-empirical philosophical arguments and is isolated from contemporary philosophy of science" (p. 27). It is proposed that one of the reasons for the dogged commitment to logical positivism is that philosophically logical positivism situates itself as a universally applicable methodology (Costa & Shimp, 2011). A universality that would fuel the methodologism seen in mainstream psychology education, where more method-oriented course content than even the natural sciences such as physics is found (Costa & Shimp, 2011). This methodologism is the epistemological attitude that gives rise to the notion that logical positivism is appropriate for all psychological research questions (Teo, 2005). An attitude that has been shown to be both particular to, and pervasive within mainstream psychology education (Costa & Shimp, 2011).

In addition, logical positivism is able to appeal to that which is perceived as "natural" or "occurring in nature" with theoretical claims to the biological sciences and medicine (Danziger, 1997). Within a quasi naturalistic frame, it is possible for mainstream psychological constructs to go untheorized as they simply exist as natural objects (Danziger, 1997; Rose, 1998). When in reality, "by the time explicit psychological theories are formulated, most of the theoretical work has already happened—it is embedded in the categories used to describe and classify psychological phenomena" (Danziger, 1997, p. 8). This is the process of psychologization (De Vos, 2013) and these mechanisms offer psychology a powerful role in both "making up people" (Hacking, 1986) and in shaping common understandings about societies.

Neoliberal social imaginary

The early proponents of neoliberalism sought to embed the ideas that economic markets were a natural occurrence of human nature and removing barriers to those markets was enabling their true nature (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Harvey, 2005). The foundational desires of neoliberalism were never exclusively economic, they were fundamentally about shaping the social world (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Humphrys, 2019). This suggests that neoliberalism has a much deeper reach and exists as a series of sociocultural forces that engender a "neoliberal social imaginary" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 34). The neoliberal social imaginary is largely concerned with the implanting of market-based logic, and in the case of higher education is also concerned with the standardization and control of education (Abendroth & Porfilio, 2015). Conceiving neoliberalism as a social imaginary is useful in that it situates particular logics, reasoning, and practices in a temporal and material space rather than adrift in a macroeconomic one.

A social imaginary can be thought of as the collective thinking shared by ordinary people in society (Taylor, 2007). It is not simply something that resides in people's heads but is lived and constituted in shared social practices (Brinkmann, 2008). It can be closely linked to the notion of social imagination, which Christens et al. (2007) define as the gaps between individual thought and personal experience and systemic forces. In both instances, imaginary/imagination is not used in the naïve sense of the word, as in merely fictitious, but rather it is "the common understandings that make everyday practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy. It is largely implicit, embedded in ideas and practices, carrying within it deeper normative notions and images, constitutive of a society" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 34). The social imaginary influences peoples' subjectivities and how they perceive government and being governed, and engenders ideas about social institutions (Abendroth & Porfilio, 2015).

Harvey (2005) points out that neoliberalization accomplished widespread political consent across the USA and UK because it was grounded in the Gramscian notion of "common sense." This is more accurately translated as the sense held in common (Gramsci, 1985), and in this regard is "constructed out of longstanding practices of cultural socialization" (Harvey, 2005, p. 48). Important to this conception of common sense is the way in which it can obscure or disguise real problems under cultural prejudices (Gramsci, 1985). As Harvey (2005) points out, "political questions become 'insoluble' when disguised as cultural ones" (p. 48). This would suggest that analyses of

neoliberalism need to adopt a critical bifocality (Weis & Fine, 2012), one that enables both the conceptualizing of large sociopolitical formations and the embodied everyday reality of people.

Dominant narratives about what it means to be fit for the 21st century have become culturally normalized (Connell, 2013; Vassallo, 2015) and they seek to not only describe and rationalize market relations in a particular way, but to naturalize neoliberal subjectivities as essentially human (Adams et al., 2019; Rutherford, 2018; Sugarman, 2015). A strong case for the ways in which these subjectivities are maintained via the bidirectional relationship between psychology and neoliberalism has already been established (Adams et al., 2019; Binkley, 2014; Ratner, 2019; Teo, 2018) and there is ample historical evidence of psychology's direct involvement in capitalism (Duckett et al., 2011; Roberts, 2015; Sloan, 1996). However, neoliberalism is complex, and while narratives of it being a hegemonic international phenomena are true in part, they can lack details of the specific national variants that "helps us understand the historically and contextually specific ways it is implemented" (Humphrys, 2019, p. 14).

Neoliberalism as ideology and actually existing

There have been criticisms about the way ideology has been conceptualized and therefore its usefulness (Montenegro, 2002). Perhaps some of the calls to disregard neoliberalism as an ideology have merit (see Klein, 2017) in that it may cloud the ability to see it as something that has actual impacts. In political psychology research, it has been suggested that the abstracting of ideologies serves to disconnect ideology from politics itself (Weltman & Billig, 2001). Montenegro (2002) proposes not only critically reviewing the concept of ideology but calls for the need to connect it with the concept of hegemony. Kincheloe and McLaren (2011) similarly propose that "Ideology vis-à-vis hegemony moves critical inquirers beyond simplistic explanations of domination that have used terms such as propaganda to describe the way media, political, educational, and other sociocultural productions coercively manipulate citizens to adopt oppressive meanings" (p. 291). Critical theorist Catherine Belsey (2002, p. 48) believes that ideology should not simply be considered a "system of ideas in people's heads" but rather that it has both real and imaginary components. Real in that it speaks to the ways in which people understand their relationship to the social relations that govern them, and imaginary in that it deters a full understanding of these "conditions of existence and the ways in which people are socially constituted within them" (p. 48). Conceptualizing ideology in these ways attempts to understand it not as a concrete, singular set of meanings and practices, but rather that those meanings are part of social relations in a process of constant flux where certain elements are privileged in particular contexts (Montenegro, 2002).

In terms of neoliberalism, this contradictory process is captured in the concept of "actually existing neoliberalism" (Peck et al., 2018) which differentiates between neoliberalism as an ideology and as actually existing in the following way:

> While the ideology of neoliberalism defers to the sovereignty of a singular, transhistorical, and uniquely efficient market, the inescapably murkier reality is that actually existing programs of neoliberal transformation are always contextually embedded, institutionally grounded, and

> politically mediated—for all their generic features, family resemblances, patterned dynamics, and structural interconnections (p. 10)

Actually existing neoliberalism is better understood as an uneven, open-ended, frustrated process of neoliberalization, that is, as a series of processes rather than a single outcome (Peck et al., 2018).

It is worth noting here that, unlike many of the dominant narratives regarding neoliberalism, in Australia it became established via a consensual social contract between the centre–left government and the trade union movement (Humphrys, 2019). What occurred under this agreement was the transformation of civil society and this development of neoliberalism in Australia can be seen as "a distinct spatial example of neoliberalism emerging alongside—and through—corporatism" (Humphrys, 2019, p. 37).

The neoliberal episteme and higher education

The current political and economic climate in many Western liberal democracies is such that universities are being administered more and more like corporate businesses and shaped by the ideologies of neoliberalism (Connell, 2013). Connell (2013) details what she terms a "neoliberal cascade of 'reforms'" in the Australian higher education sector around the mid-1980s which "brought every institutional sector under the sway of market logic" (p. 102). This has not only affected the administration of universities but has dramatically changed the relationship between students and education, with market-oriented ways of thinking fostering notions of meritocracy, competition, and choice (Savage et al., 2013). Within this climate of competition and choice and the ongoing manipulation of funding arrangements, universities have undergone shifts that have seen the expansion of managerialism (Connell, 2013). This has seen an increase in the power of deans and other central management whilst at the same time instituting the decline of departmental decision-making, and the repositioning of students as customers, which has resulted in an "undermined academic democracy" (Connell, 2013, p. 102). There are indications that Western liberal democracies other than Australia are also facing concerns around the impacts of neoliberalism in higher education (Abendroth & Porfilio, 2015; Gillies, 2011; Liu, 2011; Peters, 2011).

In the neoliberal university, structural or systemic changes are often sold as economic imperatives that are objectively separate from epistemic and pedagogical considerations. However, Adam (2012) suggests that neoliberalism has an "epistemic identity" which is characterized by "objectivising epistemologies that are loosely affiliated with *positivist, realist, rational, atomistic, descriptive, abstract, empirical* and *quantitative* approaches to knowledge in academic discourse and *structured, authoritative, unitary, productive, organising*, and *certain* approaches to knowledge in more public discourse" (pp. 73–74). Put simply, neoliberalism supports conditions and cultures by which certain epistemologies are more likely to thrive, which has had a direct impact on certain disciplines, seeing the decline of critical disciplines such as philosophy (Connell, 2013). This is echoed by Adam (2012), who argues that the market ideology of neoliberalism results in the commodification of knowledge and that "some types of knowledge and ways of knowing may not be as easily quantified, commodified, mass produced, mass marketed and short-term desirable, prescribable, or consumable as burgers and benzodiazepines" (p. 78).

There is, however, a strange tension inherent within the marketization of higher education, between more neoliberal positions (which laud the ability of the competitive market to find solutions to educative dilemmas) and neoconservative ones (which propose a return to more traditional forms of knowledge and knowledge production). Ideologically, neoconservatism proposes that the only way out of educative dilemmas is to return to "real knowledge," and other knowledge that sits outside this, that belongs to and represents the lives of the more marginalized communities, is disregarded and delegitimized (Apple, 2001). For instance, the delegitimizing of Indigenous and community knowledges within the neoliberal university has been noted by those working toward epistemological resistance and decoloniality (Carolissen et al., 2017; Dudgeon & Walker, 2015; Moreton-Robinson, 2004).

The tension between these neoliberal and neoconservative values was highlighted by Foucault when he identified "the grand contradiction of neoliberalism was its passion for intervention in the name of non-intervention" (Miller, 2010, p. 56). This tension is evidenced in Australia by the recent submission of the Psychology Board of Australia (2016) to extend a national exam to all provisionally registered psychologists. Despite students having completed a postgraduate degree in a specified area of psychology, they are required to complete an extensive exam, which covers four domains: ethics, assessment, interventions, and communication (Psychology Board of Australia, 2016). While much of the discourse surrounding the exam is about professional standards, the cornerstone of the exam is content knowledge with large sections being about the specifics of psychological tests and measures. In other words, it represents that which can be standardized and, as Abendroth and Porfilio (2015) note, that "standardization and accountability in education are emblematic of the neoliberal social imaginary for educational institutions" (p. 164).

The pathway to this kind of legitimized knowledge comes at a great financial cost to students. To obtain general registration, students must complete a 4-year sequence of undergraduate study. This is followed by either 2 years of internship of supervised practice, or 2 years of postgraduate study during which students can obtain provisional registration. Upon successful completion of this second stage, students are required to shoulder the financial cost of the exam ($450 AUD) and, once successful, completion to moving toward general registration attracts a further $947 AUD for application and registration (Psychology Board of Australia, 2014). On top of these are the increasing costs of a university degree in Australia, which is around $10,000 AUD per year, plus increased interest rates on student loans and lowered wage thresholds for repayment of those loans (Ey, 2018). The economic burden for students, including the financial constraints being encountered in their lives, is then coupled with the neoliberal discourses that position them as consumers of higher education (Cassell & Nelson, 2013).

In addition, higher education is increasingly being presented as a means–ends pathway to the labour market, and students (consumers) are required to make economic choices about courses that will lead them successfully into jobs. While it would be foolish to suggest that educational choices should not be made on some consideration of a job prospect, this environment would seem to favour a psychology that can align itself as one that will service the demands of the labour market. Students are therefore making choices about careers in the dominant areas of psychological practice without being

given the opportunity to question the underlying epistemic assumptions built in to that pathway. The neoliberalization of psychology education begins to constrain epistemic possibilities and does so largely without the students' knowledge.

Epistemic deceit and discriminatory impacts

With logical positivism running through textbooks and undergraduate courses, where it has been found that both terminology and concepts of positivism are widely used but are not explicitly acknowledged as doing so (Costa & Shimp, 2011), it becomes a pedagogy of epistemic deceit. A deceit that reduces the possibility for students to not only critically approach, but to perhaps even reject the underlying philosophical foundations of mainstream psychology and to be supported in finding other psychologies. This would be particularly salient for students from non-Western cultural backgrounds who may find it difficult to reconcile the acultural position of mainstream psychology, or for its inability to deal with issues such as racism (Adams et al., 2019). For instance, it has been found that for Indigenous Australian undergraduate students studying psychology, culturally resonant content is in fact central to their success and wellbeing (Ranzijn et al., 2009). However, this deceit should not rest with individual educators, but rather be located as the product of a number of forces currently governing higher education that legitimize what some have termed neoliberal pedagogies (McCafferty, 2010).

This is not to say that psychology educators are not continually grappling with ways to creatively insert critical aspects within psychology education both in Australia and elsewhere (see Carolissen et al., 2017; R. Fox & Fryer, 2018; Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011). Nor is this to suggest that textbooks do not address critical thinking as an important skill for psychology students. But as pointed to by R. Fox and Fryer (2018) and others (Newnes & Golding, 2018), there is a difference between critical thinking as a kind of systematic cognitive process and providing space to engage in critical psychology which politicizes, historicizes, and questions epistemic foundations.

In the South African context, Carolissen and colleagues (2017) have suggested that it is not simply a matter of advocating for change in curriculum content, but also a recognition of the "social, historical and contemporary factors that frame curriculum" (p. 502). This is an important case study that draws attention to the impacts that an ahistorical and apolitical psychology has on students of colour, one which has been echoed here in Australia with discussions around psychology and "the negative impact that certain disciplinary theories and practices have had on Indigenous Australians" (Dudgeon & Walker, 2015, p. 276). These examples suggest that knowledge is not simply a means–end process to skill acquisition and the labour market, but that knowledges intersect with personal ontologies and the lived experiences of students. And therefore, a pedagogy underpinned by epistemic deceit should not simply be seen as a philosophic sleight of hand, but as a very real infringement on the opportunity for students to develop critical consciousness (Freire, 1965).

One of the concerns for a psychology that fails to engender critical consciousness is also the propensity for it to reproduce epistemological violence (Teo, 2010). Epistemological violence does not simply refer to the inappropriate or unethical use of research in general but to a hermeneutic process that has harmful consequences

for people and communities who are made "other" through the ethical blindness of "interpretive speculations [that] can be done with good or bad intentions" (Teo, 2005, pp. 57–58). Importantly, critical consciousness seeks to dismantle dominant, mechanistic ways of thinking to empower people through knowledge, and knowledge production, and as such is a deeply sociopolitical project (Freire, 1965). Epistemological violence is therefore more likely to occur when the mechanisms and impacts of knowledge and knowledge production are obscured, ignored, or denied.

The way in which certain epistemologies have been afforded greater status, at the expense of others, particularly those arising from non-White, female sources, has been highlighted by Indigenous feminist and critical race theorist Aileen Moreton-Robinson: "since the Enlightenment, the dominant epistemological position within the Western world has been the white Cartesian male subject whose disembodied way of knowing has been positioned in opposition to white women's and Indigenous people's production of knowledge" (2004, p. 76). Psychology has also been denounced for the racializing of certain groups via "hereditarian race researchers" engaging in "scientific racism" (Teo, 2011, p. 242). This othering has in part been possible due to the pursual of objectivism, which obscures reflections about the racial implications of such an epistemology (Teo, 2011). Dutta et al. (2016) have detailed the ways in which a lack of interrogation about the origins of epistemic power have led to structural and cultural violence, and the continued colonization of knowledge.

Resistance and justifiable epistemologies

Given the potential for violence and the perpetuation of epistemologies of ignorance, it would seem that some of the resistance to the neoliberalization of psychology education ought to be in the uncovering of the hidden assumptions and philosophical tendencies of it. Bourdieu (1998) in *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market* suggests that a central feature of resistance must be exposing the idea that neoliberalism is an unavoidable, natural path. It is one thing to expose these workings, but what qualities might constitute the justifiable epistemologies of such a psychology education?

Foremost, there would need to be a greater awareness and critical reflection at the discipline level, specifically a focus on epistemological ethics (Teo, 2015). An ethics that seeks to engender ongoing questions about the impacts of any given epistemology and to recognize that knowledge production has repercussions for people and communities (Teo, 2015). An ethics that does not distance itself through ahistorical objectivism, which "hides the interests as well as the life-world realities that constitute its very meaning" (Teo, 2015, p. 143). Justifiable epistemologies would recognize the importance of the more historical–hermeneutic aspects. A self-reflective, empirical–analytical psychology that is able to reflect on the ways in which it co constructs psychological objects would have to be a more justifiable epistemology:

> One could argue that psychologists obtain a "more objective" understanding of objectivity in psychology when they look at the cultural, social, and political contexts in which this term was developed as well as at the meanings of this concept in other disciplines. (Teo, 2015, p. 139)

Feminist philosopher Sandra Harding (1992) has also argued that “strong objectivity” can only be truly obtained when the objects and subjects of knowledge are located within the same critical frame, and it is this framing that necessitates “strong reflexivity.”

While some of the arguments and critiques put forward here belong to a substantial history of theorizing and reflection about the impacts of mainstream psychology, there also seems to be renewed calls for more justifiable epistemologies within the Australian context. The scientist–practitioner model and the emphasis on individualism, psychopathologies, and expert-driven interventions that underpin clinical psychology training is being seen by some as insufficient to deal with issues facing Australian societies such as refugee, migrant, and Indigenous health and wellbeing (Rhodes & Langtiw, 2018). Calls have arisen for a clinical psychology that is able to respond to “the sociopolitics of human distress and lend itself to social action for complex problems” (Rhodes & Langtiw, 2018, p. 377). Clinical psychology educators Rhodes and Langtiw (2018) suggest that if a clinical psychology is to ever adequately address the needs emerging from non-Western cultural communities, there ought to be a shift in curriculum and pedagogy in psychology training that works from a foundation of decoloniality. In addition, they suggest an engagement with a wider range of paradigms such as those from community and critical psychology and expanding the philosophical and epistemic content so as to question “the expert-driven individualism” of clinical psychology and “recast psychopathology as the product of social structures as well as personal experience” (Rhodes & Langtiw, 2018, p. 380).

While the accreditation and regulatory systems in Australia make this difficult, interdisciplinary and collaborative work within and between universities is being fostered through both formal (e.g., conferences, special issues, journals, and workshops) and informal (e.g., social media and social spaces outside institutions) avenues. There is also currently one postgraduate course in community psychology offered in Australia that offers some examples of work from a broad range of epistemic and methodological positions and highlights a number of interdisciplinary relationships (e.g., decoloniality and critical praxis: Sonn & Quayle, 2013, 2014; displacement, migration, and identity: Sonn et al., 2017; everyday multiculturalism and local geographies: Oke et al., 2016).

Conclusion

This article has offered some ways to conceptualize and piece together some of the processes of neoliberalization that affect psychology education generally, and specifically in the Australian context. The philosophic tendencies already within mainstream psychology, the forces of accreditation and registration, and the market demands of the neoliberal university are maintaining an epistemic dominance. A dominance that has discriminatory impacts for students, and that is in danger of reproducing epistemological violence. However, psychology is in a unique position to foster some resistance to the neoliberalization of its discipline by prioritizing epistemic plurality through these very accreditation and regulatory systems that currently constrain it. This would require the governing bodies of the discipline to acknowledge the importance of epistemological ethics and to deliberately foster spaces within institutions to advance critical psychologies and a more robust awareness of the historical–hermeneutic elements of the discipline. As we face

increasingly complex sociocultural and sociopolitical issues, the epistemic blindness of a neoliberalized, instrumentalized, quasi-objective psychology would seem to work against many of the ameliorative intentions of a modern psychology.

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Chapter summary

Through utilising historical thinking, the paper in this chapter brings to light an important number of elements that have shaped, and continue to shape, the dominant forms of psychology in Australia. Some of these elements are unique to the Australian context such as the way in which the discipline is controlled through a variety of legislative, institutional and organisational mechanisms. Other elements, such as the dominance of mainstream psychology, has been noted by critical psychology scholarship in other parts of the world. So too, neoliberal ideology has both a localised impact, but it also belongs to a globalised capitalism. What this paper highlights are the complex intersections of these contextual elements that lead to environments where certain epistemologies are able to flourish more readily than others. Ideologies embolden epistemologies because of their power to seemingly explain that which has been essentialised and naturalised.

Through historical thinking some of the ways in which epistemic power is accumulated by psychology (as both a discipline or an epistemic institution, and as a practice) and the ways in which psychological knowledge and technologies have gained gravitas in Australian society and culture have been shown here. It should also be acknowledged that some of this epistemic power is derived from the global, Eurocentric project of mainstream psychology and from the ways in which classifications, naturalisations and objectifications continue to support status quo reasoning (Haslanger, 2017). This kind of reasoning is underpinned by both essentialist and normative assumptions which Haslanger (2017) defines as: "*Essentialist Assumption*: Robust regularities are not accidental. They are due to the natures of things" and "*Normative Assumption*: Things should express their natures, and under normal/favorable circumstances they will. Abnormal/unfavorable circumstances are not good and should be avoided or changed" (pp. 548-549).

In relation to mainstream psychology, this means categorisations are afforded both the power of explaining something which is natural (and has always existed), and also that these psychologisations can be made to seem as though they are inherent within people. This is how psychological subjectivities are constructed and can make their way into a range of contexts and shape the space of possibilities for how people are able to see themselves as a certain human kinds (Hacking, 2006). These subjectivities should not be considered a unitary psychological object as there are a multitude of subjectivities engendered by certain psychological categories, diagnoses, disorders and discourses. Whilst they often all contain at their centre a common psychological self, which in this case has been detailed as increasingly a neoliberal self, the other elements that make up the background of subjectivities are contingent on a range of historical, contextual, and epistemological factors. It could be argued that what the psy-subjectivity is trying to *do* in a given context also influences its construction. The following chapter focuses more closely on the concept of wellbeing and the ways in which it is involved in co-creating subjectivities.

