CREATIVE APPROACHES TO RESEARCH

EXCAVATING WIDENING PARTICIPATION POLICY IN AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

SUBJECT POSITIONS, REPRESENTATIONAL EFFECTS, EMOTION

ERICA SOUTHGATE AND ANNA BENNETT

Purpose

The massification of higher education is a definitive feature of the last fifty years. Widening participation policy is a recent manifestation of this phenomenon. This article uses Foucauldian discourse analysis to identify two subject positions within Australian WP higher education policy, those of the cap(able) individual and the proper aspirant. The article also traces the feeling-rules associated with these subject positions to ask critical questions about neo-liberal forms of social justice.

Design/Methodology/Approach

A Foucauldian discourse analysis was conducted on a range of policy documents related to higher education during the period 2008-2013. Using Bacchi's (2012) 'what is the problem represented to be?' approach, two subject positions and their attendant feeling-rules were identified.

Findings

The two subject positions, the cap(able) individual and the proper aspirant, represent a quintessential neo-liberal subject who possesses 'natural' ability, hope for social mobility and has a highly individualised and entrepreneurial disposition. As a reinvention of social justice approaches to higher education, WP has wide

emotional and common sense appeal derived from its links to older discourses on meritocracy and the redemptive promise of education and childhood hope. A new neo-liberal appropriation of social justice, WP neglects many critical historical, social and contextual factors related to educational inequity.

Keywords: widening participation, higher education, policy, Foucault, discourse, subjectivity, emotion, aspiration, capability, meritocracy

— *"Policies pose problems to their subjects."* (Ball, 1993, p. 12)

— *"What are the modes of existence in this discourse?...What placements are determined for possible subjects? Who can fulfil these diverse functions of the subject?"* (Foucault, 1977, p. 138)

WHY DIG?

The massification of higher education (HE) has been linked to a post-1970s shift towards knowledge economies and neo-liberal forms of governmentality (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Brennan & Naidoo, 2008; Rizvi & Lingard, 2006; Teichler, 1998). A recent type of massification policy is the widening participation (WP) agenda. WP policy has sought to increase access and participation for groups who have traditionally been underrepresented in HE. The target of WP is "non-traditional students" (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002). The category of non-traditional student encompasses diverse groups of people including: those from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds; certain ethnic and cultural groups; people with a disability; those living in rural and remote locations; mature age students; and those who are the first in their family to attend university.

The HE policies of the British New Labour government (1997-2010) have received significant scholarly attention (Ball, Davies, David, & Reay, 2002; Burke, 2012; Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003; Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2009, 2010). The HE priorities of New Labour were widening (or fair) access aimed at increasing the participation of non-traditional students at elite universities and widening participation (WP) aimed at increasing the overall involvement of these students in university study (Hoare & Mann, 2011). While Australia has a history of social justice initiatives in HE (Gale & Tranter, 2011), the WP agenda was adopted by the *Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education* (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008), commissioned by the then Labor government

(2008-2013). The *Bradley Review* set the following targets: By 2020, 20% of all undergraduate students would come from low SES backgrounds and 40% of all 25-35-year olds would hold a Bachelor's degree. The 20/40 target was to be met through uncapping undergraduate places and by providing significant funding through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP), an initiative designed to "undertake activities and implement strategies that improve access to undergraduate courses for people from low SES backgrounds, as well as improving the retention and completion rates of those students" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). The UK and Australian WP agendas reflected a fusion of social democratic and human capital ideologies that produced a neoliberal version of social justice (Sellar & Gale, 2012).