Chapter 4: Constructing psy-wellbeing(s)

Often the epistemological underpinnings of psychological constructs go unnoticed. There can be an assumption that because of the knowledge claims made by mainstream psychology that the epistemological underpinnings are grounded in something akin to that of the natural sciences (Danziger, 1990; Teo, 2015). That is, constructs arise through natural observations of objects in the real world, and these objects can be measured, verified, made generalisable, and named. As with the natural sciences, mainstream psychology suggests through its logical positivism that these objects/constructs exist independently (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010; Michell, 2003). Thus, when psychological constructs make their way into other domains, such as education, there can be even less interrogation about their claims or foundations as they are positioned as naturally occurring, observable realities. Psychological constructs are also emboldened by having arisen from a discipline with the epistemic power to make truth claims about their existence.

Some educators have been sceptical of the constructs and technologies used by psychology throughout its history of involvement in education and schooling in Australia (Campbell & Glasheen, 2017; Wright, 2011). However, wellbeing seems to be have been embraced and embedded within education with a little less critique as noted by Wright (2014, p. 143) “Australia has to some extent lagged behind debate and critical assessment of these issues; the pervasiveness of psychological discourses in Australian educational policy and practice has not been subject to vigorous critique as it has elsewhere”. Traction of particular psychological discourses and knowledge is often due to the fact that they appear to make sense of the cultural moment in which they arise (De Vos, 2012, 2013). Psychological constructs cannot be separated from the sociocultural context and like any development in psychology, new conceptual areas that emerge seem to reflect “ways of thinking that are widely accepted in contemporary society” (Richardson & Guignon, 2008, p. 617).

The importance of young people's health has always been a part of education as reflected in the numerous health campaigns aimed at them and schools. Historically these have largely focused on physical health, dietary advice, sexual health, lifestyle, and other health behaviours (e.g., Laurence et al., 2007; McLellan et al., 1999; Smith et al., 2011). It could be suggested that because of this focus on healthy behaviours, schools were already fertile ground for the concept of wellbeing to take hold. An important distinction to make here is that the kind of wellbeing emerging in early 2000s around Australian education is a distinctly psychological one, which is in keeping with the rise of more psychologically focused teaching and schooling in general (Wright, 2011, 2014). Described as "therapeutic education" this refers to an "overall educational philosophy that emphasises the importance of attending to emotional and psychological life, pedagogical approaches aimed at making classroom activities more engaging, and curriculum initiatives that affirm social and emotional learning" (Wright, 2014, p. 142). A central element of this philosophy is its focus on mental health and one that has been increasingly matched in both policy concerns and school-based programmes and interventions (Svane et al., 2019; Wright & McLeod, 2015a).

The history of psychology's involvement and therefore the existence of psychological subjectivities within education has already been evidenced here. However, it is the arrival of certain types of psychology and therefore types of subjectivities in early 2000 that is of interest. As noted previously, mainstream psychology has an ability to epistemically camouflage itself as having always existed, or as natural. This gives importance to the uncovering of these newer epistemic tendencies to understand the ways in which they are (re)conceiving or (re)constructing young people, their education and futures.

The arrival of positive psychology/education in Australia

It has been suggested that it was "the rise of positive psychology and its concomitant concerns with happiness and flourishing" (McLeod & Wright, 2016b, p. 12) that played a key

part in the genesis of wellbeing in the educational landscape in Australian. A central moment of this was a collaboration between Martin Seligman, one of the founders of positive psychology in the US, and Geelong Grammar, an independent Anglican co-educational boarding and day school, whose fees for senior secondary full boarding students exceed $70,000 AUD per year (Geelong Grammar School, 2020; Slemp et al., 2017). It was during a 6-month visit by Seligman and some of his colleagues in early 2000 that Geelong Grammar School began introducing positive psychology/positive education into its community, and the school began to design initiatives around Seligman's (2012) PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment) model, while also adding a physical health component to it (Norrish & Seligman, 2015).

Also at this time in many other Western cultures there was a burgeoning industry based around psychological concepts and practices of coaching, motivation and CBT, particularly for corporate workplaces that were seeking to increase productivity whilst at the same time buffering against economic austerities (Davies, 2016; Ehrenreich, 2010). Davies (2016) describes the ways in which this psychological knowledge is able to gather authority via accumulating epistemic power from other domains:

> The psychology of motivation blends into the physiology of health, drawing occasionally on insights from sports coaches and nutritionists, to which is added a cocktail of neuroscientific rumours and Buddhist meditation practices. Various notions of 'fitness', 'happiness', 'positivity' and 'success' bleed into one another, with little explanation of how or why. (p. 89)

Another important feature of positive psychology is the way in which it positioned itself as "radically new" and that its so-called "happiness science" offered a pathway which sought to usher in a fresh start "through which the pains, politics and contradictions of the past can be overcome" (Davies, 2016, p. 12). This new promise of a positive future is also centred on the

idea that a hard science of subjective affect is possible and had already been put to work in a number of domains "via management, medicine, self-help, marketing and behaviour change policies" (Davies, 2016, p. 12).

Positive psychology/education in Australia was afforded a substantial amount of public exposure via news media in the early 2000s. National and local news providers ran articles both promoting and criticising the new psychology that had arrived. *Civilising kids a bigger picture* was the 2008 headline from one paper which cited the work of a US psychologist who noted that recent research "showed that bright, charming, seemingly confident and socially skilled teenagers from affluent, loving families are experiencing epidemic rates of depression, substance abuse, and anxiety disorders" and that this "happens more among this affluent group than in any other socio-economic group of American adolescents" (Green, 2008, para. 29). The same article goes on to promote the positive psychology program at Geelong Grammar School, which

> recognises that young people today need strategies that will help them deal successfully with modern life. It wants to shine light on issues such as drugs, depression, obesity, alcohol, eating disorders, suicide, bullying and peer group pressure. It has taken a new approach to teaching and learning, using positive psychology in collaboration with Professor Martin Seligman, Fox Professor of Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. (para. 31)

The article concludes with the author suggesting that "young people must be protected from themselves" and that to assist in the civilising of young people "we" need to "demonstrate our belief in the goodness of young Australians, nurturing their confidence and optimism so that they can fulfil their role in an Australia of high personal and community standards" (para. 38). It should be noted that the author of the article was (and remains) the chief

executive of the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, a member organisation supporting private/non-government schools in the state of Victoria.

A 2007 article from a Sydney based news outlet titled *Happily ever after; life* details the construction of a $16 million AUD Wellbeing Centre at Geelong Grammar which is to house medical and sporting facilities, yoga, pilates, counselling and is "an approach to teaching and learning that is attracting worldwide attention. The school is to become the first in the world to incorporate positive psychology into its curriculum" (Fawcett, 2007, para. 3). The article goes on to summarise some of the studies and research of Seligman and colleagues supporting positive psychology, whilst also offering the opinion of a local coaching psychologist who reiterates that "I think what positive psychologists are saying is that psychology has been dominated by a focus on the negative, illness and dysfunction" (Fawcett, 2007, para. 27). The article offers a modest counterpoint from another psychologist who suggests trying to adopt a more "upbeat demeanour" is not necessarily useful for everyone. The article concludes with the following comment from a Geelong Grammar staff member:

> Students will feel that they can control their lives, that they're not victims of society… When things get difficult they'll be able to say I have seen this before, I recognise there is some science here. For me the result will be a mindset that a student can take steps to enable them to counter whatever problem they're about to encounter (para. 34).

Other articles such as *Happy school: The issue / Emotional skills* follow similar themes citing Seligman as "an American happiness guru" who has been engaged "to train teachers and staff so they can help students become more resilient" and that proponents of positive psychology are "in no doubt that teaching social and emotional skills promotes the well-being and educational success of school children" (Patty, 2008, paras. 4–5). Often the articles are also blended with information about youth mental health and in some instances offer

examples of existing programmes focusing on young people and their wellbeing. There is also some critique offered by educators in the article (Patty, 2008) who wonder about the message and techniques of positive psychology

> It's a bit like the message 'everybody can do anything'. They actually can't … If you are saying to people, 'do all this and you will be happy', how does it feel in the end if you are not? You feel like you are a double failure (paras. 33-34).

Other articles at this time covered the utility of positive psychology for domains such as the workplace, corporations and in other professional sectors such as human resources management (Taylor, 2006) and banking/finance (Korporaal, 2008). Details of Seligman's and positive psychology's reach into these areas are made evident when in Sydney he also held briefings at the Australian Graduate School of Management, where "together with Professor Roger Collins, he outlined how Australian organisations could apply positive psychology concepts in the workplace" (Taylor, 2006, para. 3). The interest and awareness of some professional organisations is also detailed in the article: "Executive and business coaches appear to have been the most eager to embrace positive psychology, although topics such as positive psychology and its impact on feedback systems and corporate culture are starting to pop up on HR conference programs" (Taylor, 2006, para. 5). Another article (Korporaal, 2008) suggested that positive psychology and Geelong Grammar might be good examples of how best to weather the economic future:

> It would be folly for individuals to approach the future without an informed understanding of the seriousness of the economic problems, but it may well be those who have the positive psychology (or who can learn it) who are best equipped to steer through the rough water ahead. (para. 15)

However, the engagement of Seligman to run a series of positive psychology workshops for staff for the Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment

and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) drew public criticism as seen in an article titled; '*Million- dollar smiles as feds call in happy chappy to 'cascade' fun'* (MacDonald, 2009). In it, one government official was reported as saying:

> At the time when tens of thousands of Australian workers are already losing their jobs, and hundreds of thousands more are facing the prospect of being out of work in the months ahead, there is something un-serious about the Department of Employment bureaucrats spending almost $650,000 to teach themselves how to be happier in life. (para. 2)

In defence of the expenditure, the deputy secretary of DEEWR was reported as stating that the workshops were part of a strategy to increase workplace motivation and that "good productivity and motivation comes from people being able to deal with adversity as it arises" (para. 4). In addition, the deputy secretary stated that the Department was looking at "how to cascade that [happiness] in the organisation" (para. 4). The article concludes with a response from an opposition senator during an estimates hearing into the cost of the workshops in which he said "it was difficult to understand why the department would commit such a large amount of taxpayer funds to a course which had no stated impact on productivity. He said taxpayers would be 'decidedly unhappy' about the department's actions" (para. 5).

The arrival of positive psychology in Australia had two important cultural impacts. Firstly, its arrival reinvigorated psychology's role as an applied project and moved it out of the clinic, out of the therapy session, and into the world. Secondly, it gave voice and authority to a whole new range of psychological constructs and categories mostly focused on emotions and the management of them. Through a concerted publicity campaign positive psychology sought to insert itself into a range of domains, including education, but more importantly through the normalising and socialising of its discourses it sought to embed itself in the social imaginary in Australia.

Critiques of positive psychology

Critical psychologists and feminists Becker and Marecek (2008) suggest that given the fluidity and breadth of the field of positive psychology, it is difficult to refer to it as a whole, but that viewing it through a social constructionist lens they "regard positive psychology – like all psychologies – as a cultural artifact, a product of its time and place" (p. 1769). Furthermore, they do not regard the social and behavioural sciences as being able to uncover pre-existing truths but rather that knowledge production necessarily includes the standpoints of researchers, as well as "the preoccupations of the larger culture" (Becker & Marecek, p. 1769). Further concerns raised about positive psychology from a feminist perspective are that "positive psychology, with its conception of a self-contained individual, inadvertently reproduces and strengthens cultural ideologies and societal structures of domination that perpetuate inequalities of gender, ethnicity, and class" (Becker & Marecek, p. 1769).

Positive psychology is founded largely on the dominant Western idea of individualism or liberal individualism which circumscribes a number of values, beliefs and subjectivities, as outlined by Christopher and Hickinbottom (2008):

> (a) a Cartesian distinction between an internal subjective world of values, experiences, beliefs, and meanings and an external objective *real* world of abstract facts; (b) a notion of a fixed, essential self that is separate from others and the world it inhabits; and (c) a moral outlook in which it is presumed that because meanings and values are subjective, persons should be free to determine both the meaning of and the means to pursue the good life, or happiness. (p. 566)

Another distinct feature of positive psychology is the way in which it divides these psychological constructs and processes into those which are positive (and deemed good/desirable/useful) and those which are negative (bad/undesirable/valueless). However,

these distinctions are made “a priori, independent of circumstantial particularity, both intrapersonal and interpersonal” and this positive/negative dichotomy is also problematic due to its ambiguity which has resulted in “considerable conceptual muddles and dead ends” (Held, 2017, p. 1). As already proposed, ambiguities and conceptual inexactness seem to be one of the ways in which psychological knowledge and discourse can travel into new epistemic domains relatively unquestioned. Because positive psychology positions itself as the scientific and moral authority on how to attain a good life its purpose in society can be formulated as endlessly applicable and utilitarian. What also results from this is a walling off from critique, as people who seek to interrogate the intentions of useful, good positivity are quickly painted as supporting negativity or anti-happiness (Ehrenreich, 2010; Furedi, 2010).

Wellbeing has been a central feature of positive psychology although conceptually its meaning has shifted over time. Initially, wellbeing was centred around an authentic happiness theory of hedonic wellbeing, but this has subsequently shifted toward eudaimonic wellbeing and theories of flourishing or optimal functioning (Seligman, 2012; Seligman et al., 2009). Held (2017, p. 24) outlines the shift in Seligman’s (2012) book *Flourish* in this way:

> Seligman contrasts his original authentic happiness theory with his new well-being theory: (a) focus on happiness vs. well-being; (b) measuring life satisfaction vs. positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment; (c) increase of life satisfaction vs. increase of flourishing. (p. 24)

A number of anomalies around wellbeing discourses have been noted by Ereaut and Whiting (2008). For instance, wellbeing has no real opposite – there is not a single term that suffices (e.g., un-wellbeing) and this results in having to specify an area related to it or state it as a lack (lack of wellbeing). It is also difficult for it to be criticized as an ideal or aspiration. In Western liberal democracies the cultural kudos that wellbeing has attained makes it virtually impossible to suggest that wellbeing is a bad thing. Wellbeing is also often positioned as

something general surrounding something more specific (e.g. youth wellbeing or psychological wellbeing) and this general-specific coupling has the effect of making it seem both ubiquitous and personal at the same time.

Although the concept being named has changed over time a persistent feature of wellbeing in positive psychology has been its focus on the role of emotions and how these might be altered, manipulated, or eradicated in the service of a better life. The desire to create an objective science of that which is distinctly subjective has been the ongoing project of positive psychology and one that has been asserted by its proponents - “the framework of Positive Psychology, we want to emphasise, is an empirical research endeavour and not mere grandmotherly common sense” (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 296). This quasi-objectivity has been the cornerstone of how positive psychology has sought to distinguish itself from other psychologies and indeed how it has sought to discredit humanistic psychology traditions (McDonald & O’Callaghan, 2008). A key concern is that this kind of psychological approach that posits being able to change thoughts and feelings more readily than external circumstances “is how critical politics has been neutralized” (Davies, 2016, p. 191).

Positive psychology does not completely disregard context, but rather treats it in its own conceptual manner as social institutions. These are often posited as moralising binaries such as “the good family’, ‘the good school’, ‘the good workplace’, ‘the good religion’, and ‘the good society’” and while some of these are not rightly social institutions, they are “institutions dearest to the American middle-class heart” (Becker & Marecek, 2008, p. 1772). Although the inclusion of social institutions within the scope of positive psychology looks like contextualisation it has been noted there is a failure to analyse critically the sociopolitical and sociohistorical context in which institutions are inevitably embedded. This results in the prioritising of decontextualised, highly individualistic, psychological knowledge and discourse.

The ontological position of positive psychology points to it being "an exemplar of an abstractionist approach" and as such "assumes that *all* things, including the self, are the most real and the best understood when they are abstracted or separated from the situations in which they occur" (Slife & Richardson, 2008, p. 701). Thus, positive psychology shares the epistemic underpinning of mainstream psychology, one based on logical positivism, experimental methodologies, and a commitment to knowledge production of law-like, universal truths about the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of human beings (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010; Danziger, 1997; Teo, 2009b). One of the concerns raised about this kind of psychology is that it sets up a system of knowledge whereby theories create bifurcating norms around what is regarded as proper/healthy development, categories of normal/abnormal behaviours, and a range of psychological technologies which can be used in the ranking of such behaviours (Hacking, 1986; Henriques et al., 1998; Rose, 1998; Teo, 2018). Becker and Marecek (2008) note that the "rankings of social behaviors or achievement typically reflect middle-class experience and are detrimental to economically disadvantaged groups" and the propensity of psychology to normalise generalisations can be seen as a "kind of cultural hegemony that devalues the realities of poor people's lives and ultimately contributes to their moral exclusion" (p. 1776).

Positive education, emotions and wellbeing

Schools and education are seen as crucial domains for the deployment of positive psychology/education and its concepts of wellbeing. The imperative for wellbeing is given on three grounds: "as an antidote to depression, as a vehicle for increasing life satisfaction, and as an aid to better learning and more creative thinking" (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 295). Schools are also seen as a place whereby large number of young people can be reached "and enhance their well-being on a wide scale" (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 295). The positive psychology "movement", as its proponents often refer to it, has sought to have an impact on a

large scale and education has provided it with an ideal context in which to normalise its constructs.

Positive Education has been defined as “traditional education focused on academic skill development, complemented by approaches that nurture wellbeing and promote good mental health” and “as bringing together the science of Positive Psychology with best-practice teaching to encourage and support schools and individuals to flourish within their communities” (Norrish et al., 2013, p. 148). Its aims have also been outlined as building “strengths, capabilities, well-being and resilience in educational communities” that grew from a “recognition of the growing mental health crisis in young people” (Slemp et al., 2017, p. 103).

While there is some debate around how influential positive education has been, there is no doubt that it played a part in increasing the amount of psychological discourse around education, policy and in a variety of programmes seeking to address wellbeing both in Australia and other Western liberal democracies (Sointu, 2005a; Spratt, 2017; Wright & McLeod, 2015b). In particular there has been the ongoing emphasis on emotion-focused discourse and emotional regulation for young people. For positive psychology, the relationship between wellbeing and emotion also has an economic/productivity imperative as outlined by Seligman (2009):

> General well-being—how much positive emotion, how much engagement at work, how much meaning in life our citizens have—is now quantifiable and it complements, and makes sense of, GDP. Public policy can be aimed at increasing general well-being and the successes or failures of policy can be measured quantitatively against this standard. (p. 308)

The concept of harnessing positive, useful emotions as well as building resilience against negative or unproductive emotions has become a key tenet not only in positive

education but it has made its way into other areas of teaching and learning in the form of social and emotional learning (SEL), and into government funded public schools in Australia. Slemp et al. (2017, p. 103) suggest that the skills of SEL are often incorporated into positive education (PosEd) but that "PosEd is broader in nature. It includes additional frameworks and theories, which go beyond psychosocial skills to include aspects such as character, morality, meaning and purpose, and physical health."

While there are a range of variations on SEL and its implementations, in Australia it is most commonly centred around the frameworks developed in the US by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (Frydenberg et al., 2017). The definition of SEL as offered by the CASEL (2013) website is:

> the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (para. 1).

Research in the area of SEL also identifies social and emotional competence (SEC) as an important aspect of young people's learning and development (Frydenberg et al., 2017). There are five core SEC's: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Tarbetsky et al., 2017).

In the SEL literature wellbeing is often used interchangeably with positive mental health and there is an implicit connection made to the beneficial nature of attending to one's thoughts and emotions. It is even referred to as social and emotional wellbeing (Bernard & Stephanou, 2018). While it is not a novel claim that psychology has had a firm focus on the individualised, interior aspects of people, what has been proposed by research is the increase

in "emotionalization" (Holmes, 2010) of issues that previously may have been captured within other psychological constructs (Binkley, 2011, 2014; Wright, 2011, 2014).

Despite the dominance of the individualised, positivistic, decontextualised psychology present in much of the SEL literature, there have also been calls for greater attention to context (Street, 2017). For Street (2017, p. 40) the reasoning for this call is promoted by "two seemingly incongruent increases" which are, that although there's been a rise in "popularity of school-based wellbeing and SEL programmes over the past fifty years" over the same time period reports have indicated an increase in mental health issues among young people. Street (2017, p. 40) outlines the reasoning for this incongruence as "a lack of consideration of the importance of context in the development and delivery of well-being and SEL programmes in schools" and that "many school-based well-being and SEL programmes in Australia are aimed at supporting individual well-being, albeit with consideration of individual social skills." It is further suggested that individualised approaches to wellbeing are unable to justifiably be applied to groups of people (e.g. in classrooms and schools) which is a severe limitation in the context of a school.

Despite the well-intentioned nature of SEL and its pursuit of wellbeing, there is evidence to suggest that societal norms and expectations play an important role in how people reflect on their own thoughts, feeling and emotions. For people already coping with depression, it has been found that "perceived societal norms may contribute to depression…hinting at a possible malignant consequence of society's denouncement of negative emotions" (Dejonckheere et al., 2017, p. 1). The perceived social pressure of feeling a certain way or of expressing certain emotions more or less than others is well documented and that deliberately trying to avoid negative thoughts, feelings and emotions can have "the ironic effect of amplifying those same thoughts and feelings" (Bastian et al., 2017, p. 266). In addition, the Western obsession with happiness and the pathologisation of negative emotions

has created "social expectancies" that can reduce wellbeing (Bastian et al., 2015). In research of first year tertiary students, representing a cross section of wellbeing levels, it was found that students who experienced more negative emotions perceived that society disapproved of these emotions and as a result reported more loneliness (Bastian et al., 2015). As Bastian et al., (2015, p. 496) state, "our data suggest that social pressures to be happy and not sad can make people feel more socially isolated when they do feel sad".

Critical psychology and emotions

Critical psychologists have suggested that often mainstream psychology is epistemologically ill-equipped to include context in a meaningful way and instead what arises is something more akin to person-in-context or more specifically psychological self-in-context where context is treated more like a variable (Kagan et al., 2011; Teo, 2014). This is evidenced by the very fact that central to SEL is the psychological construct of emotions which are regarded by mainstream psychology as emanating from an essentialised, individualised, self (Gergen, 1995). The use of emotions in research and practice throughout the history of psychology has been an important device by which it can distinguish its epistemic power. As Gergen (1995) suggests:

> emotion terms have largely served political purposes within professional psychology, strategically situating the discipline or its very subcultures in relationship to the academy, to the general public and to its own membership. What psychology has had to say about emotions, where many instances failed to say, is not - and in principle cannot be - the result of careful and controlled observation. (p. 62)

With this in mind technologies like SEL and positive education can be seen as more than a series of techniques or practices to assist young people through their educational pathways, but rather an interconnected web of psy-discourses that are involved in the governing of populations (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Dean, 2010; Foucault et al., 1991; McCallum, 2014;

Rose & Miller, 2013). Thus, psychology is intimately connected to the sociocultural context and the political ideologies within it, and positive psychology/education/SEL are regarded as an extension of "an apparatus of power but of a specific kind of deployment that can be described as an intensification" (Binkley, 2014, p. 13).

The power of emotions and self-work

Barbalet (1998) has detailed the ways in which emotions have been set in opposition to reason and despite the conceptual weakness of such a framing it has been incredibly pervasive. This conceptual flaw is in part due to the lack of contextual consideration given to emotions and the idea that "different emotions, and the same emotion in different contexts, conduct different relations with reason" (Barbalet, 1998, p. 32). The notion that people can be characterized by their ability for thought and reason has a long history and is often touted as the critical difference between humans and non-human animals, but as Barablet (1998, p. 33) suggests this claim does much more than this, "it fully locates 'responsibility' in the individual person: what one does must be a consequence of what one thinks". If emotions are also responsibilised in this way it is easy to see how the notion that if people lack control over their emotions it would necessarily subvert their ability to reason, "If I am because I think, then I am undone if I feel" (Barbalet, 1998, p. 34).

This "conventional" approach to emotions has another important feature in that it tends to situate thoughts in the head and emotions in the body and as such emotions are often regarded as "a compelling force, which leads persons away from the decisions they make, the reasons they have, the choices they take, and is responsible for disrupting the calculations they perform" (Barbalet, 1998, p. 34). Far from simply being commonplace ideas, this conventional approach to the conceiving of thoughts and emotions has a long history as a part of the technical apparatus of much of psychology (Barbalet, 1998; Binkley, 2011, 2014; Danziger, 1990; Gergen, 1995; Wright, 2011).

Although psychology traditionally has adopted this conventional approach to reason and emotions, Barabalet (1998) lays out other philosophical approaches to the topic: “the critical approach: emotion as a solution to problems rationality cannot solve” (p. 38) and “the radical approach: emotion and rationality as continuous” (p. 45). What is important here is not the argument for or against any particular approach but rather to follow the query that given “the conventional approach to reason and emotion is remarkably durable… it has to be asked why it is so widely believed” (p. 54).

The notion of a rational subject is the necessary object of psychology and one which appears in western culture from the seventeenth century (Henriques et al., 1998). This unitary, rational subject “is the subject-of-science that classical epistemology takes to be the ideal representative of *homo rationalis*” (Henriques et al., 1998, p. 116). This follows a long tradition of regarding thoughts as rational, conscious and deliberate, while emotions are the visceral, irrational disrupters of such rationality. This is a key component of Weber’s seminal work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1976).

It has been proposed that the intensification of psychological technologies is facilitated by the focus on emotions (Binkley, 2011, 2014). The Foucauldian notion of intensification is particularly salient as it means both more deeply penetrating and more widely spread (Nealon, 2008). By virtue of emotions being constructed as internal and mutable they make for the perfect site for the enactment of what Foucault called ethics, by which he meant the work that one does on one’s self (Ball, 2013; Rose & Miller, 2013). This kind of self-work becomes the cornerstone for the kind of power Foucault saw arising in modern societies, biopower (Foucault, 1995). Biopower is able to operate not via the older methods which used more social or sovereign modes, but rather its mode is subjectivities (Ball, 2013):

> the idea of subjectivity as what we do, rather than who we are, as an active process of becoming, as the work of 'the care of the self'. That is, an art or technology of living, a set of practices through which we establish a relationship to ourselves of self-examination. (p. 151)

The integration of biopower into Western societies has happened through a number of means, and psychological knowledge and practices have been central to it (Ball, 2013; Foucault, 1982b; Hook, 2007; Rabinow & Rose, 2006). It should be noted however that "this technology of power…does not exclude disciplinary technology, but it does dovetail into it, integrate it, modify it to some extent, and above all use it by infiltrating it, embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques" (Nealon, 2008, p. 45). Biopower is seen as the evolution or transition from disciplinary power and is distinguished by the mode, the target and desired outcome (Nealon, 2008).

In the context of schooling, it can be suggested that multiple modes of power are operating. Disciplinary power is a key function in many schools and some might say is a way of socialising young people into the exercise of power. While this form of power has certainly not been superseded by other forms, there is research to suggest that modern schooling now tends toward forms of biopower (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Binkley, 2011; Foucault, 2010; Rabinow & Rose, 2006). Conceiving power in this way is useful in the instance of wellbeing, as there is the potential for it to be regarded as so subjective as to be out of reach of any kind of power, and that interventions are simply a promotion of autonomy. But herein lies the potential of this kind of power in that it seeks to govern through self-government (Foucault, 1988; Rose, 1996, 1998).

The shift in power may also be seen as a shift in authority or shift in responsibilisation. This means that "authority becomes personal" and that it "operates across the boundary between rationality and emotion" (Binkley, 2014, p. 37). This emotionalisation

becomes a way for governing to be suffused with a "certain humanizing imperative" (Binkley, 2014, p. 37). This imperative is one that is able to diffuse the authoritative edge whilst retaining the power to govern, as it speaks not to "the human dimension of personal life, not to the customer, employee, or citizen as merely a number but as a real human being with feelings and represents a transformation in the way organizational authority operates today" (Binkley, 2014, p. 37). However, as Binkley (2014, pp. 37-38) elaborates, this involves a double movement, one which sees those in power or authority simultaneously acknowledge a limit to their reach into the realm of "private emotional life" but in addition, "they impose specific organizing effects on the emotional real itself, opening new channels through which power penetrates the private existences of those it governs, at a distance."

This governing at a distance is an important feature of neoliberal ideology in that it is designed to support the liberalist notion that government ought to be removing itself from the lives of citizens and shrinking the welfare state and other government interventions, but in reality, it represents an intensification. Socialising people into the idea of self-government has been one of the most important planks for neoliberalism across Western liberal democracies (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Rose & Miller, 2013) and what drawing governmentalities down to the subjective level does is "fold together the disjointed plans of interior and exterior, to mark the limit of a certain logic of government in order to better transfer its operation" (Binkley, 2014, p. 38).

Subjectivities of self-work are a feature of neoliberal ideologies (Adams et al., 2019; Binkley, 2014; Davies, 2016; Teo, 2018) and with neoliberalism having dramatically shaped education in Australia (Connell, 2003, 2013c) neoliberal subjectivities have entered teaching, education and education policy (Attick, 2017; Vassallo, 2014b, 2015). Connell (2013) argues that "restoring privilege is central to the political dynamics of neoliberalism" (p. 279) and that "neoliberalism in education...persistently draws attention to the underachievers, the 'at

risk', the non-performers, the pockets of poverty, the bad schools, the bad families, the under-motivated, the excluded, the failures" (p. 282). In Australia, the statistics of school and student success are ranked and made publicly available via reporting of the nationwide assessment known as NAPLAN featured in media and government websites (e.g., MySchool.edu.au). Connell (2013, p. 282) suggests that this public display of 'winning' and 'losing' schools not only legitimises public policy and funding but that it legitimises 'losing' as it "has to be made credible and not appear as a matter of unfair discrimination or bad luck. It is, therefore, not surprising that the neo-liberal takeover of education has been accompanied by a great revival of competitive testing".

Emotions have provided psychology with a unique point of intervention that has afforded it a substantial amount of epistemic power to delineate the purpose of emotions, which ones are productive/unproductive, the appropriate levels or intensity, and how they relate to other areas such a wellbeing. Although there are other elements often captured within the concept of wellbeing, emotion-focused discourse seems to be the most enduring amongst them. Also persistent is the psychological idea that emotional regulation can, and should, be taught. From the global expansion of CBT methods to newer mindfulness interventions there is a strong message that getting a hold on or taming one's emotions is necessary to proper, rational and therefore productive functioning within neoliberal capitalism (Binkley, 2014; W. Davies, 2016). The connection between psychology, rationality, and productivity is important to consider as they are also often part of the rationale and logic which underpin the operationalising and measuring of wellbeing.

Measuring and reporting wellbeing

Despite wellbeing being a nebulous concept there are a number of scales, measures and other psychological technologies that attempt to objectify, generalise, and universalise it. Whilst schools are often led by the supposed objectivity of evidence-based wellbeing

programs, the lack of definition and therefore conceptual clarity has called into question the validity and trustworthiness of wellbeing research and measures (Svane et al., 2019). It was noted by Svane et al. (2019) in their review of current understandings of wellbeing in schools in Australia that:

> The broad range of wellbeing interventions found in the literature highlights a lack of consensus around best practice for wellbeing in schools… the outcomes of the interventions are difficult to compare because they do not necessarily relate directly to wellbeing. (p. 209)

This was also previously noted in a systematic review of wellbeing literature by Pollard and Lee (2003) who stated that the complex and multifaceted nature of it made difficult not only defining and measuring it, but also conducting any kind of systematic review on the concept. They also found that much of the research reviewed used “multiple separate measures of presumed indicators of wellbeing in an effort to capture a more complete assessment” (Pollard & Lee, 2003, p. 68).

A brief review of some of the website’s marketing and selling wellbeing measures/surveys to schools offers a sense of this conceptual multiplicity. Many of these can be found on the Geelong Grammar School’s Institute of Positive Education website (2018) with some being freely available and others incurring a cost (usually dependent on number of participants) and offering additional services such as further reporting. A summary of their key features can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1 *Wellbeing measures publicly available for schools and education*

Organisation	Measures	Conceptual framing	Services/products	Cost (AUD)
Australian Council for Educational Research https://www.acer.org/au/sew	ACER – Social-Emotional Wellbeing (SEW) Survey	An 'ecological', positive-psychology model of the social and emotional wellbeing of young people.	A school-wide survey to provide insights into student wellbeing from ages 3 to 18	$420 - 3880
Assessing Wellbeing in Education Pty Ltd (AWE) https://www.awesomeschools.com	Surveys and reports	To measure and track the wellbeing of their school community though Positive Education	Surveys/reports to measure wellbeing over time (staff, students, parents), and assess the effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives	$1200 - 9075
Flourishing at School (cloud based platform) https://flourishingatschool.com	Student flourishing survey VIA (values in action) Survey Wellbeing check-in	"Flourishing" which is conceived as a high level of wellbeing characterised by positive emotions, engagement (or flow), positive relationships, meaningfulness and accomplishment.	Online surveys/reporting and information for teachers, parents and students (secondary only) focused around flourishing, wellbeing and building character	$5 per student $50 per staff
National School Surveys https://www.schoolsurveys.com.au/Student-Well-being-Survey.php	Student wellbeing survey	Focuses on six key areas: socialisation, school environment, self-confidence, optimism, motivation, motivational goals	Online survey "tailored" to school needs with data analysis and reporting by educational	3 surveys package: $3,999 includes, full administration, survey set-up,

			psychologists	analysis and reporting
Resilient Youth Australia http://resilientyouth.org/survey	Resilience Survey	The survey measures the resilience and wellbeing of young people across 9 key domains: Understanding Self, Social Skills, Positive Relationships, Safety, Healthy Body and Healthy Mind, Learning, Positive Attitude, Positive Values, Positive Identity	A range of surveys and programs for students 8-18, parents, and staff. Surveys are supported by statistical analysis/workshops	not publicly available
The well-being profiler The Centre for Positive Psychology – Melbourne University https://www.wbprofiler.com	Wellbeing profiler	Defines youth wellbeing as a multidimensional construct comprising psychological, cognitive, social, physical, economic, emotional wellbeing, and strengths integrated within the environmental systems of family, school and community	A measurement and reporting service developed for schools to examine the wellbeing of their students from ages 10 to 25 years old.	not publicly available
Dr. Peggy (Margaret) L. Kern Associate Professor Centre for Positive Psychology Melbourne Graduate School of Education The University of Melbourne https://www.peggykern.org/questionnaires.html	EPOCH Measure (Engagement, Perseverance, Optimism, Connectedness, Happiness)	Adapts the PERMA model for adolescents, capturing five positive characteristics that we believe promotes flourishing: engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and	Site offers survey freely available for noncommercial research and assessment purposes, after registering Also offers links to	free for noncommercial use

		happiness.	other surveys: PERMA profiler, Workplace wellbeing survey	
The World Health Organisation (WHO-5) https://www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/who-5/Pages/default.aspx	WHO-5 Wellbeing Index	Based on concepts of: quality of life and also linked to depression	Five item survey available in multiple languages. It is recommended to administer the Major Depression (ICD-10) Inventory if the raw score is below 13	free
The Australian Centre on Quality of Life a joint initiative by Australian Unity (health insurance), the Centre for Social and Early Emotional Development (Deakin University) http://www.acqol.com.au/instruments	Personal Wellbeing Index – School Children (PWI-SC)	Seven item survey of satisfaction, each one corresponding to a quality of life domain as: standard of living, health, life achievement, personal relationships, personal safety, community-connectedness, future security	Available in Chinese (Cantonese), Argentina, Dutch Hindi, Portuguese. Site also contains a list of other related instruments	free

While this is not an exhaustive list of the instruments currently available seeking to measure, define, rank, and evaluate the wellbeing of young people, (also their parents, teachers and schools) in Australia, it does however represent a cross section of what is publicly promoted and available specifically for education, and also offers a snapshot of the conceptual diversity and the dominance of psychological discourses among them.

The measuring and reporting of wellbeing have also been a central feature of many levels of government, often in collaboration with universities and/or other research institutions. The relevance of the reports reviewed here is to highlight the ways in which wellbeing has been constructed in a variety of ways and to elucidate the role psychological knowledge and discourse has played in the evolution of wellbeing as a concept.

A 1998 report supported by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs sought to examine the association of “well-being (happiness) with a variety of demographic and economic factors among young people” (Fleming, 1998, p. v). In the introductory statement the report asserts the importance of happiness in this way:

> Most societies see happiness as a desirable state of affairs. The happy populace is generally believed to lead to a more productive society with less crime and other social problems. Indeed the rise of the 'welfare state’ derives from the idea that providing for people’s basic needs will ensure a certain level of well-being and thus, a more moral as well as better functioning society. (p. 1)

It goes on to suggest that young people are the most vulnerable to socioeconomic changes and that the things making life more difficult for young people is the decline of the youth labour market and “increasing competition in both education and employment” (p. 1). It is explicitly stated in the report that the concepts wellbeing, happiness and life satisfaction are used interchangeably. Using data from a longitudinal study of four national cohorts of young

people the report investigated the impact on wellbeing in terms of: gender, income, occupational and employment status, marital status, the presence and number of children and residence. It also considered changes over time by ageing and cohort effects. The report found that for young Australians, “employment, relationships and sufficient income are important for maintaining subjective wellbeing and happiness” (Fleming, 1998, p. v). While subjective wellbeing is cited a number of times throughout the report there is no definition offered to distinguish it from other wellbeing constructs. The only indication of what is meant can be found in the nine scale items which inform the “subjective wellbeing index” and they are:

> life as a whole, the work you do (which included study and unpaid work), what do you do in your spare time, how you get on with people, the money you get each week, your social life, your independence, your standard of living and your future. (p. 13)

Other key findings were that an increase in income (and socioeconomic status) was correlated with increasing levels of happiness and that “the unemployed were less happy than the employed by a large amount and there are indications that the negative influence of unemployment on well-being is strengthening” (Fleming & Marks, 1998, p. v). Notable in this report is the interweaving of happiness and wellbeing with employment and the economy.

The Child and Adolescent component of the National Survey of Mental Health and Well-Being was conducted in 1998 as a response to the 1992 Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments of Australia National Mental Health Strategy and was the first survey to investigate the mental health and wellbeing of children and adolescents at a national level in Australia (Sawyer et al., 2000). This wide-ranging report is focused very much on mental health and utilises a number of diagnostic categories from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition (DSM- IV) (American Psychiatric Association,

1998) as its conceptual basis. Specifically, the modules for depressive disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and conduct disorder from the Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children, Version IV were used (Sawyer et al., 2000).

Mental disorders are mostly characterised in the report via “clinically significant sets of symptoms or emotional and behavioural problems” as described by the DSM IV (Sawyer et al., 2000, p. 3). One of the central aims of the survey was to identify the number of young people with “a high level of emotional and behavioural problems” (p. 5). It is suggested in the report that there is no precise definition for the term *emotional and behavioural problems* and that usage of the term is generally to describe “a wide range of individual behaviours or emotions that are commonly associated with personal distress or dysfunction” (p. 61).

Despite the biomedical, psychiatric focus of the report there is some effort to also highlight the relationships between wellbeing/mental health and contextual factors, or as the report calls them demographic characteristics. The report makes the following assertions about context and mental health/wellbeing: “Children and adolescents living in sole-parent, step/blended or low-income families were more likely to have mental health problems” and “both males and females living with parents not in paid employment had a higher prevalence of externalising problems than those in families where parents were employed” (p. 11). Externalising behaviours is a reference to an area of assessment Child Behaviour Checklist completed by parents as a part of survey and refers to “antisocial or under-controlled behaviour (e.g., delinquency or aggression)” (p. 11) .

In the domain titled health related quality of life (HRQL), the report found that not only did adolescents with more emotional and behavioural problems tend toward a lower HRQL, but they also had “substantially worse self-esteem and greater limitations in school” (p. 16). In addition, the report states that adolescents with more emotional and behavioural problems tended to live in “less cohesive families” (p. 16). Having a step/blended family was

found to be correlated with higher prevalence of conduct disorder “than those living in their original families” particularly for young men (p. 26). The importance of these “demographic groups” as stated in the report is to highlight which “adolescents appear to be at particular risk for mental disorders” thus providing a focus for programs and interventions in the community (p. 26).

The domain which looked at health risk behaviour in the survey found that adolescents who reported more emotional behaviour problems also reported that they were more likely to have “dieted or exercised to lose or control their weight” and that “adolescents with a very high level of problems reported more frequently that they vomited or took laxatives to control or lose weight” (p. 41). Overall, it said in summary that adolescents with emotional and behavioural problems were also more generally likely to have problems with their physical health and engage in health risk behaviours such as smoking and drinking.

It is important to note the survey included not only self-report questionnaires for young people, but other evidence was collected from parents and teachers in the form of interviews, checklists and other questionnaires. Although there is no definitive construction of wellbeing from the survey, what does emerge is a complex network of factors supported by psychological discourse that ultimately results in the problematisation of certain demographic groups and therefore provides a justification for targeted interventions. In this report what seems to impact wellbeing for young people might more rightly be considered social issues.

In more recent reports, such as the report *Addressing the social determinants of inequities in mental wellbeing of children and adolescents* (Welsh et al., 2015) produced by Australian National University for the Victorian government’s Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) there are moves to try and grasp the contextual influences on mental wellbeing through a framework for health equity which draws on the concept of social

determinants of health. The framework is used to identify influences at three layers (i) individual and family health-related factors, (ii) daily living conditions and (iii) the socioeconomic, cultural and political context (p. 1). As in other reports, wellbeing is used interchangeably with mental wellbeing, mental health, positive mental health, emotional wellbeing and social wellbeing. In addition, the report draws on the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of mental health which is cited as "a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make contribution to his or her community" (World Health Organisation, 2001, p. 1). It is further acknowledged in the report that the term mental wellbeing is complex and multifaceted but is understood to include the following elements "resilience, mental assets and resources, capabilities, social wellbeing, self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, life satisfaction, hopefulness, self-coherence, a sense of meaning in life, social integration, social acceptance, social actualisation, social contribution, social coherence, and social integration and self-actualisation" (p. 1). The stated aim of the report is to offer a summary of "the social determinants of inequities in mental wellbeing" and to "identify successful approaches to reducing inequities at each layer of the framework" (p. 8).

The VicHealth report calls on numerous disciplines and professional areas such as social work, psychology (community, clinical, developmental, school/educational), public health, health education, public health, urban health, psychiatry and medicine. While a complete summary of its findings is beyond the scope of this section, some specific conclusions and recommendations are worth noting. The report makes it very clear that mental wellbeing is shaped by "material and psychosocial factors associated with individual and family circumstances, the conditions in which children live, grow and learn, and the

broader socioeconomic, political and cultural context" (p. 33). The impact of socioeconomic conditions for young people is also a strong factor addressed in the report.