In both British and Australian contexts, the outcomes of WP policy have been uneven. There have been differential levels of access and participation by the type of institution (first tier/elite versus other) and degree (prestigious degrees such as medicine versus lower status/social mobility degrees such as nursing or teaching). In the UK, WP did have a significant impact but it seems to have benefitted the middle class more than the working class, with participation rates masking considerable variation in social class participation between elite and second tier universities (Lunt, 2008). In Australia, there has been a rise in the proportion of students from low SES backgrounds accessing university, however it is likely that most growth has occurred in second tier universities not elite ones and, in all probability, in 'social mobility' degrees such as liberal arts, education and nursing (closer examination of Australian statistics is required on these issues). As Gale (2012) points out:

> For equity to have real teeth, proportional representation also needs to apply across institutions and course types. Short of this, it will be difficult to argue that the (Australian) policy, or at least its equity intent, has been successful. (p. 246)

In both the UK and Australia, WP policies have sparked public debate about the 'quality' versus the 'quantity' of undergraduate students, a debate that deflects attention away from the underlying cultural, social and economic determinants of post-school career and education options (see Gorard et al., 2007).

Australian WP policies have attracted some scholarly attention (for example Gale, 2011a; Sellar & Gale, 2011, 2012; Sellar & Storan, 2013), but not to the same extent as its UK counterpart. This article contributes to critical studies on WP by examining Australian WP policy since the *Bradley Review*, as both a discursive field (Ball, 1993) and an emotional arena (Fineman, 2000). While the metaphor of excavation has been applied to policy analysis (Fletcher, 1995; Jones & Ward, 2002), we utilise it in the same way as a Foucauldian "stone-cutting" approach to discourse (Foucault, 1979, p. 139). This involves an empirical uncovering of

subject positions, attendant emotions and governmental forms of power relations within the field (Southgate, 2003a, 2003b). Our excavation is in the tradition of Foucauldian critique where common sense assumptions are questioned, rather than simply accepted as straightforward, reasonable and true:

> A critique does not consist in saying that things aren't good the way they are. It consists in seeing on just what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established and unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based... To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy. (Foucault, 1983, p. 172)

Despite the often palpable feelings that "stick" (Ahmed, 2004) to the subject positions within the field, there are few explicit excavations of HE policy as an emotional arena (Brown, 2011; Hey & Leathwood, 2009; Sellar & Storan, 2013; Webb & Gulson, 2012). The contribution of our analysis is in its focus on identifying the subject positions of higher education policy, the effects of their representation, and their accompanying feeling-rules; a type of analysis that is relatively unique given the propensity to gloss over the significant connections between subjectivity, representation and emotion in higher education policy research (Hey & Leathwood, 2009; Leathwood & Hey, 2009). We focus on how these subject positions, their representational effects and feeling-rules congeal with broader neo-liberal ideologies. The intent of our excavation is to unsettle common sense approaches to neo-liberal inflected social justice, which we argue constitute a form of Foucauldian governmentality.

DIGGING TOOLS

Two of the most prominent Foucauldian-informed policy analysts are Carol Bacchi (1999, 2000, 2009) and Stephen Ball (1990, 1993, 1997). Both scholars offered the current analysis a range of theoretical tools for excavating policy. Ball (1993), for example, views policies as "textual interventions into practice" and as discursive "ensembles…(that) exercise power through a *production* of 'truth' and 'knowledge'" (p.12-14). Referring to Foucault's conception of discourse as something that is not just descriptive of objects and subjects but constitutive of them, Ball (1990) contends that:

> Discourses are, therefore, about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations…Discourses construct certain possibilities for thought…We do not (just) speak discourse. The discourse speaks us. (pp. 17-18)

It could be argued that policy discourses attempt to speak certain types of subjects into being. The constitutive processes of discourses are not however inevitable nor are subjects subservient to them (Foucault, 1990). Ball (1990) argues that it is best to understand education policy within a moving discursive frame in which interpretations, action, possibilities and probabilities are established, struggled over and sometimes elided. Expanding on Ball's discursive policy framework, Gale (1999) suggests that ideology should be added to the theoretical toolbox so that the influence of dominant political discourses can be adequately accounted for.

Bacchi (1999, 2000, 2012) is interested in the way policy 'problems' are framed or represented, and the social and political implications of this. Bacchi (2009) shifts the focus from policy solving to policy questioning by providing the analytic tool – 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' – or the WPR approach. The WPR approach poses six questions:

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?

2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?

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

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

5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?