The report goes on to recommend that any efforts or interventions seeking to boost the wellbeing of young people must also consider how "political, social and economic contexts and policies may shape the quality of relationships, the strength of social bonds and the experience of care that are fundamental to wellbeing" (p 33). It also concludes that amongst the vast number of interventions identified in the review "almost none reported a specific equity focus" and that while a number of interventions were applied to "traditionally disadvantaged groups such as Indigenous Australians or children in low income settings", the singular focus of interventions on disadvantaged groups did not allow for a greater understanding of health outcomes in a more gradated way (p. 33). While a number of the reports here have either mentioned or attempted to measure economic domains, they are often the domain which has the least number of instruments (Pollard & Lee, 2003).

Another more recent report is one commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training (DET) and completed by The Centre for Adolescent Health, Murdoch Children's Research Institute in 2017 titled *Student wellbeing, engagement and learning across the middle years* (Centre for Adolescent Health et al., 2018). The focus of the report is young people 8 to 14 years of age (middle years) as this time is conceived in the report as "a period of rapid physical, emotional and intellectual growth" and as a period of transitions (p. 6). One of the rationales for the report is that "the cognitive, social and emotional determinants of learning during the middle years are less well understood" and that little is known about "changes in wellbeing across the middle years and the effects on school engagement and learning" (p. 1). School engagement is defined in the report as being a student's relationship to their school, school staff, peers, and learning. Furthermore, it frames engagement as being comprised of behavioural engagement, emotional engagement and

cognitive engagement (p. 13). The report states that there is “a growing consensus amongst policy makers, education professionals, researchers, and the public that a modern education system should develop a ‘whole child’” and that to achieve this there needs to “a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills to face the challenges of an increasingly uncertain and volatile world” (p. 1).

Drawing on a longitudinal dataset of Australian students, one of the questions they sought to address in the DET report was: to what degree does student wellbeing in the middle years influence school engagement and learning? It is stated that emotional and behaviour problems are determinants of student wellbeing and that as well as “psychological aspects, wellbeing incorporates the cognitive, social and physical functioning and capabilities that students need to live a happy and fulfilling life” (p. 9). The use of the term cognitive in these reports most often refers to academic skills/thinking/learning and it is interesting to note these are regarded as separate from psychological aspects. The indicators of wellbeing used for this report were: emotional problems, behaviour problems (teacher report), behaviour problems (parent report), low subjective wellbeing, high subjective wellbeing, bullying , school engagement, numeracy, and reading. Emotional problems are said to refer to “symptoms of anxiety and depression such as sadness, loneliness, worrying, feelings of worthlessness and anxiousness. Emotional problems are sometimes described as internalising problems” (p. 6). Some of the key findings are:

- A substantial proportion of Australian students in the middle years are not tracking well. Twenty percent have persistent emotional problems and a similar number have persistent behaviour problems. Around 10% self-report persistent low wellbeing.
- Subjective wellbeing in primary school predicts poor engagement and learning.

- Student wellbeing in the middle years matters for school engagement (pp. 3-4)

The central thesis and finding of the report are that there are important reciprocal relationships between learning, engagement, and wellbeing (p. 4). The report then proposes that given this relationship exists there is strong impetus for education systems, schools and teachers to “promote the social and emotional development of students to help each and every student reach their full learning potential” (p. 4). Although it is acknowledged in the report that there are factors outside the school context that affect wellbeing, schools are seen as an important location to implement wellbeing strategies. Further recommendations include, “strengthening the curriculum to continue to build and develop social and emotional skills in children” and “prioritising policies and practice to promote wellbeing in order to create inclusive and positive social environments in which students can engage and learn prosocial skills” (p. 4). Some of the other recommendations look to increase support in terms of peer relationships, and to maximise and maintain student engagement through teacher training and providing safe secure environments in which to learn.

Lastly it is worth briefly looking at one of the more global reports from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) whose stated goal is “to shape policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity and well-being for all” (OECD, 2019, para. 1). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an ongoing, large scale study of OECD member and non-member education systems and its aim is to offer comparable data which enables member countries to develop education policies and outcomes (OECD, 2019). Specifically, PISA is a survey of 15-year-old students conducted every three years from around the world and seeks to assess the extent to which they have “acquired key knowledge and skills essential for full participation in social and economic life” (OECD, 2019, p. 30). PISA 2018 utilised data from 37 OECD countries and 42 partner

countries and economies (see OECD, 2019, p. 30) and although it consists of mainly academic skills and related tests such as reading, maths and science literacy, it also measures school climate and student wellbeing. The indicators for school climate and wellbeing in the PISA 2018 report are based on students' and principals' reports and readers of the report are cautioned "when interpreting indicators with a strong subjective component, such as life satisfaction and student feelings, which are more likely to be influenced by cultural norms and the personality of the respondent" (p. 36). There also a number of qualifications offered in the report relating to language and translation and other sociocultural differences inherent in cross country analyses.

The report defines student wellbeing as "the psychological, cognitive, material, social and physical functioning and capabilities that students need to live a happy and fulfilling life" (OECD, 2019, p. 40). There are five domains listed which underpin the concept of student wellbeing they are: cognitive wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, physical wellbeing, social wellbeing and material wellbeing. However, in the 2018 report the wellbeing domains were only examined under a psychological dimension and a cognitive dimension. It was stated as a feature of the PISA reporting "that these well-being indicators can be examined across a large number of economies and in relation to cognitive as well as social and emotional outcomes" (p. 40). Within the psychological dimension the indicators utilised were students' life satisfaction and meaning in life, students' feelings, students' self-efficacy and fear of failure. The indicator for students' feelings is linked to subjective wellbeing and is defined in the report as "good mental states, including all of the various evaluations, positive and negative, that people make of their lives and the affective reactions of people to their experiences" (p. 41).

The 2018 report represents the first time that students were asked "how they normally feel in their lives. Students reported their positive – happy, lively, proud, joyful and cheerful

– and negative – scared, miserable, afraid and sad – affect states" (p. 176). Notable is the way in which emotions/affects/feelings are used interchangeably and also bifurcated into positive and negative. Underpinning this, as cited in the report, is the positive psychology broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2004) which posits that certain emotions such as happiness, enjoyment, love and pride assist in urging students to "play, explore, aspire and be creative, broadening and improving their skills in the process" (OECD, 2019, p. 176). Despite the focus on feelings the report ultimately concludes that "there is probably no universally acceptable way of ranking countries based on the positive and negative feelings expressed by their students" but that "if there is one type of answer that most people would agree should be taken seriously it is when students report that they always feel sad, scared, afraid or miserable" (p. 177). Findings showed that on average across OECD countries 7% of students reported negative feelings, whilst more than 80% of students reported "sometimes or always feeling happy, cheerful, joyful and lively" (p. 177).

Within the cognitive dimension of the 2018 report the single indicator was growth mindset which is defined as "the belief that someone's ability and intelligence can develop over time" and is "closely related to the notion of personal growth (i.e., feeling of continued self-improvement), a traditional dimension of well-being" (p. 41). It is stated that educators can "instil a growth mindset in students" which is broadly explained as teachers ensuring students are challenged by their work but not led to believe failures are a lack of inherent ability (p. 200). The report does warn against using the concept of growth mindset in an overly individualised way and that failure to recognise the importance of support, from both educators and the school environment, "as essential for a growth mindset to take root and flourish" means "the responsibility for failing lies entirely with the student, even when they do not have the necessary resources to reach their full potential" (p. 201). The main statement put to students in the report to assess their growth mindset was "Your intelligence is

something about you that you can't change very much" and it was found a majority of students disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (p. 200). The report also states a positive association between "holding a growth mindset" and the ability to "master tasks, general self-efficacy, learning goals and perceiving the value of schooling," and a negative association with a fear of failure (p. 200). The growth mindset section also concludes that in approximately 50% of education systems investigated "students who exhibited a growth mindset were more likely than students who held a fixed mindset to expect to complete a university degree" and this was after they accounted for socioeconomic status, gender and immigrant background (p. 200).

Normalising psy-wellbeing

A noticeable feature of these reports is their focus on emotions, and while this was often another way of referring to mental health conditions, emotions were seen to be the thing the parents and teachers were observing or reading as a way to assess wellbeing. This is despite research clearly showing that "a child's wellbeing cannot accurately be assessed by examining only whether or not the child exhibits a particular 'mood' or 'feeling'" (Pollard & Lee, 2003, p. 68). This raises questions about the use of emotion focused discourse and its place within wellbeing measures and research.

In the history of psychological discourse emotions have held a unique position in their ability to empower psychology, as they are often conceived as an objective measure of something subjective (Gergen, 1995). This means they are often the point at which assessments, interventions, and adjustments are made and also that they become a site of psychological norms. Emotions are able to be categorised, as seen in some of the reports above, into those which are considered positive, productive or useful and those which are negative. Greco and Stenner (2013, p. 2) argue that "a bifurcated approach to questions of happiness and wellbeing…underlies the scientism, individualism and biologism that many

critical commentators have already identified as features of the discourse on wellbeing and of the “happiness agenda”.

Traditionally in wellbeing research the psychological domains have the largest number of indicators, and also rely more heavily on deficit indicators i.e. anxiety, depression, or other emotional problems (Pollard & Lee, 2003). This may account for the shift towards something like positive psychology as a counter to these deficit indicators, although simply creating so-called objective measures “reflects a typically Western deep mistrust of subjectivity and thus of experience and feelings as organs of perception and knowledge”, a mistrust, it is argued, that is plentiful in “the current project of positive psychology and happiness economics” (Greco & Stenner, 2013, p. 14)

The rise in positive psychology and wellbeing related indicators such as happiness and quality of life has become “a significant crystallization point” in the creation of what can be considered an apparatus or device of power and “whilst this development has long historical roots, it is only since the late 1990s that it has congealed into something recognizable as such an apparatus” (M. Greco & Stenner, 2013, p. 1). Greco and Stenner (2013, p. 2), drawing on Foucault and governmentality scholarship, define apparatus as a “set of connective relations that temporarily interrogates a thoroughly heterogeneous assemblage of elements in order to respond to an urgent need”. Also important to this idea of apparatus is its occurrence within particular historical moments and that its assemblage is made up of “discourses, institutions…regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral propositions, in short the said as much as the unsaid” (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 194).

An important mechanism of an apparatus is that through “a perpetual process of strategic elaboration” it is able to rework “the heterogeneous elements that surface at various points” (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 195). Conceptualising wellbeing within the psy-

apparatus helps understand the multiplicity and conceptual opaqueness of wellbeing. It also offers a way to see the power afforded to psychology and how it is able to be conceptually mutable and operate across many domains. This is the epistemic power of psychology, that through discursive practices it is able to articulate what are good, useful and important aspects of being human and thus what are good, useful and important aspects of Western culture and society. As has been evidenced in this chapter, and by others (Danziger, 1996; De Vos, 2013; Parker, 2013), these psy-discourses are not confined exclusively to the discipline and its related institutional or organisational spaces, but rather they are able to move into a range of other spaces, reports, measures, government papers and policy documents. It is in these spaces that we also see psychological knowledge and discourse problematising subjects to establish psychological objects.

Chapter summary

This selection of reports offers a sense of how wellbeing has been constructed in a range of ways, both locally and globally. The multiplicity and vagueness of definition is often constructed by the reports as a positive attribute. Some reports suggested that capturing wellbeing is necessarily elusive, yet despite this shaky foundation indicators that supposedly point to wellbeing are established. It has previously been found that large amounts of wellbeing research have been conducted measuring only a single domain, with only 13.1% measuring two domains, and 4.6% measuring three domains (Pollard & Lee, 2003).

Although there are differing ways in which wellbeing is conceptualised within the reports, the psychological theories and discourses running through them are evident. Even when domains, categories or indicators were not specifically identified as psychological wellbeing they often drew on psychological terms and constructs. While this is not entirely surprising given the way in which psychology has been closely associated with both wellbeing and education for some time, it is perhaps a way in which psychological

knowledge and discourses are becoming increasingly normalised. This normalisation has two important features: first, it puts the language of psychology into a range of domains outside the discipline, and it also adds authority to the constructs themselves. In a self-evidencing tautology, wellbeing comes into being as an object for psychology because it is measured in these reports.

Chapter 5: Objects, subjects and critical policy analysis

The purpose of this chapter, and the paper contained within it, is to offer a rationale for the use of a particular analytic process for policy analysis and also to propose that this method of analysis is important for community psychology because of its ability to offer contextual details to the ways in which people and communities are problematised. First a summary is offered of the theories and concepts that underpin this type of analysis, then the paper further explores the rationale for utilising problematising and genealogical analysis via Bacchi's (2009) poststructural approach to policy analysis, *What's the problem represented to be?*(WPR). Here the focus of investigation is the emergence of wellbeing subjectivities in education policy in Australia and what this might indicate in terms of the kind of student being problematised.

Critical problematisation

The term problematisation has been used in a number of ways across various research traditions and scholarship. Montero and Sonn (2009, p. 80), from a liberation psychology perspective and based on the work of Paulo Freire, state that it is "a strategy for developing a critical consciousness". This perspective sees problematisation as a "pedagogical practise that disrupts taken-for-granted 'truths'" (Bacchi, 2012, p. 1). Although somewhat similar in their intention to call into question the notion of accepted truths, the Foucauldian version and poststructural analyses that utilise his theoretical perspective are different in that for them "problematization is more a description of thinking as a practise than a diagnosis of ideological manipulation" (Bacchi, 2012, p. 1). A poststructural use of the term problematisation is often both a way to describe a method of analysis and also a way to infer a sociohistorical process of producing objects for thought (Bacchi, 2012). The point of this kind of analysis is to investigate how an issue is analysed, questioned, categorised and

controlled. The intent is also to look at "how and why certain things (behaviour, phenomena, processes) become a problem" (Foucault, 1985, p. 115) and how they are formed as certain objects able to be thought about. It is the problematised object or phenomenon that becomes a problematisation and hence the subject for poststructural analysis (Bacchi, 2012).

This kind of analysis focuses on problematisations emerging directly from certain practices. Practices are conceived as "places" where "what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect" (Foucault et al., 1991, p. 75). Eveline and Bacchi (2010) state that it is through practices that certain kinds of subjects are constituted and that this is the process of subjectivation. This process of subjectivation occurs through certain truth claims or through the "production of truth" which refers not to the "production of true statements", but to the "administering of the realms (setting up the 'rules of the game') in which the production of the true and the false is regulated" (Bacchi, 2012, p. 4). It is the explicating of these rules that is the important political rationale for this kind of analysis.

This is not a causal relationship and people can be situated within multiple practices and problematisations, and the truth-power of an object can be supported by a range of expert knowledges, moral agents/codes, scientific and biological imperatives, and also the weight of public consensus. When something has circulated within a population for long enough the truth-value of it becomes inherent, and it becomes regarded as common sense. Thus, part of critical problematisation is to step back from that which appears common sense and ask how it has come to be. This analytic frame is particularly useful when looking at policies which often are constructed around these kinds of common-sense truth claims. The intention of a policy is to outline actions toward a solution, but in doing so it has already predetermined the problem(s) and this is often done through the subtle assertions of the problem's objective, common sense nature (Bacchi, 2009).

Community psychology and critical policy analysis

While the values of social justice and equity and the focus of the sociopolitical climate have been central to the way in which community psychology positions itself, there have been ongoing criticism about its lack of engagement in the area of policy and policy analysis (Nelson, 2013; Sarason, 1984; Serrano-García, 2013). This is despite a number of the social problems, which are often the focus of community psychology, having been exacerbated by neoliberal policies (Nelson, 2013). Serrano-García (2013) has suggested that focusing on subjectivities, specifically within policies, is an important, but neglected, area of community psychology work. She argues that "policies embody values, beliefs and meanings of a particular socio-historical and cultural period but as a result they also influence the development of social relations among participants influenced by these policies" (Serrano-García, 2013, p. 3). This is echoed by Bacchi (2012, p. 4) who says that "every policy or policy proposal is a prescriptive text, setting out a practice that relies on a particular problematization." Here, policy is used in the broadest sense of the term to reflect its use at all levels of governing. In this way, policies are not merely documents that seek to exert political will through explicit statements, but rather they work via implicitly problematising groups or communities of people, as argued by Bacchi (2009):

> most government policies do not officially declare that there is a problem that the policy will address and remedy. Rather this is implicit in the whole notion of policy – by their nature policies make changes, implying that something needs to change. Hence there are implied problems" (p. ix).

Policies are not benign documents simply outlining possibilities or institutional aspirations, although this may indeed be a part of them: they are documents which seek to govern. They establish what Hacking (1996) has termed "self-ascriptive kinds", that is kinds of self-hood that require self-categorizing, and a willingness to belong to a category. This is

not to say that these categories only exist within individuals. As Hacking (1996) suggests, this is also "an administrative category. It groups a subclass of those who do not have 'normal' abilities in this or that respect" (p. 22). Thus in order for it to be an administered category there must be a range of people and knowledge which can delineate what is considered normal, in other words an "administrative kind" which arises from the marrying of the social sciences together with "the bureaucratic imperative to distinguish, enumerate, control, and improve deviants" (Hacking, 1996, p. 21).

In relation to education and wellbeing, the maintenance of these categories and kinds occurs via the convergence of psychological and educational technologies including the various measures, reports, statistics, and observations made by teachers, school staff, and parents. The categories and subjectivities that do emerge are often not completely new, but can consist of residue from older ones and become newer through people's interaction with them. This is termed "looping effects" by Hacking (1996) and he describes the process in this way:

> "New sorting and theorizing induces changes in self-conception and in behaviour of the people classified. Those changes demand revisions of the classification and theories, the causal connections, and the expectations. Kinds are modified, revised classifications are formed, and the classified change again, loop upon loop" (p. 370).

Agents are always involved in the process of appropriating a classification or categorisation as a part of their identity development and intentional actions (Haslanger, 2017). This is more than simply referring to the labels people use to identify themselves. It involves the ways in which the socially, historically and politically situated category influences how they are able to understand and see themselves within a context. It is also important to add that the mechanism of looping does not necessarily proceed via the activity of theorising or

classification, or the identity and intentionality of agents involved, and the looping effects may occur in different directions (Haslanger, 2017). As Haslanger (2017) suggests:

> We can unintentionally 'make people' be a certain way through large structures that are not under anyone's control and are not conceptualized, e.g., the interactions between educational, employment, and residential opportunities, together with transportation, health care, and judicial systems, can create social regularities, and notably inequalities, that are not intended or even apparent to us. (p. 554)

The problem however arises when the various technologies of measuring and categorising result in "epistemic objectification" which ultimately fails to conceive of the structural aspects giving rise to regularities and misattributes "the regularities to something intrinsic to the agents," thus engendering essentialist and normative assumptions (Hasalanger, 2017, p. 554). Foucault (1982b) detailed three specific ways in which objectification shapes individuals into subjects (subjectivation). The first way is through epistemes or modes of inquiry within the broad realm of science which claim to produce objective knowledge about a subject. The second practice of objectification arises from the separation and distinctions drawn by categorical binaries (e.g. sane/insane). Lastly, objectification has to do with the way in which individuals shape themselves into certain subjects by identifying themselves within relations to larger structures.

Haslanger (2017) asserts that epistemic objectification is a kind of epistemic injustice in that it is able to maintain certain social positions through the explanation of regularity which is further empowered by the notion of naturalism or as an inherent characteristic. Furthermore, these mechanisms are central to the process of marginalisation, because it is through essentialist and normative assumptions attained through epistemic objectification that outliers can be identified (in both a statistical and normative sense). Psychology has played a

key role in both the normalising and naturalising of a whole range of categorisations of personhood that are deemed to be objective realities rather than constructs of epistemic objectification (Henriques et al., 1998; Teo, 2017, 2018). From a feminist perspective one of the objections here is the implicit assumption that objectivity is neutral or value-free when clearly it is not (Angelique, 2012; Harding, 1992; Rutherford, 2018).

In the following paper it is proposed that focusing exclusively on problem solving (as opposed to problem questioning) perpetuates decontextualised understandings and practices. The analytic methods of problematisation and genealogy are explored as a way to move away from the epistemic objectification of mainstream psychological knowledge and discourse as it relates to wellbeing and education policy. These forms of analysis are advocated for by critical community psychology in order to retain its focus on context in the face of neoliberalisations which can reduce complex issues down to problems-with-solutions.

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Chapter summary

Perhaps the two most significant events of the late twentieth century for education were the recessions of the early 80's and the 90's. One of the historical facts about the connection between economic prosperity and schooling in Australia is that "economic reliance on school increases as job opportunities decline" (Teese & Polesel, 2003b, p. 9). This can be seen in the retention rates of young people at school during severe economic downturns in Australia such as in 1982 and 1991 (Teese & Polesel, 2003b). A downturn "compels many young people to stay on at school. The first signs of recovery bring falls in retention, sometimes sharp (as in Tasmania in 1992), otherwise more modest but sustained" (pp. 9-10). After the 1990 recession, in which Victoria was hit particularly hard with unemployment rates triple those of the rest of the country (Macfarlane, 1992), school retention rates in Melbourne had some of the steepest falls (Teese & Polesel, 2003b). Ironically, "despite poor chances of finding work, participation in the workforce rose, while enrolments in school fell" (Teese & Polesel, 2003b, p. 10). This suggests that the ever changing economic and youth employment market threatens the dominant narratives that education in Western liberal democracies had established, in that it threatens the meritocratic ideals on which much of schooling and educational success has been premised.

There have also been some important historical shifts in the ways in which the role of curriculum was conceived at both a political and educational level (Yates et al., 2011), and these have consequences for the type of psychology emerging around education and schooling. One of the major shifts in discussion around curriculum reform occurred in the interwar period around 1930 where discussions both in Australia and internationally were increasingly directed toward the "good student and the good citizen" and it was at this time that these discussions were increasingly being "influenced by psychological knowledge,

reflected in growing concerns about the mental life and emotional adjustment of young people" (McLeod & Wright, 2013, p. 171).

As highlighted in the analysis in this chapter, how does an education system explain the lack of success for those from lower socioeconomic groups and other marginalised students? How does an education system retain the positive, aspirational declaration that completing year 12 and moving on to university is the desired educational pathway for successful democracies despite evidence of consistent youth unemployment? These questions highlight that public education is inextricably linked to political and economic desires and that the perceived role of education in society shifts to accommodate them. The narrative around education and its inherent ability to attain equity for "all young Australians" is a strong one and as suggested in the Melbourne Declaration "a school's legacy to young people should include national values of democracy, equity and justice, and personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience and respect for others" (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008, pp. 4–5). While it is acknowledged that these policy statements are designed to be aspirational they also create a fairly robust picture that schooling should only be good, and only be positive.

The intention of this chapter was to investigate the problem representations within educational policy through the analytic frames of problematisation and genealogy and in doing so highlight why such an analytic method is important for the values of community psychology. What is established through the analysis was the emergence of wellbeing as a problem representation that is informed by mainstream psychological constructs which tend towards a decontextualised understanding of the issues actually facing students for whom education success is made more challenged by external factors. It was also proposed that this psy-wellbeing co-constructs neoliberal forms of subjectivity which are blind to the reality of education inequities and success.

Chapter 6: Psychology as a Moralising Force in Education

Establishing psy-wellbeing as a problem was made possible not just by the desires of education ministers and school leadership, nor was it simply a response to increasing anxiety about the mental health of young people in schools. There are residues of how youth and adolescence has been constructed historically and a long held belief within Western societies that schooling can be a civilising project for children (McCallum, 1980, 1990). This has been apparent not only through the more obvious forms of socialisation, but also through the problematising of young people via psychological categories and disorders such as attention deficit disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiance disorder (ODD), and other related conduct disorders (Laurence & McCallum, 2009). The moralising imperative of creating normal children has long been a project for doctors and psychologists (e.g., Glueck, 1960; Illingworth, 1975) and education has often been seen as a key site for the deployment of interventions in service of this. While these psychological disorders and categories are still within the teaching and education discourse (Emery, 2016; Sointu, 2005b; Vassallo, 2015), what is also becoming evident are the ways in which newer moralising mechanisms are operating in subtler, less obviously psychological ways to create normal young people.

Constructing youth

A central theme in the study of young people is "the problematic nature of being a young person and the even more problematic nature of becoming adult" (Wyn & White, 1997, p. 8). This period in a young person's life has also been termed emerging adulthood, particularly by those establishing theories of developmental psychology as related to risk-taking or reckless behaviour by young people (e.g. Arnett, 1992, 2000). Interestingly, Arnett (2000) suggests that while originally this period was regarded as covering the change or shift from being an adolescent, it now needs to encompass the ages of 18-29 as this too is seen as period of great instability. Arnett (2004, p. 8) in the chapter titled "A Longer Road to

Adulthood" describes the five features peculiar to the time of emerging adulthood as identity exploration (especially in terms of work/career and romantic relationships), instability (living arrangements, romantic relationships and work), self-focus (obligations to others is at a low point in this part of their lifespan), feeling in-between (neither adolescent or adult), and possibilities/options "(when hopes flourish and people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives)". Albeit containing striking tautologies, this expansion of what is considered the purview of developmental psychology enables the epistemic reach and psychologisations to move into a new period that was previously seen as the time when young people had finally become adult.

These concepts have largely inherited assumptions from the epistemic foundations of developmental psychology (Martin & McLellan, 2013; Walkerdine, 2008; Wyn & White, 1997) which posits "universal stages of development, identity formation, normative behaviour and the relationship between social and physical maturation" (Wyn & White, 1997, p. 8). This psychologised, age-based conception of development is linear, objective, and thus measurable. This conception of development found synergies with the project of mass schooling in the early 1900's in Australia and was one of main ways of categorising, and sorting, young people through education (McCallum, 1984, 1990). It was also a way that seemed perfectly natural - as a child develops in age they develop more toward the ideal of an adult (Lesko, 2012). However, researchers have continually called into question both the theoretical veracity of psychology's claims about development (Burman, 2008; Kelly, 2001; Lesko, 2012; Wyn & White, 1997), and also the role it plays in establishing particular subjectivities (Henriques et al., 1998; Kelly, 2001, 2006; Walkerdine, 2008) and specifically Western oriented subjectivities (Wyn & White, 1997; Walkerdine, 2008). The universal claim of developmental psychology can be seen more as a socially constructed Western ideal because for a substantial proportion of the world's young people, "the idea of 'youth' as a

universal stage of development was and remains an inappropriate concept" (Wyn & White, 1997, p. 10). This is not to suggest that there is no value in trying to understand the ways in which youth is constructed in various sociopolitical/cultural locations, but rather to acknowledge that dominant conceptions of youth and young people in Australia are linked to the culturally specific, psychologised versions of development. Youth, as a stage of progression to adulthood, has meaning "only in relation to the specific circumstances of social, political and economic conditions" (Wyn & White, 1997, p. 15). Subjectivities can therefore become substantiated via psychological knowledge and dominant narratives of what youth is and ought to be.

The notion of adolescence was originally around the ideas of it being "a period of transition and turbulence" (Connell, 2013a, p. 27). At the beginning of the twentieth century new truths about the nature of adolescence emerged spurred on by the work of American psychologist and educator Granville Stanley Hall who was dubbed the father of adolescence, and who popularized the concept of adolescent "storm and stress" which was founded on a "romantic idea of youth potential and problems that mandated increasing supervision of young lives" (Lesko, 2012, pp. 39-40). Hall, who was known for his public speaking, garnered popularity by tapping into middle-class concerns about the problems of correctly controlling boys to produce "energetic, manly, and strong citizens, not docile or cautious boys" (Lesko, 2012, p. 40). This concern for the appropriate development of boys led to extensive work for "newly minted experts in psychology, pedagogy, playgrounds, and juvenile justice" and modern adolescence therefore becomes a "site to worry over and on which to work on new citizens for a new social order" (Lesko, 2012, p. 40). The connection between youth development and citizenry/society is an important one as it not only gave gravitas to the imperatives of dealing with the problem of adolescence, but it also provides a seemingly natural alliance with the democratic desires of education and schooling, which are

that a more educated population is a better one, economically and otherwise (Crittenden, 1988; David McCallum, 1990).

Within this, Hall's construction of adolescence has come to be seen as a crucial marker at which "individual (and a society) jumped to a developed, superior, Western selfhood or remained arrested in a savage state" (Lesko, 2012, p. 43). Underpinning this conception of adolescence was also an ugly dividing line drawn from his beliefs in social Darwinism and eugenics where he marked the difference between the "rational, autonomous, and moral white bourgeois men, those civilized men who would continue the evolution of the race" from the less desirable "emotional, conforming, sentimental or mythical others, namely primitives, women, and children" (Lesko, 2012, p. 43). This gender divide not only represents the minimising and devaluing of femaleness/femininity, it also marks something that it was felt boys needed to pass through, or overcome; "in the very schema of adolescence as a developmental stage, femaleness loomed as an obstacle that had to be navigated and surpassed; we can say that femininity haunted the modern developing adolescent" (Lesko, 2012, p. 56). Thus, what emerges is a conception of youth transition to adulthood which fits one group, white middle class boys, more closely than another (Burman, 2008; Wyn & White, 1997). This is also reinforced by other dominant post-enlightenment desires which positioned rationality as superior, and those subjectivities to which irrationality could be ascribed are devalued (Barry et al., 2013; Burman, 2008; Kelly, 2006).

Lesko (2012) proposes that another dominant feature of discourse on adolescence is its position within what she terms panoptical time, which is described as:

> a time framework that compels us—scholars, educators, parents, and teenagers—to attend to progress, precocity, arrest, or decline. Adolescence both makes and marks time. The developmental framework is simultaneously colonial (with privileged,

invisible viewers and hypervisible, temporalized, and embodied others) and administrative (ranking, judging, making efficient and productive). (p. 96)

It is this "development-in-time episteme" that enables experts and institutions to categorise, rank, and bifurcate young people (Lesko, 2012, p. 97). Adolescence is therefore able to be tracked in terms of both physical and psychological steps through time. This panoptical element and its governing power lies in the ways in which it requires subjects to look inward and manage the self according to these temporal, developmental norms. The temporal nature of this also implants a kind of insistency to the problem of adolescence, so that intervening in this optimal development period is given great solemnity in developmental psychology and education alike.

A further persistent concern around conceptions of youth and their development is unemployment; and youth unemployment became a firm focus and a kind of moral panic in many Western countries (Bessant, 1995; McCallum, 1990). Bessant (1995, p. 34) claims that despite a significant economic recovery during the mid-1980's in Australia persistent levels of youth unemployment lead to references in media and political discourse of a "juvenile underclass" which she describes as different from "previous accounts of 'the poor'" in that this time the preoccupation is with "'marginalised', 'feral', 'disillusioned', 'potentially dangerous' and unemployed young people". It is during the 1980s and 1990s in Australia that we see a discursive convergence of these two inherently problematic groups: the marginalised and the unemployed. Bessant (1995, p. 35) also notes that much of the reportage of this new underclass draws on social science to add authority to the (mis)representations of a "new and threatening sub-stratum of young and poor people" and that "much academic discussion of the juvenile underclass is characterised by extensive use of the medicalisation of 'at risk' groups". An undercurrent of these constructions is that failings are presented as psychological, and if not, then they are represented in psychosocial terms (Bessant, 1995).

The use of the ideas of a juvenile underclass at this time in Australia also takes place within an explicitly politicised framework, one centred on debates between the political left and right about the role of the state (Bessant, 1995). From the right, the problem is emblematic of the effects of state welfare intervention resulting in the creation "of a dependent population of social security claimants who become 'the underclass'" (Bessant, 1995, p. 36). Whereas for the left, the underclass discourse is propagated by "academics and researchers who argue the inadequacy of state provision and the absence of a national full-employment policy as providing the seedbed in which the underclass will flourish" (Bessant, 1995, p. 36).

The neo-conservative concern about the moral effects of poverty and/or receipt of social security benefits has a substantial history and undergirds a wider moral foundation of meritocracy in Western liberal democracies (Donovan, 2018; McCallum, 1990; Mijs, 2015). The moralising about poverty within neo-conservative concerns and the "alleged self-inflicted misery of 'the underclass'" are effortlessly merged with notions of "cross-generational transmission of poverty and welfare dependency" (Bessant, 1995, p. 37). This continues a well-established tradition of blaming the victim and situating disadvantage within people themselves (David McCallum, 1984, 1990) or within the "'culture of poverty' in which they live" (Bessant, 1995, p. 39).

What these problematisations about youth, employment and poverty enable are the raft of ideas and interventions that require guidance and expert attention "to ensure that the process of becoming adult is conducted correctly" (Wyn & White, 1997, p. 11). Here the role of psychology has historically been at the fore, where through a range of disordered behaviour categorisations it has shaped what are appropriate development norms, as detailed by Laurence and McCallum (2009):

> the work of the psy-sciences, in the context of contemporary western liberal societies, has very little to do with the maintenance of the status quo. It is more productive than that, implicated in the make-up of new types of persons, new ways of being…Moreover, we suggest that the work of the psy-sciences in naming and accounting for disorder goes far beyond identifying what is 'in the individual'; it is fundamentally implicated in the production of that space within, from whence contemporary psycho-medical practice inscribes and reads off its diagnoses. (p. 1)

Thus, it can be seen how psychological knowledge accumulates power as an epistemic authority on correctly becoming an adult, and perhaps more importantly how to avoid becoming a delinquent. Hence, a key component of the conceptions of youth and education is their regulatory intention. These conceptions arise from the intersections of political, economic and cultural ideals which serve to distinguish a binary between desirable/undesirable pathways to adulthood. They serve to problematise certain ways of being and becoming, and in doing so seek to govern young people. As has already been established, a substantial amount of this governing is enacted via self-governing, but this also requires a context in which discourses about appropriate development are disseminated. The following paper investigates the role of psychological discourse in maintaining and constructing youth subjectivities within education policy that then form a network of moralisations, moralisations which, it is claimed, are key in the governing of young people.

Paper in Review –The Moralisations of a Neoliberal Psychology in Education in Australia

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End of journal paper

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019)

In the time since submitting the previous paper for publication there has been a subsequent education declaration released. Many of the goals and aspirations of the 2009 Melbourne declaration have remained the same as can be seen from this section of the preamble of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019, p. 2): "Education has the power to transform lives. It supports young people to realise their potential by providing skills they need to participate in the economy and in society, and contributing to every aspect of their wellbeing". Perhaps the most notable change in this latest ministerial document is the centring of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) education. The title of the report, Mparntwe (pronounced M-ban tua) is the Arrernte name for Alice Springs, and the Aboriginal Arrernte (pronounced arrunda) peoples are the traditional custodians of Alice Springs and the surrounding region (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2019).

While the Melbourne declaration does note the educational inequity, poor access and outcomes for ATSI students, in this latest declaration there is a renewed emphasis and focus on these students. This may be due to the data which persistently shows an education gap between non-Indigenous and ATSI students particularly on measures like attendance (especially by those in remote locations) and reading and numeracy as assessed by the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019a). There have however been several questions raised about the

cultural bias of NAPLAN testing and that the test reflects a privileging of mainstream knowledge and that other knowledge is averaged out in the statistical methodologism of this large scale, national test. While there is no doubt that the Mparntwe declaration seeks to place Indigenous knowledge at the centre of a more inclusive education system, there is insufficient details about how they plan to shift some of the epistemic power away from high stakes, national testing of mainstream knowledge which has become such a feature of the neoliberal education landscape in Australia (Connell, 2013c).

The Mparntwe declaration outlines ways in which it hopes to develop a more inclusive education system. It states that key to this is the development of partnerships and connections with ATSI communities:

> welcoming and valuing the local, regional and national cultural knowledge and the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will help the education community to build authentic partnerships with local communities and teach young Australians the value of our nation's rich history" (p. 10).

There are continual references throughout the declaration for the need to include Indigenous knowledges and culture within the education system for it to be successful. There is also expressed the need for ATSI students to be "empowered to achieve their full learning potential, shape their own futures, and embrace their cultures, languages and identities as Australia's First Nations peoples" (p. 16). However, this is prefaced by the idea that this inclusion is "fundamental to Australia's social, economic and cultural wellbeing" (p. 16).

Whilst the aspirations of self-determination, cultural respect and recognition are admirable inclusions in this latest declaration, they should be framed in the wider political context which saw the Australian government reject key reforms in 2018 from ATSI communities for constitutional and legislative change proposed in the *Uluru statement from the heart* (Uluru Statement from the Heart, 2017). The Uluru statement developed by the

Referendum Council consulted “12 First Nations Regional Dialogues, which culminated in the National Constitutional Convention at Uluru in May 2017” and it “empowered First Peoples from across the country to form a consensus position on the form constitutional recognition should take” (Referendum Council et al., 2017, p. iv). The constitutional reforms in the statement seek to address the structural racism and violence against ATSI people and their children:

> Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future…When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country. (paras. 5 & 7)

What this incongruity between the aspirations of the ministerial declarations and the reality of Indigenous self-determination suggests is that either the declaration sees educational inclusion and achievement can mute the effects of structural violence, or that equitable education can exist as a project despite the continued progress of coloniality. Depoliticising education in this way helps reframe education away from the ugly truths of intergenerational violence and trauma, dispossession and racism, and reasserts the discourses around the inherent goodness of education for Western liberal, democratic societies as established in the previous declarations (Brown, 2019). Within these discourses, the subjectivities of success remain coupled to productive Australian citizenry and *homo economicus* framed by white western capitalism. This is one of the ultimate challenges for a more inclusive education, how does it reconcile its ideas of success with ontological positions and ways of knowing that exist outside its Eurocentric epistemologies and capitalist logic (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016). Brown (2019, p. 55) suggests that “an engagement with Indigenous education policy

and the experience of Indigenous young people learning ‘shared history’ within Australian classrooms expose the continuation of settler colonial violence”. Shared history as an aspiration of Western liberal education is understood here as “the seemingly benevolent consideration of historical encounters as figured through, and legitimised by, discourses of aspirational unity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples” (Brown, 2019, p. 55).

The idea of shared history can be seen a number of times in the Mparntwe declaration but often expressed through “a commitment to partnerships” (p. 10). There is a strong emphasis on the value of “Welcoming and valuing the local, regional and national cultural knowledge and the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples” as it is seen as a way to build “authentic partnerships” and that it will be of educative value to “teach young Australians the value of our nation’s rich history” (p. 10). This does seem to create somewhat of a division in the question of who is able to be a young Australian, and what differentiates them from an Indigenous young Australian. In addition, it positions our history as not only something shared, but leaves white settler history unproblematised and something that can be embellished or improved by the addition of Indigenous knowledge and history. The cultural importance of including other knowledges and experiences within the education system is tasked with fostering “a culturally supportive learning environment where all young Australians can thrive educationally and in all facets of life” (p. 10).

In many ways the burden of the problem of Indigenous youth education is claimed by governments and the education system, yet much of the policy is premised on an “a priori assumption that the problem of Indigenous people is first and foremost disadvantage and deficiency” (Brown, 2019, p. 66). This leads back to Bacchi’s (2009) questions around problematisations: what's the problem represented to be, who is defining the problems, and how is it possible to speak of the problem in these ways, at this time? Indigenous youth have

long been a problem for the education policy and system in Australia as noted by Brown (2019):

> Decades of concerted policy efforts have aimed to address the 'Aboriginal problem' through education, yet these efforts have failed. This failure is manifest in the presence of these young people who haunt high school classrooms, unsettling notions of 'shared history', while their intellectual capacities and critical knowledge remain misrecognised. (p. 66)

Also at the school level, racism, discrimination and marginalisation continue to have harmful, wide reaching and life long effects, and influence academic achievement for Indigenous students (Moodie et al., 2019). Faced with these harmful impacts and with the cultural and epistemic inadequacy of the education system, it is possible to see how the cycle of problematising Indigenous students as at-risk begins. With educational challenges not experienced by their non-indigenous counterparts, Indigenous youth becomes a problematised category and one that is supported by public discourse and the racialised over-policing and over-incarceration of them, as noted by te Riele (2006, p. 138) "an entire racial group is stigmatized with images of juvenile offending, homelessness and 'disconnection' (which is a fuzzily derogatory concept itself)". This belongs to a long history of problematising Indigenous youth in ways which situate the moral failings of delinquency as "inherent racial deficits" and which has historically been used to justify a raft of interventions aimed at correcting moral and character failings (McCallum, 2017, p. 217). While the example here related specifically to Indigenous youth, it is important to note the same racialising undertones of the at-risk category have travelled to other black and brown youth (Baldridge, 2014; Coleman, 2020).

Youth, risk and employment

In the broader history of adult concerns about youth there has usually been some version of moral hand wringing about “what to do with youth, of how to school them, or police them, or regulate them, or house them, or employ them, or prevent them from becoming involved in any number of risky activities - sexual, eating, drug (ab)using (Kelly, 2006, p. 25). More specific concerns around the notion of youth at risk emerged in Australian education policy and educational programs around the late 80s (te Riele, 2006). Policy documents make explicit reference to the dangers that young people are at risk of: “not making a smooth transition through school; disconnection from their families, community, education and work; not completing Year 12 or moving on to further training or employment; leaving school prematurely” (te Riele, 2006, p. 131). Many of the Australian policy problematisations of young people at risk are constructed with deficit discourses that adopted “a diagnostic model borrowed from health sciences—locating both the problem/illness and the place for action/intervention with the individual” (te Riele, 2006, p. 137). However a common alternative to this individualised approach to constructing at-risk is to base it on groups (te Riele, 2006); the at-risk individual belongs to an at-risk community. The power to define who is at risk, what is the risk, and necessary interventions to mitigate or minimise the risk has become a defining power of many youth focused organisations and programs.

A continuing concern shaping the category of at-risk revolves around youth un- or underemployment, which is a very real concern in the Australian context. In September 2020 the youth unemployment rate increased 0.4 points to 14.5% (and increased by 2.7 pts over the year to September 2020), compared to the general unemployment rate which increased 0.1 pts to 6.9% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020). While some of these current impacts have been due to the global pandemic, the concern about youth unemployment is definitely not new, nor is it exclusively about the instrumental aspects of getting a job. The concerns about

the risk of youth unemployment have intervened in public and political discourse for decades as evidenced in a parliamentary background paper by Millbank (1993):

> Their parents and grandparents are concerned about the effects of the social, economic and structural changes that have occurred over the last twenty years, and the effects of the economic recession which began in the 1980s. They are concerned in particular about their children's and grandchildren's future. They worry especially about whether they will compete successfully in school and further studies and training, and whether they will be able to obtain employment. They worry about whether they will cope, or whether they will turn to drugs, a 'sub-culture' of the streets, and crime. (p. 1)

Here it is clear the concern is not just for the material necessities employment offers, but that failing to obtain employment potentially leads to delinquency or other character failings. These moralisations are also able to sustain public and political discourse which premise economic hardship/precarity on poor choices and social support/welfare as receiving unearned or undeserved support (Hodgetts et al., 2017; Hodgetts & Griffin, 2015). Here the concern is that unemployment potentially leads to a life of actual crime, but also that unemployment is an offence against meritocracy.