6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced? (Bacchi, 2012, p. 21)

Policy texts—their development, implementation, pronouncement, interpretation and analysis—are "co(i)mplicated" with emotion (Horton & Kraftl, 2009, p. 2984). Policy 'problems' resonate with feeling, from turbulent reactions to moral panics, to more subtle moods leaking imperceptibly from the dry documents of government. To adapt a phrase from Fineman (2000), policy is an emotional arena. Feeling-rules (Fineman, 2003; Lupton, 1998) reverberate through policy, and these rules influence public sentiment and private moods. Individuals may have private reactions to policy, but policy also evokes an emotional materiality that is sensed, shared, contested and endured in the social

realm (Southgate, 2003a; Webb & Gulson, 2012). While affective responses in political and social spaces cannot be guaranteed (as if they are marketing devices which invoke measureable and assured policy-induced responses and commitments), they are not random processes either (Thrift, 2004).

Drawing on the influential work of Nikolas Rose, Ball (1997, p. 261) points out that forms of governance through policy do not simply constrain or repress people; rather, they express a mode of existence that inscribes techniques of self-scrutiny and self-regulation. We would add that policies also articulate modes of *emotional existence.* Feeling-rules are techniques of the self that are inherent in neo-liberal ideologies where each person is considered to be their own entrepreneur responsible for the cultivation of their personal human capital (Connell, 2013; Davies & Bansel, 2007). Feeling-rules are an important part of governmentality, and more specifically, neo-liberal forms of governmentality. Governmentality involves:

> [M]odes of action, more or less considered and calculated, that [are] destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others. (Foucault, 1994, p. 341)

In this article we deploy Bacchi's (2012) questions relating to representational effects, to aspects of WP policy in Australia. We excavate two subject positions that are evident in the discursive field: the cap(able) individual, and the proper aspirant. We trace how these two subject positions, with their attendant feeling-rules, may structure the possible field of action for those who are the target population of the policy—non-traditional students, particularly those who are from low SES backgrounds, and equity practitioners in university, school and community settings. In line with Bacchi's (2012), we ask questions about how subject positions are implicated in representations of the bigger WP 'problem' in HE, what assumptions underpin these representations, and what silences and effects are produced by them. In proposing this critique, we hope to make it less easy for neo-liberal versions of social justice to operate unchecked in HE.

WHERE TO DIG?

The discursive field of WP is expansive. It has globalised and localised manifestations. It consists of stock scripts and resistant voices, official government and institutional texts and more marginal discourses emanating from numerous sites. For the purposes of this article we have focused on WP policy in the Australia (2008-2013) as represented in the following texts:

- *Review of Australian Higher Education, Final Report.* (*The Bradley Review*) (Bradley, et al., 2008);

- The Australian Government's *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009);

- Two Labor government media releases (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, 2011) and one speech (Gillard, 2009);

- The Australian Government *Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program* (HEPPP) website, http://myuniversity.gov.au/ http://www.innovation.gov.au/highereducation/Equity/HigherEducatio nParticipationAndPartnershipsProgram/Pages/default.aspx;

- The Australian Government *My University* website, http://myuniversity. gov.au/

- The Australian Government Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, The Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program website (http://www. innovation.gov.au/highereducation/Equity/HigherEducationParticipati onAndPartnershipsProgram/Pages/default.aspx);

- Two Liberal Party speeches (Abbott, 2013; Pyne, 2011) and the Liberal Party (2013) *Education Plan;*

- *Towards a Performance Measurement Framework for Equity in Higher Education* (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013);

- Two documents from the peak university body, Universities Australia (Universities Australia, 2013a, 2013b).

The above documents constitute pronouncements on WP in Australian HE policy during the period the Australian Labor Party held government (2008-2013). Following Brown (2011) we have applied an iterative process of axial coding to identify the major subject positions, always guided by the questions of the WPR approach (Bacchi, 2012). We acknowledge the limitations of concentrating on only these types of texts as they do not adequately reflect the range of (lived) subjectivities shaped through HE (Brown, 2011; Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003; Reay, et al., 2009, 2010). Furthermore, we have not entirely enacted Ball's (1997) trajectory perspective where attention is paid to how "policies evolve, change and decay through time and space and their incoherence"(p.266). Rather, we do discuss a recent shift (since mid-2013) in HE discourse from that of the "quantity" to the "quality" of undergraduate student.