Although unemployed and poor people have long been blamed for their positions (Carr & Sloan, 2003; Hodgetts & Griffin, 2015; McCallum, 1990; Weis et al., 1992) here it has been demonstrated that a substantial mechanism of the moralisations of prudentialism are increasingly stemming from neoliberal psychology. With contemporary changes in the labour market being felt most dramatically in jobs at the lower socioeconomic end of the market, that is, lower skilled or routine jobs (Committee for Economic Development of Australia, 2015; Foundation for Young Australians, 2018) there is good reason to question the cruel optimism underpinning prudentialism in this context. Despite reports stating that there simply

are not enough jobs for young people in Australia (Foundation for Young Australians, 2018), the neoliberal forms of subjectivity present in polices about young people and their education turn this into a wellbeing enterprise for the entrepreneurial self.

Nowhere is the cruel optimism of this situation more clearly laid bare than in the New Work Order report series by the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA). In their *The New Work Reality* report (2018), the main barriers that young people identified as preventing them from transitioning to full-time work are: not enough work experience, lack of appropriate education, lack of career management skills and not enough jobs (Foundation for Young Australians, 2018). In the same report the FYA identify four significant factors that can "accelerate the speed of transition from full-time education to working full-time hours" and they are:

- Enterprise skills: courses that teach enterprise skills (such as problem-solving, communication and teamwork) can increase the speed of attaining full-time work by 17 months
- Relevant paid employment: combining studying and working in a job that is within your desired job cluster can speed up the transition
- Future focused clusters: by choosing employment with a strong future focus a young person can speed up the transition by 5 months.
- An optimistic mindset: A young person who is happy with their career prospects begins working full-time hours two months faster than a young person who is not happy with their career prospects. Mindset and wellbeing can greatly impact the opportunities that a young person perceives are available to them. (p. 9)

Here, the full force of responsibilising can be seen for young people to have the right skills, and to have the right mindset and wellbeing.

This responsibilising is echoed in education psychology research in which “growth mindset” is something that “can be taught to faculty, students and parents” and whose aim is to change “a student’s thinking that intelligence level is not a fixed number and can change” (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015, p. 49). It is believed that the development of such a mindset leads to the positive psychology construct of grit, which helps students in the face of adversity (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). Grit has also been used concomittantly with the concept of resilience in education (Brunila, 2012). Research from the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America which looked at 10th grade students in Chile determined that “students from lower-income families were less likely to hold a growth mindset than their wealthier peers, but those who did hold a growth mindset were appreciably buffered against the deleterious effects of poverty on achievement” (Claro et al., 2016, p. 8664). This has clear connnections to the concepts within positive psychology which engender neoliberal subjectivities of positive dispositions as a panacea for a number of social issues (Binkley, 2014; Davies, 2016; Ehrenreich, 2010).

As already established, these subjectivities neglect to capture things that are known to effect and disrupt education and employment pathways such as race based discrimination and racism (Mansouri et al., 2009), social class and poverty (Connell, 2013b;Connell, 2003; Fine & Burns, 2003; Lamb, 2007; Weis et al., 1992), gender (Smyth, 2007), and being from an Indigenous background (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Brown, 2019; Venn et al., 2018). The neoliberal wellbeing subjectivities within education policies represent more than aspirational ideals, they represent the epistemic power of intuitions to be able to tell certain truths that echo the current economic climate and job market imperatives. The discourses that embolden these truths are informed by white, Western, middle-class values and moralisations: moralisations which are further justified by the epistemic power of psychology.

Chapter summary

The concept of youth has been problematised historically in many different ways, some of which have drawn from dominant psychological norms about adolescence, education and development. These norms are often interwoven within Western social imaginaries and culture in a way that makes them seem natural or as having always existed. Through identifying how problems are represented in education policies this chapter de-ideologises and de-inevitablises some of these taken-for-granted notions about young people and their futures. The analysis also revealed the ways in which moralisations operate via psychological knowledge and discourse to give gravitas to these problem representations. It is through the institutions and experts that neoliberal forms of subjectivity are increasingly forming the background against which successful citizenry and future possibilities for young people are held up. For psychology, the connection to education and schooling has always served to legitimise its role as an epistemic institution, and in doing so to retain its epistemic power to define the role of education and youth development. This epistemic power to define ideals of youth development also defines that which is abnormal, and thus neoliberal forms of subjectivity are able to be both aspirational and marginalising.

Education has long sought to uphold the democratic ideal that mass schooling is a good thing for both individuals and society. Educational equity is the aspirational mantra for many government schools, whilst at the same time trying to deal with socioeconomic inequities and funding shortfalls that shape the educational possibilities of young people. Schools and education have often relied on meritocratic ideals, but within the moralisations of a psychological meritocracy, those students who fail in their educational attainment, employment prospects and social mobility can be blamed for not having exercised sufficient prudentialism. While it is difficult to draw tidy lines around those to whom this marginalisation applies, the evidence reviewed here suggests that it continues to fall along

lines of social class. This creates both a self-evident reason for the continued implementation of neoliberal wellbeing strategies (as a way to help at-risk students and at-risk communities) whilst at the same time explaining the inability of the government education system to attain educational equity (because some at-risk students do not have the capacity or mindset). As detailed here, the at-risk student and the at-risk community category comes preloaded with a number of assumptions about their deficits, difficulties, inabilities and failings. This characterisation also keeps at-risk students marginalised as in-need; thus justifying a raft of psy-based social interventions whilst at the same time denying the epistemic agency of both the individual and their communities.

Chapter 7: The 'problem' of disengagement

Educational inequality is complex and the factors which exacerbate it range from gender (Smyth, 2007), to school location and school size (Lamb, 2007), to pedagogy and curriculum (Teese & Polesel, 2003). Other factors such as racialisation (Weis et al., 1992) and indigeneity (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Brown, 2019) have long been predictors of unequal educational access and outcomes. Intersecting with these factors is often social class and the way it consistently impacts the educational possibilities for students. These unjust outcomes are not the main narratives of schooling, and the impression management of educational inequality requires that losing be "made credible and not appear as a matter of unfair discrimination or bad luck" (Connell, 2013c, p. 282).

The assertion of meritocracy is a feature of neoliberal reasoning which constructs subjects as "*homo economicus* that is not just a partner in economic exchange but an entrepreneurial being who is the subject of enterprise and production" (Gane, 2014, p. 4). However, the individualising and responsibilising of educational inequality is only part of the picture. The meritocratic ideals embedded in neoliberal education require the erasure of class, as noted by Connell (2003) :

> The neo-liberal agenda is, in effect, seeking to reconstruct mass education on the organisational model of ruling-class education. Since neoliberal language does not acknowledge the existence of class structure, this feature of its program is never explicitly acknowledged. It is simply assumed that the market model is universally applicable. (p. 237)

It should also be added that teachers themselves are increasingly being shaped by neoliberal education in a number of ways including becoming a product of the competitive education market and by being required to be an "economic being" (Attick, 2017). Although there are a number of intersecting factors that lead to educational marginalisation and disengagement,

the pressure to perform within the logic of neoliberal education is undoubtedly now a part of this.

Te Riele (2006, p. 141) has stated that educational marginalisation "does not affect merely a small, problematic minority" and that in addition to those who leave school before completing year 12, there are also students who would like to leave. More recent data suggests the year 12 attainment rate increased overall between 2008 and 2018, from 83.2% to 88.8%, but this is a decrease from the peak of 89.2% in 2016 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019b). While some of the educational gaps have narrowed, it would seem that educational marginalisation still exists for those seeking to move into university. Marked disparities in educational expectations exist across different population groups, often reflecting wider patterns of disadvantage in Australia as detailed by Hillman (2018) where in 2015:

- 28% of Indigenous students anticipated completing a university degree, down from 43% in 2003
- 39% of students in remote location schools expected to complete a university degree, compared with 59% of students in metropolitan areas
- 34% of students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile expected to complete a university degree, compared with 77% in the highest socioeconomic quartile
- even among high achieving students, only 74% of those from low socioeconomic backgrounds expected to complete a university degree, compared with 92% from high socioeconomic backgrounds

This suggests that while secondary education inequities may be narrowing, they perhaps have shifted to tertiary education. So, while secondary education might be able to still hold some of the democratic ideals of mass education as a great equaliser and generator of productive citizenry, for many that road ends at year 12 or before. While there are many

pathway options for those students who do not go on to university, but want to continue further study, these other tertiary education pathways often lead to technical and manual labour apprenticeships or other work-related traineeships. This bifurcation in types of courses and subjects harks back to the very classed nature of curriculum in schools as highlighted by Teese and Polesel (2003b) where subjects with a more hands on or practical element were advocated for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and subjects with higher levels of abstraction and/or requirements of specific cultural capital were advocated for students from higher socioeconomic background. What this means is that the classing nature of education might begin in school but continues well beyond it.

Youth development and engagement programs are often in partnership with schools and are aligned with educational aspirations similar to those that are informed by education policy discourses (Coleman, 2020; Edwards et al., 2007). This means the dominant subjectivities that have emerged within education policy and the problem representations within them can also make their way into these youth focused programs and organisations. Building on the moralisations around youth and their development in the previous chapter, here it is proposed that youth-based programs and organisations become a continuation of the network of moral subjects enacting moralisations. As already demonstrated, these are classed moralisations underpinned by a variety of psy-discourse and as result neoliberal wellbeing subjectivities often become a feature of youth development programs. These neoliberal forms of subjectivity flatten or erase the realities and lived experiences of young people (particularly those from at-risk communities) by engendering discourses that are colour/class/gender-blind (Coleman, 2020). Thus, at-risk youth can be targeted for intervention irrespective of their actual needs or educational/employment barriers, and neoliberal subjectivities offer youth programs the ability to side-step some of the uncomfortable truths about why at-risk youth face disengagement.

Youth programs and organisations are epistemic organisations whereby dominant ways of knowing about young people have the potential to become oppressive as they create backgrounds about who they are and what they can be. Epistemic violence is perpetuated by "denying the Other a voice with which to articulate the self and produce a counter-narrative, or to take ownership of how the self—and the group to which the self belongs—can be understood" (Malherbe et al., 2017, p. 167). As outlined in the previous chapter, the category of youth or adolescent already comes with a certain amount of consternation that young people do not have the requisite adult-knowledge which devalues young people as knowers and leaves open the opportunity for epistemic injustice (Connell, 2013a; Malherbe et al., 2017; Walkerdine, 2008). This creates what Pohlhaus (2017, p. 51) regards as class of "sub-knowers", and she suggests that "practices and institutions that create and maintain a class of sub-knowers are clear candidates for the label epistemic injustice insofar as they wrong those knowers deemed 'sub-knowers' and constitute an epistemic dysfunction in their treatment toward them".

Pohlhaus (2017, p. 44) outlines how injustices can be understood as epistemic in at least three ways. First, they wrong knowers *as* knowers (e.g., via suppressing a knower's account or by obfuscating what is in a knower's interest to know). Second, they lead to epistemic dysfunction "for example, by distorting understanding or stymieing inquiry." Lastly, they perpetrate "the aforementioned two harms from within, and sometimes through the use of, our epistemic practices and institutions, for example, when school curricula and academic disciplines are structured in ways that systematically ignore, distort, and/or discredit particular intellectual traditions". As detailed in the first paper, related to psychology and the neoliberal episteme, these epistemic dominations occur through mechanisms which normalise the psychologisation of everyday life and preserve ways of knowing that belong to epistemic institutions. These institutions are then able to disseminate

the various psy-discourses which empower the network of authorities with psy-knowledge about how-to-know people in specific ways.

Program discourse and 'logic'

Some of the discourses of psy- have shifted away from explicitly psychological toward more character-building, future-proofing, aspirational ones. However, this is not to suggest a move away from the psychological aspects but rather that youth programs are taking up the discourses of neoliberal subjectivities and the concomitant psychological meritocracy. These come packaged in programs and program logic as things like leadership, positive sense of self-identity, capacities (strengths and weaknesses), confidence, and empowerment. Whilst it can be reasonably argued these are indeed useful or necessary aims for youth programs, they cannot be disconnected from the discursive web nor the sociopolitical/cultural context in which they are able to be uttered as objects of truth. As evidenced in the preceding chapters, the ways in which psychologisation occurs in the Australian context are largely informed by the epistemic lens of mainstream psychology. This means that in order for programs to speak authoritatively about at-risk youth in these psychosocial ways, there is the strong possibility that they also invoke neoliberal forms of subjectivity.

Often, due to a lack of resources, the imperatives of funding and lack of access to more critically focused psychological knowledge, not for profit youth organisations are unable or ill-equipped to invest in epistemic shifts. As a result, they fall or are forced back to the status quo of the dominant epistemic positions. Although they may not regard themselves as doing so, youth organisations are trying to establish their own epistemic power within the larger network of policies, government frameworks, institutional affiliations and other competing youth organisations. The epistemic power accumulated by youth organisations in

defining youth development, leadership, engagement, and other neoliberal subjectivities is also the power to implicitly define the opposites.

At risk of disengagement

One of the aims for a number of youth focused programs in Australia is to focus on students who are at risk of disengagement. While this often refers to their education and schooling, it also often also refers to concerns about a wider disengagement with society or community. The problem with disengagement as a term is that it suggests something a young person has chosen to do (or not to do). In official documents, such as those from government education departments which inform parents and educators, disengagement is constructed as something a young person can and should attend to in terms of traits. The Victorian Government Education and Training (2020) website describes student disengagement as when "a child or young person demonstrates none of these characteristics", characteristics which fall into three domains:

- participate in all areas of the school including academic, social and extracurricular activities (behavioural engagement)
- feel included in the school and has feelings of belonging to the school (emotional engagement)
- are personally invested in and take ownership of their learning (cognitive engagement) (para. 1)

Disengagement also refers to young people who are not enrolled or have poor attendance at school. As outlined on the Victorian State Government Education and Training website (2020) the risk factors for this fall into three domains, family/community factors, personal factors and school-related factors. There are also a number of indicators cited on the website that assist in identifying that a student may be at-risk and it advises a range of data and tools to be used in the identifying process. It suggests collecting data ranging from

information about "family background, educational history and personal issues collected at the time of enrolment" to "health or welfare assessments completed by in-school or Department support services" to "reports from classroom teachers on learning and behavioural issues" (para. 3). Whilst these might be important contextual factors which inform some of the work schools and student engagement programs do, it could be argued that this is a continuation of the ways in which young people from less-privileged backgrounds have historically been profiled and categorised in relation to education (Connell, 2003; Fine & Burns, 2003; McCallum, 1990; Ostrove & Cole, 2003).

One of the central concerns of disengagement is certainly the welfare of young people and their futures, but also evident is the notion that disengagement is conceived as the making of risky citizens, citizens who will be less able to be productive and more likely to be delinquent as noted in this report to the Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia (Hancock & Zubrick, 2015):

> For a significant minority of students, the end-point of disengagement culminates in school dropout, which has implications for life course trajectories once young people leave school. Students who leave school early are at greater risk of unemployment, low income, social exclusion, risky health behaviours, and engaging in crime. When the young people go on to have their own families, their ability to support their children at school is diminished and the children are also faced with an increased likelihood of disengagement. Of course, not all young people who ever disengage from school will end up on such a pathway, however, engagement at school remains a significant issue for the intergenerational persistence of disadvantage. (p. 5)

Here, there are a number of moral obligations woven into the disengagement/engagement discourse which are connected to wellbeing and productivity discourses, and family/citizenry

obligations. It is also clear from this passage that the responsibility for the persistence of disadvantage lies with young people and remaining at school.

While communities are acknowledged as an important element within students' lives in the discourse around disengagement, as is the need for a sense of belonging and agency, very little positions young people as the knowers of their own at-riskness. While it has been shown here that much of the responsibility for not falling into being at-risk lies with young people themselves, it is the epistemic agents around education that are seen as having the requisite knowledge to define and select them into such a category. While adult intervention in youth matters have long been a part of the project of schooling and education given the generally authoritarian nature of schooling, it is easy to conceive how epistemic injustices can occur. Epistemic justice in educative settings is of particular importance, as Walker (2019) suggests:

> Education is demonstrably a space where epistemic justice matters; it is after all where being a knower and being able to act as a knower to gain epistemic access and develop epistemic agency is rather important. This matters further because the lack of epistemic freedoms can be a major barrier to preparation for democratic life more broadly. (p. 165)

Although previous work conceptualising epistemic injustice has often positioned marginalised people or communities as having little or no epistemic agency this is often not the case and instead marginalised epistemic communities "resist dominant epistemic frameworks to make meaning and to actively change their material and epistemic conditions" (McHugh, 2017, p. 536).

Epistemic injustice does not only refer to single moments or spaces where certain voices are under-valued, but it also refers to the domination of certain epistemologies that (re)position people and communities in certain ways through authoritative discourses and

practices. In this instance it is argued that part of the issue is the way neoliberalism, and its dominant epistemic tendencies are shaping both the problematisations of young people from the African-Australian diaspora, and the solutions. This means that many of the issues described in Chapter 5 around the paradigm of problem solving and the decontextualised nature of evidence-based logic may also apply here. Within the neoliberal logic of having to quantify the success of youth programs, the problems have to be able to be operationalised, measurable and above all fixable. This is the logic in which "human kinds" are co-created through looping effects as described by Hacking (1996):

> By human kinds I mean kinds about which we would like to have systematic, general, and accurate knowledge; classifications that could be used to formulate general truths about people; generalizations sufficiently strong that they seem like laws about people, their actions, or their sentiments. We want laws precise enough to predict what individuals will do, or how they will respond to attempts to help them or to modify their behaviour. The model is that of the natural sciences. (p. 3)

The constructing of problem-solution logic within these youth focused organisations, coupled with the nature of their funding requirements, not only sustains the organisation's epistemic power, but at the same time it devalues the knowledge of young people and their communities. Through disregarding the intellectual traditions and knowledge production that inherently exists within communities, programs seeking to address the problem of at-risk or disengaged youth are able to position themselves as authorities and experts. This epistemic oppression (Dotson, 2014; Pohlhaus, 2017) can rightly be seen an extension of cultural imperialism (Young, 1990) and coloniality (Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011; Dutta, 2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). However, Fisher and Sonn (2008, p. 263) warn that oppression

should not be regarded as a "simple matter of domination and the dominated" as different contexts and circumstances constantly change the power differentials.

Epistemic justice and values-based praxis

The following paper highlights some challenges in navigating values of inclusion, epistemic justice, and collaboration through the implementation of a program evaluation. The youth program evaluated was developed specifically for youth from the African-Australian diaspora and the not-for-profit organisation involved had run a number of youth focused programs, but this was the first of its kind to respond to the needs of young people from the African-Australian diaspora. Detailed here are some of the ways in which a program evaluation worked towards critical community psychology values and sought to centre the personal and collective narratives of the young people who participated.

Values-based research seeks to show how programs give voice to the wisdom young people have cultivated "at the margins of institutional betrayal and economic/racial/sexuality oppression" (Fine, 2016, p. 355). Informed by values, methods are derived that can capture how programs have sought to foster "the embodiments of and survival skills honed in precarity" of young people faced with structural violence (Fine, 2012, p. 356). These are methods that adequately explore the complex psychosocial and sociopolitical identities of young people placed at the edges of communities by discrimination and racialisation (Futch & Fine, 2014).

This means there is an important multidirectional relationship between researchers, program facilitators, program participants, and program stakeholders (Dutta et al., 2016; Fine, 2012). Engaging in critical praxis also means the products of the research-based evaluation are not regarded as politically inactive objects that report decontextualised facts, but rather that they form part of the re-imagining of radical possibilities through organisational and systemic change. Through bringing young people as knowers into the

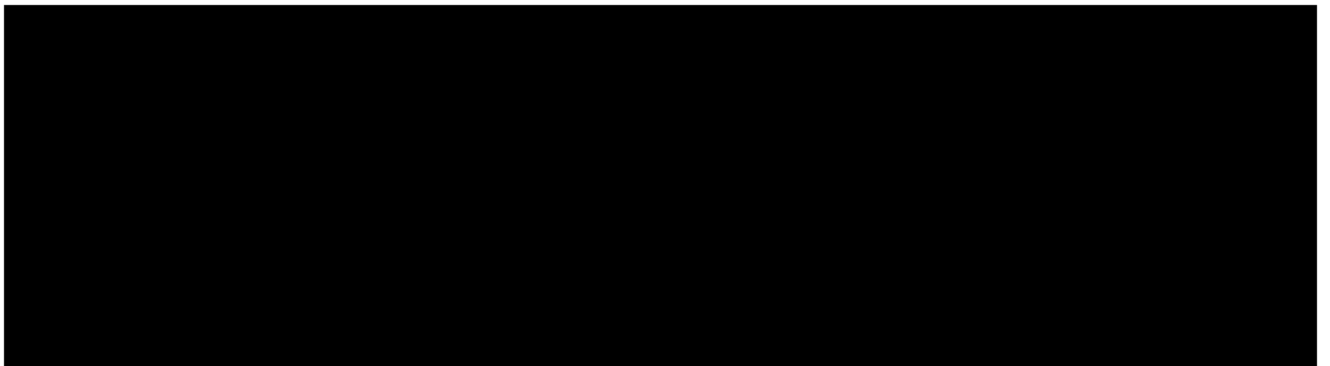
research and its outputs, it is hoped that some of the pre-existing assumptions and problematisations of them within the organisation can change.

The following paper is framed by Evans' (2014) notion of community psychologist as critical friend, of which the interconnected attributes and functions are co-creation of critical space, value amplification, problematising beliefs and practices, seizing teachable moments, sharing critical frameworks, critical action research and connecting community practice to networks and social movements. Essentially these are to ensure that as critical researchers we become "skilled at partnering with community-based organisations for social change without being co-opted into discourse and practices that simply maintain unjust conditions, or worse, exacerbate them" (Evans, 2014, p. 365).

It should be noted that although community psychology has been proposed throughout this project as being more able to capture justifiable epistemologies it is not immune from Western epistemic dominance (Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011; Dutta, 2018). In the case explored in this chapter this means considering ways in which critical community psychology praxis can engender values which support a shift in how young people are regarded within a research evaluation. This also means working with youth-program organisations to articulate and encourage the need for epistemic justice.

Journal Paper: Subjectivities and the Space of Possibilities in Youth Programs: Countering Majoritarian Stories as Social Change in the Australian Context

Abstract



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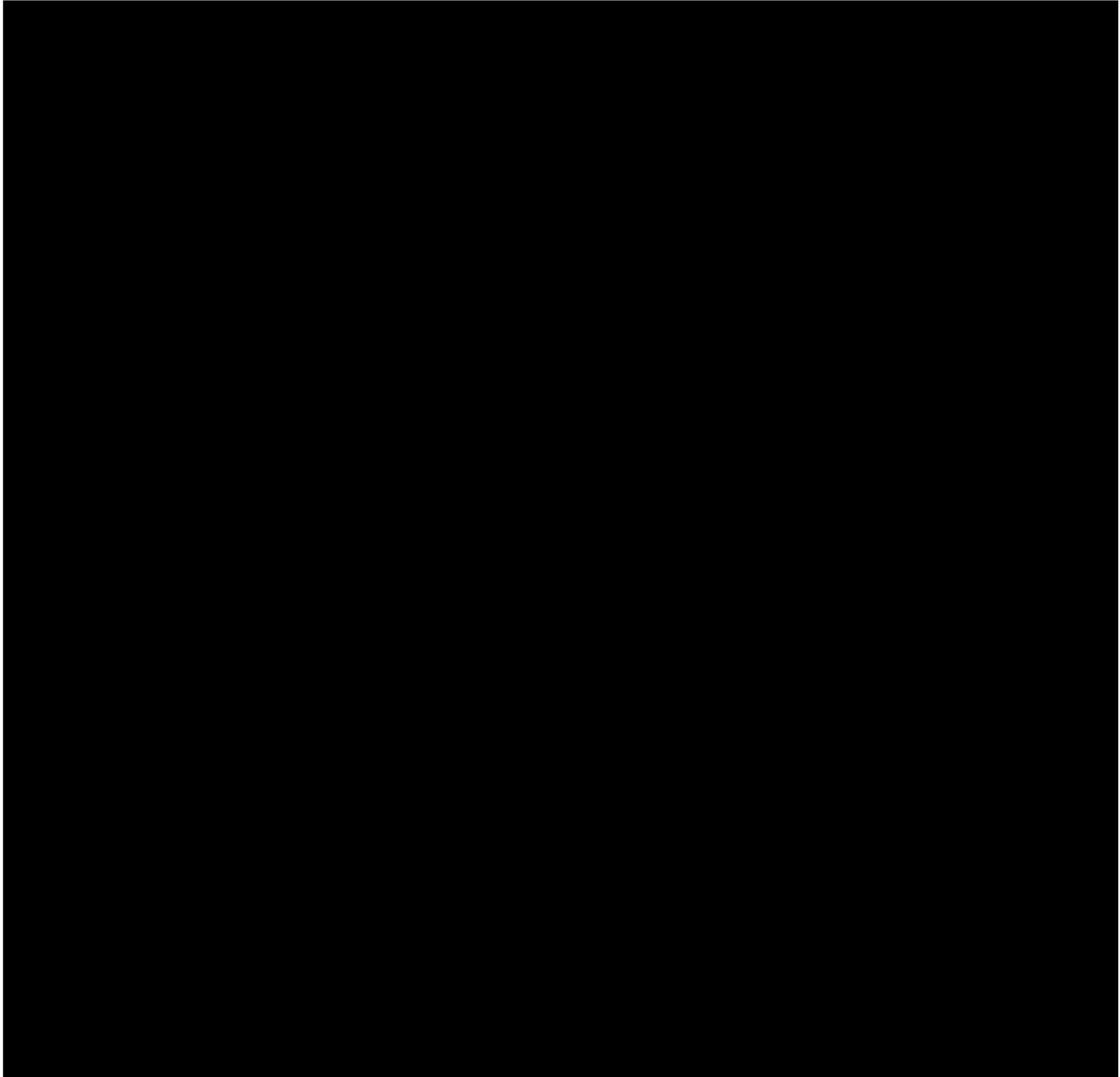

End journal paper

Chapter summary

Epistemic oppression occurs when "particular knowers are precluded from making an impact, not just with shared epistemic resources, but also on shared epistemic resources" (Pohlhaus, 2017, p. 45). Whilst there are areas of non-mainstream psychologies, such as critical community, liberation or decolonial psychologies, that have significant traditions of working against epistemic oppression, there is always a danger that when knowledge production falls into the mode of disciplinary knowledge it will be amongst mechanisms and

institutions that seek to define and cement new truths and claims of authority. There is also a danger that without epistemic reflexivity around the cultural and geopolitical influences that a focus on epistemic injustice "simultaneously hierarchizes without warrant what is epistemically significant or worthy of epistemic attention (i.e. the world as experienced by this particular set of knowers and not another) and who counts as an ideal epistemic agent (i.e. those who experience the world in this particular way, not another)" (Pohlhaus, 2017, p. 46). Epistemic blindness or ignorance which perpetuates the maintenance and dominance of certain types of psychological knowledge has been noted by a number of community psychology scholars (e.g., Coimbra et al., 2012; Dutta, 2018; Seedat & Suffla, 2017; Sonn et al., 2017).

Pohlhaus (2017, p. 48) identifies two other related dangers to consider when working with the concept of epistemic injustice: "a rhetoric of beginnings", and "aspectival captivity". She proposes that in the process of identifying an epistemic injustice we can inadvertently suggest or delineate that moment as the beginning of knowing which disregards the epistemic labour which proceeds our arrival. For the critical community friendship this means that the arrival of disciplinary knowledge is not a beginning and that the recognition of prior community authority and expertise is central to recentering epistemic justice and unsettling the "coordinated ignorance" (Pohlhaus, 2017) within organisations. Aspectival captivity refers to the ways in which addressing epistemic injustice may result in being artificially focused in particular epistemic institutions or activities whilst at the same time downplaying or omitting others. Dotson (2014) proposes retaining conceptual openness and resisting homogenising tendencies. This brings into focus the situatedness of the critical community friend and indeed that epistemic injustices may be misperceived or that some accounts may be useful in some contexts while not at all useful in others. Ultimately "any account of the

varieties of epistemic injustices must, therefore, be rendered polyvocally” (Pohlhaus, 2017, p. 49).

This polyvocality, epistemic reflexivity and positionality can be integrated within the ideas of a critical friendship toward epistemic justice. This might extend the idea of critical friendship in problematising beliefs and practices to include problematising epistemologies, and in co-creating critical spaces actively uncovering the coordinated ignorance within organisations that supports the ongoing problematisation of young people in certain ways.

Although critical community psychology has been invested in the notion that justice or fairness is connected to wellness (e.g. Fox et al., 2009; Isaac Prilleltensky, 2013) missing from this is epistemic justice. While it may be argued that some of this might be captured under procedural justice or one of the more contextually informed sub-types such as cultural justice (Prilleltensky, 2013) these concepts do not necessarily reposition knowledge and knowers. Prilleltensky’s idea of wellness has also been criticised for “its implicit assumptions…grounded in a very Western, North American worldview” and thus it fails to consider the role of “cultural factors and manifestations that community psychologists may encounter in their work” (Fisher & Sonn, 2008, p. 267). Without engaging in epistemic reflexivity or focusing on the knowledge-power nexus, what could be implemented in the name of justice and wellness might be the reproduction of dominant ways of knowing and being. Thus, the link between fairness and wellness should also include the right to reject epistemic objectifications that are manifestations of a given culture or context.

What has been shown through a values-based, creative evaluation of a youth program is that centring young people's understanding about themselves, their futures, and their communities not only gives authority to their knowledge but also challenges some of the ways in which the not-for-profit industrial complex continually problematises and categorises young people in order to justify expertise and authority. It also serves to challenge the

neoliberal forms of subjectivity which paint a background divorced from the colour and complexity of cultures and communities that at-risk young people come from. Thus social change in this instance is framed as a shift in epistemic power.

Chapter 8: Discussion

This project began with the notion that mainstream psychological epistemologies and discourse had been dominant around education in Australia and that those forms of mainstream psychology were underpinned by particular epistemologies which fostered certain subjectivities around young people, and their education and futures. From the outset the project was engaged in several kinds of "historical thinking" (Teo, 2015) and the main focus of this was to investigate the conditions that have made it possible for certain types of psychological knowledge and wellbeing subjectivities to make sense and gain authority within contemporary education and education policy. While this did involve an historical investigation (in the more traditional sense of the word) it was more centred around genealogical analyses which are designed as an analytic method to make visible "the problematisations of our present" (Koopman, 2013, p. 24). Genealogy is an analysis of power which is focused on the ways in which subjects are constituted through discourse (Bacchi, 2000; Parker, 2013; Rose, 1996) and it frames analyses in terms of the matrices of power and authority that give rise to the conditions under which certain sentences or statements are afforded a truth value, and are therefore capable of being uttered (Hacking, 2004; Rose, 1996, 1998).

A foundational idea of this project was that the dominant forms of psychology around education in Australia are those informed by epistemic positions which are inherently individualistic, and in addition they serve to co-construct psychological objects or, as De Vos (2013, p. 102) describes it, the claim that psychology is simply about "what psychologists do" ought to be understood in light of the fact that "psychology is about the human being qua *homo psychologicus*. Psychological man is always already psychologized man. Psychology is psychologization". With this in mind, the genealogical analysis here not only looked at

psychological knowledge in a disciplinary sense but was also an examination of the ways in which it leaks out into a range of other domains in order to socialise and normalise the process of psychologisation. A process by which psychological discourse and subjectivities become common, a part of the sociocultural milieu.

This project contended that increasingly neoliberal forms of subjectivity (Teo, 2018) are encircling education and schooling (Vasallo, 2014), creating a context whereby wellbeing subjectivities are focused on the individualised management of the self. This neoliberal wellbeing proposes to prepare young people for their employment future, but also through concepts such as positive psychology and positive education suggests a there is a kind of "psychological immunisation" by promising the possibility of "inoculating young people against depression" (Craig, 2009, p. 6). With mental health being a significant problem amongst young people and the desire for educators, school leadership and policy makers to address this issue, it can be seen how something like wellbeing has gained significant traction around education despite it being found to be poorly defined and its efficacy poorly evaluated (Svane et al., 2019).

Thus, the project explored the role of psychology as an epistemic institution and the power it has had to shape conceptions and problematisations of youth, development, wellbeing, and education. The main area of investigation were the ways in which mainstream psychological knowledge has informed and influenced education policies in concert with neoliberal ideologies which was addressed through the following research questions: What has been the role of psychology in the co-constitution of neoliberal forms of subjectivity around young people's wellbeing with regard to their schooling and education in Australia?

a. Who or what has been made a problem for neoliberal forms of wellbeing subjectivities to be the solution?

b. How have neoliberal forms of wellbeing subjectivities been contingently constructed for young people and their schooling and education?

The aim of this project was not simply a theoretical investigation, for as proposed by Foucault (1980, pp. 207–208) "theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice". The aim was to bring historical thinking as a mode of critical praxis for critical community psychology in order to underline the ways in which psychology is not simply about problem solving but that it is also about problem making (Teo, 2015). Thus, the importance of utilising Bacchi's (2009) method of analysis which aims to uncover the ways in which problems are represented in policies. This method is one which challenges "the commonplace view that policy is the government's best attempt to deal with 'problems'" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 1). Policies understand problems to be a particular sorts of problems and thus they give shape to them, and this project has highlighted how education policies are not merely documents which offer solutions to problems, but within them are pre-existing problem representations (Bacchi, 2009, 2012).

Community psychology is "trying to study a moving target, a dynamic culture and a changing society" (Montero, 2010, p. 489) which is why the main papers in this project have covered a wide range of contextual elements from the historical, political and economic influence on knowledge production, to the policies around youth and education, to the community tales of joy from a youth development program. These papers, discussed in the following sections, in conjunction with the other connecting chapters establish a history of the present. In doing so, they call into question the ways in which psychology operates as an epistemic institution, and its power to truth claims about the nature of young people, wellbeing, education and their futures. Thus, the project can be regarded as an epistemic intervention, but not merely for "epistemological masturbation" a "self-pleasuring with one's own canon of knowledge/research" (Fine, 2016, p. 357) nor to engage in epistemic

grandiosity (Teo, 2019) but to demonstrate the value of historical thinking and epistemological reflexivity for critical community psychology research and praxis, and its role in working toward justice and social change.

The epistemic institution of psychology

Psychology education was a starting point for the investigation as it is an important source of the dominant forms of psychological knowledge and discourse. In doing so, the paper visits some of the enduring epistemic features of psychology education and the ways in which dominant forms of psychological knowledge have been aided by the philosophical tendencies of neoliberalism. This relationship between psychology and neoliberalism has been noted elsewhere (Adams et al., 2019; Ratner, 2019; Teo, 2018), but important to this project was to identify some of the ways in which neoliberalism manifests itself as actually existing within psychology education in Australia (Dean & Hindess, 1998; Peck et al., 2018).

Although the issues of neoliberal universities (Abendroth & Porfilio, 2015) and their impacts on education can be regarded as having similarities across many contexts (Apple, 2001, 2012), this project aligns with Humphrys' (2019) notion that neoliberalism in Australia arose under very particular conditions and thus its impact or influence on higher education is also particular. Some of this is due to the relationship of government funding to higher education, which is unique to Australia (Connell, 2013c), but also that the genesis of neoliberalism in Australia "occurred through a 'positive' corporatist project centred on working class sacrifice in the national interest" and that the use of corporatism within neo-liberalism "led to a particular method of labour disorganisation—one marked by the labour movement itself implementing successful wage suppression and self-policing of industrial activity" (Humphrys, 2019, p. 9). In contrast to other western liberal democracies where neoliberal ideologies were ushered in by conservative governments (i.e., USA and UK), in Australia they were born during a centre left government and taken up by the trade unions

(Humphrys, 2019). This distinction is an important one, as one of the ideas established in this paper is the ways in which there has been an ongoing imperative for psychology to be seen as not simply a theoretical, academic pursuit. In this sense, the history of psychology in Australia is one that has close ties with both government regulation and the labour market, a relationship which, as proposed by the paper, is one which makes it amenable to the neoliberal imperatives of economic utility.

In many ways the history of psychology in Australia is one of seeking legitimacy as an area of knowledge and expertise. In an effort to move beyond the sandstone walls of the university it branched out into increasingly applied areas in order to establish its utility, and it is suggested that this came about after it was deemed that psychology was overly focused on epistemology (Bucklow, 1976; Taft & Nixon, 1976). With increasing pressures to be utilitarian, rather than epistemologically reflexive, one can see how mainstream psychology, with logical positivism at its centre, is afforded an almost unquestioned utility in that it appears to be dealing with that which is naturally existing. The more psychological knowledge moves in decontextualised ways the more it accumulates epistemic power.

This dispersion also means that the classification of people via psychological knowledge does not rest solely with psychologists, but that other agents and experts bolster the legitimacy of such classifications. In the case of this project, these include a range of people in and around education such as school leadership, education ministers and policy makers, teachers, and parents, all of whom are agents in the governing of young people. This is discussed further in relation to the third paper, but this function of psychological discourse builds a picture of how psychology becomes entwined in domains outside its discipline.

From a liberation psychology perspective (Montero, 2007, 2010), one of the pressing aims is to expose and unsettle the ideology of everyday realities, to de-inevitablise and de-ideologise them, as they represent the hegemonic "constructions of reality that reflect and

serve the interests of the powerful" (Adams et al., 2015, p. 216). This first paper exposes the ways in which the "ruling psychologies," as suggested by Seedat et al. (2017, p. 423), are "minister to the hegemonic neoliberal order" and are "enacted to…privilege extreme notions of individualism and competitiveness." A key feature of these hegemonic versions of psychology is that they go forward with little regard for history, "social responsibility, collective transformation, and pluriversality" (Seedat, 2017, p. 423).

Policy, problematisations and critical community psychology

The second paper sought to offer a rationale for historical thinking in community psychology via genealogy and critical problematisation. Through outlining the conceptual basis for these and a worked example it aimed to show the utility of this kind of analysis, particularly for ensuring the contextualisation of problems. Although, as noted, context has been a feature of many forms of community psychology, it has also been argued that this can be lost, or obscured, by neoliberal imperatives for efficacy and by economic rationality (Trickett, 2015; Evans, 2014). Furthermore, neoliberal contexts are increasingly pushing community organisations and their allies toward evidencing what works (Coleman, 2020; Fine, 2012), or, as outlined in the paper, toward problem-solving. The issue for community psychology is that these economic pressures lead to a decontextualised framing of problems. Important macro level elements of analysis such as politics and power are lost in the service of solving predetermined problems.

The critical methods, as outlined in this paper, examine the operations of power at various levels. Bacchi (2012, p. 4) suggests that analysing problematisations via critical policy analysis is a way to make politics visible and that "the productive effects of power are observed through problematizations." For Bacchi (2012, p. 7) problematisations are identified as "powerful and yet contingent ways of producing the 'real'" and that governmentalities, operate through problematisations, thus "emphasizing the importance of subjecting them to

critical scrutiny and pointing to the possible deleterious effects they set in operation". Thus uncovering what is produced as real by psychological and wellbeing discourse within education policy helps also uncover the implicit representations of problems (Bacchi, 2009). In doing so, this reveals who the policy is seeking to govern, and importantly who is most likely to feel the power of being governed.

The paper demonstrated that the subjectivities emerging in education policy, are strongly tied to notions of economic productivity, citizenry and future success. The neoliberal self (Vassallo, 2015) becomes a central element for wellbeing discourse in the policies analysed. These subjectivities are class and colour blind and reinforce the falsehood that accountability for cultural and social mobility lies solely in the hands of the individual (Hodgetts & Griffin, 2015). Neoliberal wellbeing subjectivities are also able to reinforce the culture of meritocracy already present in much of the moral project of schooling and as demonstrated are support the narrative that schooling is a necessary good for society. What is also demonstrated here is that through contextualising the problem of wellbeing through critical analysis these subjectivities are obscuring the real factors that determine educational attainment. Through historical thinking it was shown that psychological discourses in policy which reduce or erase social and structural factors from understanding how young people progress through education, and indeed their wellbeing, are unhelpful or potentially harmful.

This paper is a call to community psychology to look to this kind of analysis as a way to understand how problems are shaped, which is also a call to recommit to a focus on power. Understanding how power is enacted through policy and is emboldened by a network of experts and agents, a network that potentially includes community psychology. This analysis should also be focussed on the ways in which community psychological knowledge constructs people, communities, and problems. A lack of critical reflexivity at the disciplinary or epistemic levels for community psychology sees it in danger of slipping into

dominant forms of psychology. Others have noted that community psychology is "gradually becoming decreasingly diverse, decreasingly radical and decreasingly a critical alternative to the disciplinary ideologies, theories, procedures and practices of mainstream psychology" (Coimbra et al., 2012, p. 139).

The moralisations of psychological meritocracy

An important conclusion of the third paper is that the moralisations within the discourses about young people, their education and futures are inextricably linked to classed norms and ideals. It is well established that schooling and education is deeply classed in Australia (Teese et al., 2007; Teese & Polesel, 2003a) and therefore it is not unreasonable to suggest that these moralisations also seek to make sense of that sociopolitical reality; they seek to make sense of the continued reproduction of social class. As outlined in the second paper, for students from low-socioeconomic families, attending low-socioeconomic schools, in low-socioeconomic areas, the challenges to educational success are significantly greater than for those from high-socioeconomic ones (Croxford & Raffe, 2007; Smyth, 2007; Teese, 2007; Teese & Polesel, 2003a). Therefore, it might also be reasonably suggested that these classed moralisations are indeed dividing practices which delineate the boundaries of what is desirable/undesirable (Foucault, 1982a).

Hence comes the use of Hunt's (1999) analytic frame in this paper to establish the elements and agents of moral regulation; the moralised subject, who in this case we might suggest are those who are the audience for the policy, namely the school leadership and other governing agents within education, as well as parents and teachers; and the moralised object or target, in this case the students. The moral subjects form a network of authorities that ultimately participate in the governing of young people, and analysing the interdependencies between the political desires (rationalities) and the "governmental technologies" enables us to "understand the multiple and delicate networks that connect the lives of individuals, groups

and organisations to the aspirations of authorities in the advanced liberal democracies of the present" (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 176).

It would be erroneous to suggest that this is simply about individual authority figures seeking to regulate young people in various schooling or educational contexts (although this is part of the picture), when in fact the enactments of policy are a part of the machinations of politics and governing. These political rationalities "have a characteristically moral form" and they "elaborate upon the fitting powers and duties for authorities" (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 178). Within liberal democracies these do not simply manifest as state intervention, but rather, as determined by Rose and Miller (1992)

> political forces have sought to utilise, instrumentalise and mobilize techniques and agents other than those of 'the State' in order to govern 'at a distance'; other authorities have sought to govern economic, familial and social arrangements according to their own programmes and to mobilize political resources for their own ends. (p. 181)

The concept of governing at a distance is useful in explaining the expanding reach of the ministerial declarations outlined in this paper, as it supports the claims that there is indeed a network of "experts who classify" (Hacking, 2006, p. 295). Here it is asserted that these experts or agents of moral regulation are informed by policy pronouncements that form part of a larger moral project, one that is underpinned by neoliberal ideology.