THE EXCAVATION

Subject position 1—The cap(able) individual

The *Bradley Review* offered an important opportunity to address inequity within Australian HE. It promised to focus on "providing opportunities for all capable people to participate to their full potential" (Bradley, et al., 2008, p. 10). In the introduction to its "vision" it argues:

> Australia needs to harness the *potential of all capable* students to contribute to society and the economy. Actively encouraging and facilitating entry into higher education for people from groups who are currently under-represented is vital [italics added]. (Bradley, et al., 2008, p. 10)

In this context, the 'problem' is framed as a lack of participation of people from under-represented groups. The solution is to "provide opportunities for all capable students to participate". Government largely accepted the frame presented by Bradley, both in terms of the detail about the problem and the solution. The Labor Government's *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), explains:

> The Government embraces in large measure the Bradley Review's vision for our universities. Australian higher education should…provide opportunities for all *capable* people from all backgrounds to participate to their full potential… The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that Australians of all backgrounds who have the *ability* to study at university get the opportunity to do so [italics added]. (pp. 7-12)

The WP problem then is that *cap(able) people from all backgrounds do not participate* in HE, and the policy solution is *to provide opportunities for all cap(able) people who have ability* to participate.[1] Thus, on close inspection, despite appearing to be based on the principle of "facilitating entry into higher education for people from groups who are currently under-represented" (Bradley, et al., 2008, p. 10), the problem and the solution instead come to contradict an opportunity for all discourse. The cap(ability) discourse of WP policy is very specific about who is targeted to participate in HE and, by implication, who is not. Despite some allusions to this particular *capability framing*, this aspect has received limited attention in scholarly work on WP policy (Burke, 2012; Gale, 2011b; Leach, 2013; Watts & Bridges, 2006). In the following discussion we outline how the discourse on "capability" produces six representational effects which problematize the social justice aspects of WP.

---

1   We bracket 'able' and 'ability' in the words cap(able) and cap(ability) to visually denote how the idea of capability contains older notions of ability within it.

The first effect relates to the absence of in-depth discussion about what "capability" is. This absence reinforces the notion that people simply possess capability or not, without addressing various social and structural forms of advantage and disadvantage which determine cap(abilities), and define what it is to be cap(able) in the first place. Although predicated with an emotive tone of inclusion for all and a "triggering of hope" for both low SES students and educators invested in making a difference for disadvantaged peoples (Sellar and Storan, 2013), as an approach, WP continues to exclude because the *imagined student already possesses* cap(ability). The message that only cap(able) people can learn in HE is never explained. As such, cap(ability) is left as a floating signifier; the idea is presented as if it were straightforward, when the concept it describes is not. The idea of cap(ability) floats around in policy buoyed by a deep sea of contingent meanings and associations. Even though it appears to be about social justice, the subject position of the cap(able) low SES individual situates them *regardless of (or despite) their social and personal backgrounds* (Leach, 2013).

Buried in footnote 3 of the Bradley review is the only elaboration on the idea of capability. Included as additional information to a point about how HE will produce graduates with knowledge, skills and understandings, the report states:

> [A] core function of contemporary higher education was identified as 'Developing high level knowledge and skills'. There is general agreement that there *is a third component of educated performance which involves a broader element* variously described as understandings, *capability* or attributes. This element permits the individual to think flexibly or act *intelligently* in situations which may not previously have been experienced. Often, value positions, including a commitment to lifelong learning or to responsible citizenship, or the insights derived from practical experience are seen to be components of this [italics added]. (Bradley, et al., 2008, p. 6)

Mention of the structural, socio-cultural and learning environments which influence these kinds of dispositions, performances and values are entirely lacking in WP policy documents, and explanations of the developmental and socialisation processes both within and before the individual enters HE are not apparent, except in some governmental reports of school education (Gonski et al., 2011; cf. Kenway, 2013). This absence leaves the aim to engaging with under-represented groups open to oversimplification and neglect.

A second effect of the cap(able) subject discourse—and one that is largely unacknowledged—is the connection between the notion of cap(ability) and older discourses of ability which are based on biological essentialism. Ideas of cap(ability) link back to older understandings of 'natural ability' or 'biology as destiny'. This is an analepsis, or a flashback to older discourses, which is surprising given established bodies of work which have challenged the logics of biologi-

cal essentialism. This analepsis highlights the deeply individualistic nature of the policy narrative.

Operating under the surface of the equal opportunity rhetoric is a common sense, essentialist understanding of ability and intelligence (Hamilton, 2010). Hay and Macdonald (Hay & Macdonald, 2010) argue that biologism dominates ideas about ability within education:

> Much of contemporary, popular thought regarding ability appears to be informed unknowingly, or otherwise, by the 'positive eugenic' perspective in the sense that ability is understood to be primarily innate and stable…Although current understandings of ability have progressed from the sexist, racist and classed beliefs of the original eugenicists and to a lesser extent the positive eugenicists, the belief in the centrality of genetics to ability has prevailed…Ability has been understood within these paradigms as a largely inherited capacity of an individual… (p.2)

Thus, cap(ability) is linked with older discourses about ability, potential and talent as if it were entirely spontaneously-occurring, natural and innate to individuals. This is a simplistic and limiting discourse which obscures how intellectual abilities are developmental and a result of complex synergies between biology and environment. In addition biological reductionism obscures the way that intellectual ability is defined by socio-historical and cultural processes.

In terms of modern schooling, Räty and Kasanen (2013) argue that the ideology of "natural giftedness" acts as a "pivotal organizing principle of the social representations of educability and intelligence" (p.1112). As such, views of natural ability continue to have powerful and multiple effects on conceptions of self and identity (Räty & Kasanen, 2013). The framing of cap(ability) in WP policy can act to perpetuate the myth that social and educational systems are neutral, and (re)inscribe individuals with blame for their lack of innate ability. A socially just version of WP should recognise the social production of cap(ability) beyond the ideology of natural giftedness.

Because it does not adequately address what cap(ability) is, WP policy produces a third effect—it links back into and reinforces older meritocratic discourses about who deserves to go to university. In her analysis of policy developments related to WP in New Zealand, England and Australia, Leach (2013) suggests that the WP agenda about capable people is a merit-oriented approach to higher education, based on personal attributes rather than equality of outcome or social justice. Cap(ability) certainly assumes participation is premised on an individual demonstrating (past) success in gaining required skills and knowledge. Although the scope for inclusion is widened in terms of university entry, the system still operates by affording entry to individuals who have demonstrated merit in advance (*before entry*). This meritocratic frame represents an important limitation

for the scope of WP because it is really dependent on pre-entry performance, and its measure of success is essentially located at graduation. Success in HE is of course not just dependent upon the innate cap(ability) of students who show merit. Success is also reliant upon the actions of institutions and educators, and is determined to a reasonable extent on resourcing. The complexity of what determines success in HE is rarely discussed in policy documents. Within the discourse on cap(ability) there is no mention of what happens between entry and graduation in HE—there is only pre-existing cap(ability) based on merit and assumed success. As a result, a "policy apparition" (Webb & Gulson, 2012, p. 89) or powerful hermeneutic gap operates which reduces HE to an ethereal space where the very concept of *education* itself becomes absent.

The logic of WP connects strongly with the older meritocratic notions of success that locate responsibility for engaging (and not being "able" to engage) in HE *with the individual*. By applying Bacchi's (2012)"what's the problem represented to be" approach we can see how students are positioned as either possessing or lacking capability even before they enter HE. The policy problem is the under-represented but the solution is merely a new layering of an older meritocratic discourse of an imagined 'ideal' student who usually just happens to come from a low SES background.