In terms of an analysis of power this process of governing can be seen as an intensification of power (Nealon, 2008) in that it takes governing into families, bodies, and psyches. As is proposed by Kelly (2001), the "emerging (neo)liberal problematisations of government witness the increasing mobilisation of expertise in more sophisticated attempts to govern the ungovernable" (p. 28). Thus, normative ideals of what it means to be not only a successful student but a successfully Australian citizen through economic productivity

become moral imperatives, and demonstrated here are supported by neoliberal wellbeing discourse.

As with other moralisations, these neoliberal moralisations carry the tenor of having always existed, or as having no obvious origin (Hunt, 1999; Minson, 1988), which means they are able to travel through networks of moral agents as accepted truths about young people and their education. These moralisations are buttressed by various aspects of mainstream psychology (such as developmental, education, and school) which co-construct normative ideas about young people and their development (Lesko, 2012; Walkerdine, 2008) so that the "discourses of well-being and character both recast virtues and moral values as psychological constructs that can be trained without requiring moral engagement" (Ecclestone, 2012b, p. 476).

The epistemological position underpinning mainstream psychology is quasi-naturalistic which also means that classifications often go unquestioned or under/un-theorised as they are conceived as naturally existing objects (Danziger, 1997; Rose, 1998). It has also been pointed out that the mechanism of naturalism was a key feature which served to deproblematise the problem of education inequality (McCallum, 1980). Naturalism was able to situate problems within students because it was a part of their nature. So the moralisations concomitant within mainstream psychology are given a grounding in naturalness, but also in objectiveness, and therefore are also given utility within neoliberal ideology. Thus, the moral voice of neoliberal psychology is able to problematise students in ways that casts them as a naturally objective problems and also appeal to the higher democratic purpose of schooling as "educational opportunity for all" (McCallum, 1986, p. 235). The cost however for normalising aspirational subjectivities bound by these moralisations is that there is usually a binary opposite that is the undesirable, unproductive, un-Australian.

The undesirable identified through the dividing practices of these moralisations is the risky citizen, and risk is identified in a number of ways. Firstly, the category of youth and adolescent is constructed as risky, as unprepared or less equipped. As noted by Kelly (2001, p. 24), historically "discourses of youth at risk are framed by the idea that youth should be a transition from normal childhood to normal adulthood". These notions of development and transition are also marked by particular Western liberal cultural concepts that also suggest youth are also at risk due to their economic dependence on adults (Walkerdine, 2008). Underlying these more general discourses of youth at risk are more specific ones where risk is related to the management of the self.

At the centre of these moralisations is the obligation or duty to attend to one's wellbeing. Wellbeing discourses as described in this paper encompass mental and physical health, but all with a similar moralisation, described by Greco (1993) as the duty to be well. This duty, it was shown, now extends to one's psychological self and attending to this duty is a way in which one minimises risk. It would be simple enough to argue that attending to one's wellbeing is just a good idea, and indeed the apparent increase in mental health issues among young people would support this idea (Svane et al., 2019). However, the inescapable fact highlighted in this paper is that the Australian government and peak mental health organisations all link metal health to Australia's economic success. So while it can be said that the moralisations around wellbeing might be well intentioned, it is really the sense of duty, or as O'Malley (2013, p. 197) describes it the prudentialism of these discourses, that does the moralisation and has been noted as a "technology of governance" that responsibilises young people with managing their wellbeing risks.

Emerging from this are subjectivities whose moral position is one that this paper describes as a psychological meritocracy. A psychological meritocracy was defined as a sociocultural/political system which explains status hierarchy as belonging to those who

attend to an essentially psychological self. With this, the responsibility for social status is psychologised. It was shown that this notion of psychological meritocracy is also increasingly being connected to employability for young people and that new classifications are emerging around young people having an entrepreneurial mindset (The Foundation for Young Australians, 2016). These discourses are set against a background of an increasingly shrinking and precarious youth labour market and for those young people who are able to make it successfully, this can be explained naturally in terms of their ability to attain the appropriate mindset. For those for whom the labour market is less fruitful, this can be explained as not having managed the self, as not having the correct mindset, as not being entrepreneurial enough, as not having a positive attitude.

Discourses of meritocracy have been at the heart of Western liberal democracies and have often been deployed in the service of explaining away the unearned privileges usually afforded by whiteness (Moreton-Robinson, 2004). While it would be too blunt an analysis to suggest that the moralisations of neoliberal wellbeing as outlined here are simply a product of this, there is certainly some evidence to suggest that at-risk youth (especially in terms of employment) are multicultural youth and Indigenous youth.

What's the problem represented to be?

To summarise so far, it may be useful to return to Bacchi's (2009) series of questions in her approach to policy analysis and offer a brief response to each of them based on the analyses. Her questions are:

What's the problem represented to be in a specific policy?

The problem represented in the education policy documents is that of the risky citizen which it has been concluded are particular groups of students whose participation in education does not necessarily fit with the traditional project of secondary schooling as a democratic good for all. It was also concluded that this is an issue of social class and the

demands on the problem school leaver who is vulnerable to being unemployed and hence at risk.

What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?

A number of assumptions and presuppositions about youth and development were established, such as youth being unfinished, incomplete, and that they are "citizens in potentia" (Rose, 1999, p. 122). It is also assumed that young people will all become productive and responsible citizens through economic participation and gainful employment, and that a key feature of this is being able to attend to a neoliberal selfhood. Furthermore, it is assumed the psychological aspects of young people and their education are universal and generalisable.

How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?

This kind of problem representation has come about from a desire to explain educational inequities, to account for the dramatic changes in student populations and therefore student outcomes, the parent-as-consumer context of school choice, and ultimately to maintain the appearance of education as a democratic good within liberal democracies.

What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?

The problem also fits into a pre-existing and pervasive culture of meritocracy within schooling and education that places high value on the individualistic elements that help attain educational mobility, and therefore it is presumed, social mobility as well. This culture of meritocracy is also the thing that is perhaps left silent in this problem. The psychologisation of education and schooling has meant the idea of individual merit and natural ability has become entrenched in everything from pedagogy to curriculum and policy. This is further compounded by the competitive nature of schooling which is amplified by high-stakes testing, and the ranking and scoring of students.

What effects are produced by this representation of the problem? Consider three kinds of effects: discursive effects; subjectification effects; lived effects.

The effects of this problem representation have been explicated in terms of Hacking's (1986) idea of making up people and that through institutions and experts, neoliberal wellbeing subjectivities become validated. They are also enacted in the classroom through a range of technologies of the self (Rose, 1998) which are manifested through an ever-increasing ethos of therapeutic education (Wright, 2011). Many of the technologies of the self are enacted through a range of specific wellbeing style programs and interventions (Svane et al., 2019), but the psychologisation of education also occurs in a pedagogical manner as early as primary schooling with things like social and emotional learning (Frydenberg et al., 2017), positive psychology/positive education (Seligman et al., 2009), and growth mindset (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). These are all more than just techniques of teaching and learning, as they are also further embedding mainstream psychological epistemology within education. As discussed in the second paper of this project, the narrow, monocultural underpinnings of this ruling psychology has very real lived effects for students, in that it engenders subjectivities which fail to represent students from other cultural backgrounds. Students are therefore unable to see themselves in these neoliberal forms of subjectivity and are in fact marginalised by them (Coleman, 2020).

How/where is this representation of the 'problem' produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

In order to answer this, the project turns to the final paper. This paper documented some of the ways in which critical praxis was undertaken during a program evaluation that sought to disrupt some mainstream epistemologies and some of the ways in which young people from the African-Australian diaspora are problematised.

Epistemic reflexivity and spaces of possibility

Underpinning Hacking's (2006) concept of the ways in people are classified and their subsequent interaction with those classifications is the notion that these create spaces of possibility under which they understand themselves and thus are able to conceive of themselves in context. Hacking (2006) suggests that there are not endless possibilities, but rather we are constrained by the various classifications made available through a range of sociocultural and institutional practices. An important caveat here is that Hacking (2006) avoids race as a category for his analysis of kinds of people. This is not to disregard that fact that race and racialisation have historically played a part in organising people, or that indeed sciences of race have perpetrated untold violence and injustice, but rather he dismisses the naturalism which underpins the more psychological explanations for people using race classifications and argues that there is no foundation or use for race as a human kind classification (Hacking, 2005).

Here the project expands on the ideas established in the previous chapters of the risky citizen, and the moralisations and assumptions that come with such a category. Specifically explored in the paper were some of the ways in which narratives about young people from the African-Australian diaspora, as told by a youth engagement program and its stakeholders, essentialise them as at-risk, or risky. The analysis here is not to minimise the reality that these young people do indeed face challenges from a racialising culture, and often experience a range of racism both in school and in society (Mansouri et al., 2009; Wyn et al., 2018). Instead it seeks to point out some of the ways in which the discourses around youth development programs fail to recognise how they start with these young people problematised a priori, and so fail to see the ways in which they have preconstructed solutions which shape the spaces of possibility for young people. It is proposed that this problematising of African-Australian young people belongs to a wider desire from

mainstream Australia for social integration, and that focusing on cultural difference and material difficulties situates the problem within the individual (Windle, 2008). In this case the African-Australian diaspora too is constructed as a problem, a problem community. This is an important point of epistemic reflection for community psychology as simply having a well-intentioned focus on a community is insufficient if they are being problematised in ways that cause epistemic injustice or violence.

Thus, through the expertise and authority of psychology and education, these young people are able to be constructed as risks for which there are neoliberal wellbeing solutions. Psychological discourse becomes dominant in the narratives of agencies delivering youth programs; in this case narratives which are centred around the at-risk citizen in an at-risk community. This becomes a way for dominant narratives to become culturally acceptable and are given gravitas by psychological discourse. In this instance, neoliberal forms of wellbeing subjectivities have become those which delineate the spaces of possibilities for young people. These subjectivities are incapable of, and perhaps unwilling, to capture the reality of those students who are likely to be classified as at-risk. In addition, these neoliberal forms of subjectivity are taken up by other institutions and organisations, and at-risk students are problematised within this frame.

The reason for engaging in more critical and creative methods for the evaluation of the program was to provide counter narratives (both community and personal) back to the organisation that would ultimately help expand the space of possibilities around the young people in the future. By providing details about the communities and lives of young people from the African-Australian diaspora different organisational narratives may evolve, and the value of affording young people epistemic power will be seen as important to future program development, and to future evaluations. The methods outlined are a way to unsettle, disrupt,

and replace dominant narratives and problematisations about young people and the communities from the African-Australian diaspora.

Chapter summary

What this entire project offers are ways to analyze the co-creation and maintenance of ways of knowing and being as established by Eurocentric/Western, neoliberal forms of psychology. For it is the de-ideologising, conscientising and problematising that are political means of advancing social change, liberation and wellbeing as outlined by Montero (2010)

> Well-being on its own is highly commendable, but it can be easily distorted into a welfare orientation which is based on charity and not on justice. Change, in turn, can also be highly commendable, but in the absence of liberation, there is no way to confirm that changes will address power differentials. (p. 490)

Liberation, in the sense of this project, is the resistance to neoliberal psychology and its wellbeing subjectivities. This means advocating, as the project does, for epistemic plurality within the discipline of psychology. It means revealing the epistemic power of institutions and organisations to develop and maintain narratives about young people and communities and countering those with praxis that focuses on epistemic justice. It means developing critical praxis that is able to uncover the mechanisms of power and knowledge that engender neoliberal subjectivities within policies and youth programs. A point made by Dutta et al. (2016) "As community psychologists we must also critically interrogate the subjectivities of those among us with privilege, that is, those who benefit from whiteness, from educational, economic, and gender privilege" (p. 15).

The need to focus on policies and their problem representations is a key insight from this project for critical community psychology praxis. Community psychology should be invested in the role of policy as it is psychologists with experience of working within communities who are most likely to see the impacts of policy implementation (Burton, 2013;

Montero, 2010). Community psychology needs to be well equipped to work with a critical bifocality that fosters bottom up epistemic justice whilst also being aware of the governing forces of politics, ideology, and power. This bifocality avoids the "illusion of communities as cosy and isolated microcosms, unaffected by global dynamics" (Montero, 2010, p. 492). The method of thinking in this study offers a way to investigate from the more macro level of problem representations in policy, down to the ways in which problems are maintained by epistemic organisations, to a range of experts who measure, validate, and legitimise them through practices and programs.

The critical bifocality (Weis & Fine, 2012) of focussing on problematisations means being able to see the ways in which dominant forms of psychological knowledge and discourse align with dominant political and cultural ideologies to manifest within policies. But importantly, these problematisations become dividing practices whereby people are divided inside themselves and/or divided from their communities (Foucault, 1982). Dividing practices become the foundation of marginalisation through normalising desirable ways of being within a culture, and in doing so they are also implying what is abnormal and undesirable. These cultural norms become accepted as common sense and so are able to make their way into policies with less critical questioning.

The ministerial declarations and the other governing documents examined here do not stand alone in producing narratives about what are normal, successful, productive, young people. They come from and are reinforced by the political and cultural context. They are not radical departures from the status quo, but rather, they try and make sense within it. Therefore, the finding here that neoliberal wellbeing and its concomitant moralisations and subjectivities pervade education policy must be seen in a wider sociopolitical and cultural context. This includes a public education context which, as demonstrated here, has consistently reproduced educational marginalisation along lines of social class. Neoliberal

psychology can therefore be seen as a part of a process that explains away marginalisation in order to uphold the democratic ideals of education. As highlighted by others (Fine & Burns, 2003; Hodgetts & Griffin, 2015; Weinstein, 2002), psychology has often been ill-equipped to deal with the complex intersections class and education.

For critical community psychology to be focussed on liberation and wellbeing, it must be focussed on questioning the marginalising impetus of policies and the resultant practices emanating from policy discourse. Questions must be asked about who are most likely the targets of policies, despite them often being framed in generalist and well-intentioned terms, and therefore who will be marginalised as a result of them. It has been well established that communities who face greater challenges in terms structural disadvantage are also usually those who are most likely to be the targets of governing interventions and policies (Brown, 2019; Burton, 2013; McCallum, 2017; Rose & Miller, 2013).

An increased focus on the impacts of social policy for community psychology has previously been argued for by Serrano-García (2013) and this project proposes that this should also include investigating how policy problem representations are maintained at more localised levels through dominant psychological epistemologies and ideologies. The analytic methods offered here directs critical community psychology praxis toward being engaged in problem-questioning at all levels, rather than becoming problem-solvers of pre-determined policy problems. This would also include the problem-questioning of community psychology knowledge and praxis itself. This focus is echoed by Coimbra et al. (2012) who outline a number of ways in which community psychology needs to redirect its thinking including "problematising individualism, the psychological and 'the community' as modes of conceptualisation and bases for intervention", "critiquing mainstream psychologies as disciplinary practices" and "emphasising capitalist neo-liberal globalisation, colonialism and patriarchy as fundamental causes of misery and ill-health in contemporary societies" (p. 139).

It has been developed here that epistemological ethics and epistemic justice are important elements of social change. The critically informed methods demonstrated here can positively influence praxis by building “the necessary consciousness to know where to act, why, when and how” (Montero, 2010, p. 490). Using these methods should also be used to uncover the power of psychological discourse within community psychology itself. Community psychology must also be aware of its own epistemic power to problematise people and communities in certain ways.

Chapter 9: Limitations and future directions

Given much of the analysis here is focused on policies and discourse arising within a certain timeframe, this potentially does not capture the ways in which psychological knowledge is shaped by changing context and over time. This also applies to the contextual differences within which psychology is understood, practiced and used in different parts of the world. Although reference to areas of psychology (e.g., mainstream, clinical, etc.) and sub-disciplines (e.g. community, critical, etc.) are necessary terms to differentiate and reference things, they have the potential to give the false impression that these things exist in an homogeneous way, when in fact they can differ greatly between, and even within, countries and cultures.

While the main focus of the analysis was around education policy, which it was assumed largely informs government (public) schooling, the education landscape in Australia also has both private and Catholic schools which are governed and managed in ways that differ to public schools. Therefore, the scope of this project is limited to public schooling, acknowledging that there may be similar issues for young people at non-government schools, and the project does not seek to assume that the findings here would generalise to all students in all schools. The same can be said for the project being specifically situated in Australia,

and thus the findings do not necessarily represent the enormous variety of schooling and education, and education policy around the world.

A theoretical limitation is that the focus on subjectivities is one that is itself shaped largely by Eurocentric ways of knowing and excludes conceptions of selfhood and knowing, such as Indigenous ones, that do not separate a self from the ecological, spiritual or place. While the abstraction of subjectivities is useful in the investigation of how power operates through discourse, it is limited by this cultural and theoretical specificity.

There is also a limitation in the focus of epistemic justice where it could reasonably be asked why focus on certain epistemic injustices and not others, and given that people from epistemic communities are agentic in their own ways, is the focus here simply applying a certain type of knowledge onto people and communities who already have their own? While efforts have been made here not to create a hierarchy of preferable epistemic foci, this cannot ever be a completely successful task. Therefore, it is acknowledged that the focus here may indeed be on only a few of many possible epistemic injustices occurring around young people, their education and their futures.

As stated in my researcher positioning, I came to this project with ideas about schooling and education informed by my own experiences and while this in itself is not necessarily a limitation, it does need to be re-stated that my current position of privilege has undoubtedly enabled me to make choices about certain issues and to look at them in certain ways. I am afforded a certain distance or comfort in my context which has enabled me to investigate the project in this way. Had the issue of wellbeing subjectivities in education been investigated by someone from a different class/ethnicity/gender, they may have done so in very different ways. Thus, my positionality has constructed the research in particular ways which also creates its boundaries.

Future research could examine the ways in which wilful subjects are being constructed by policy and practice in resistance to neoliberal forms of subjectivity. In order to unsettle some of the sanitised versions of neoliberal wellbeing, other research might look at the relatively mundane ways in which we know teachers and schools staff are attending to the material wellbeing of students in order to get them through schooling. I have been in schools where they keep a ready supply of food for students who, for whatever reason, are not able to bring lunch, and teachers will make them lunch. I have spoken with teachers who have washed uniforms for students if needed. Future research may also want to look at the pressure and constraints felt by teachers from the economic imperatives of neoliberal education and the ways they see neoliberal wellbeing subjectivities impacting themselves and students.

Other research may want to consider how neoliberal wellbeing and forms of subjectivity intersect with other marginalising elements for students, such as LGBTIQ+ students, who we know already have a difficult time with respect to schooling, education and wellbeing. This would also be a good avenue to investigate for students getting through schooling with an impairment, for, as established here, wellbeing cannot rightfully be constructed as a one-size-fits-all. In order to embrace epistemic justice as a part of wellbeing, student lives that are marginalised both in and outside school, need to be empowered to speak back to policy and power in a way that gives authority to their ways of knowing and being well.

Concluding Statement

The critical analysis methods employed within this project are not designed to uncover new truths. Therefore, it has not been the intention of the project to develop a picture of what wellbeing should be, or even whether it indeed exists. Rather the project has utilised critical problematisation and genealogy to more fully contextualise the contingent nature of wellbeing as it exists around psychology and education in Australia. Through examining the

epistemic power of psychology (institutionally and discursively) it has been shown here that wellbeing in many instances engenders neoliberal forms of subjectivity. These forms of subjectivity paint a distinct background not only for students but for teachers and school leadership about what it means to be a successful Australian citizen, and what psychological attributes lead to such success. This builds a culture of psychological meritocracy around schooling education and policy and enables educational inequity and marginalisation to be psychologised. The neoliberal psychologisation of education with the inequalities and injustices inherent in it does not simply maintain the status quo through maintaining Western liberal values around individualism, it is implicit in the co-creation of certain new subjectivities or human kinds. These new ways of being have been captured here under the idea of neoliberal wellbeing.

Neoliberal wellbeing is a way of imprinting particular values and moralisations into education and policy. The various entrepreneurial discourses centred around a Eurocentric psychological selfhood flow from ministerial documents to school leaders, to the media and to the public. They are made culturally commonplace as points of reference for how young people ought to progress through education toward successful, economically productive Australian citizenry. Through normalising neoliberal wellbeing as a positive cultural ethos it simultaneously normalises the opposite. Neoliberal un-wellbeing in regard to education might refer to subjectivities which do not fit tidily into the democratic ideals of education. This might be students for whom the system is challenging, failing, culturally insensitive, or violent, and who are marginalised through the discourses of wellbeing, positivity, meritocracy and self-work.

The power psychology has to make truth claims about what it means to be human has been a feature of this project. Far from being simply a discipline or professional practice that dispenses therapeutic interventions, its knowledge and discourses are entrenched in the

Australian social imaginary, in the sociocultural milieu, with some of it imported from US/Eurocentric traditions and knowledge and some of it particular to this context. The challenge raised by this project for psychology in general in Australia is to develop a concept of wellbeing that centres epistemic justice. In so doing, the ways in which it conceptualises, theorises, measures or talks about youth wellbeing would informed by the expertise of young people themselves and their communities, rather than by the assumptions built from disciplinary decadence or epistemic grandiosity. More than just giving a voice to young people, this means critically reflecting as adults, as psychologists, how we disempower, delegitimise, devalue and obscure other ways of knowing and being. This also invites us to think about the organisations and institutions we are a part of and the ways in which they implicitly and explicitly problematise people thus devaluing them as epistemic agents.

Chapter 10: References

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