Implicated in this requirement for cap(ability) is a fourth effect where the aim is to "harness people's potential", rationalised as utilitarianism (for the wider social and economic good). This representational effect seems inherently inclusive; however, within this human capital approach to WP, the good of all and each is ultimately posed as the *responsibility of the individual* to participate in HE, to gain desirable employment and to work to secure the competitive economic standing of the nation within a global context. Because cap(ability) is couched in a *form of utilitarianism* that is infused by a neoliberal appeal to economic gain and individual upward mobility, the theme of inclusivity becomes problematic and disconnected from its precursory *opportunity for all* message. The logic of human capital was the central feature of the UK *Dearing Report* (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997), the precursor to the *Bradley Review*. In point 8 of the Foreword to the *Dearing Report*, the logic of the neoliberal human capital is described as a rationale for WP: "it is now widely recognised that economic prosperity relies on the presence within the labour market of large numbers of individuals with higher level capabilities".

Both the *Dearing Report* and *Bradley Review* position WP as an economic capacity-building project to be achieved through an appeal to the consumer desire for individual economic gain and social mobility (Sellar & Storan, 2013; Burke, 2012). HE institutions and the nation are considered to hold the 'capacity' for generating wealth and prosperity. Capacity is represented as something possessed by individuals who have completed HE. Capacity is considered an ability to ac-

quire the skill and knowledge for individual and national economic gain (capital). The market discourse of human capital is a form of utilitarianism that can preclude consideration of other choices, possibilities and outcomes different from economic ones (Bennett et al, 2012; Slack, 2003).

The fifth representational effect is that the cap(able) subject position implicitly relies on the idea of an abject Other—the *incapable individual*. Because some people are represented as having the cap(ability) to study at university, and because discussion of social context, developmental experiences (and the role of education itself) is absent, it is implied that incapable individuals have innate deficits. According to the equally elusive categorisation of the implied incapable individual, this is a person who does not possess the potential to "act intelligently", provide "commitment" and contribute "insights" (Bradley et al, 2008, p.6).

Policy apparitions or interpretive gaps and 'sensed signs' operate in WP policy (Sellar & Storan, 2013; Webb & Gulson, 2012). Webb and Gulson (2012) argue, "subjects make sense of, or represent, the indeterminacies and contradictions of policy—subjects fill in these spaces affectively" with multiple interpretations and feelings of hope, denial, self-doubt, and inadequacy (p. 92). One important "policy-sensing" of WP policy is fear of incompetence or of not being capable (Webb & Gulson, 2012). The "sensed-sign" of the incapable individual produces a whole host of interpretations for students and educators who register and endow the *absence* of what cap(ability) means with a significant *presence*. Within WP policy educ-*able*-ness is posed against an absent, abject Other who *lacks* the higher educ-*able*-ness.

The limited definitional category of cap(ability) restrains the very students WP seeks to engage and potentially limits the social justice work of equity practitioners and university educators. For example, students may worry: 'what if I don't have the ability?' Likewise, some teachers comment: 'some students just don't have ability', without due recognition that ability is a construct enabled by complex processes of relational development within socio-historical contexts. This points to a sixth policy-effect where the discourse of cap(ability) is caught up in a complex paradox created between inclusivity (opportunity for all) and exclusivity (only the (cap[able]).

When students assume that cap(ability) is fixed, they come to have a lowered opinion of their ability, feel helpless and withdraw (at the very least emotionally) from believing they can achieve (Hay & Macdonald, 2010). This limits our understanding of student potential, of learning as relational and developmental, and of the importance of teaching in education. The emotion so central to learning and teaching (the joy of discovery, the thrill of mastery, the crushing disappointments, the frustration, the fear, the self-doubt, anger and pleasure) are also left unacknowledged when the relational context is erased. It is critical to recognise that the construction of cap(ability) is dependent "upon the interests and objectives of those observing

or judging the abilities of others" (Hay & Macdonald, 2010, p. 1). Both the "*politics* of recognition" as the socio-cultural frame that attributes value to certain ways of being and doing (Appadurai, 2004), and the "*processes* of recognition"— the particular values, desires and assumptions about truth and validity informing the decisions of student ability for teachers—are powerful forces in the dynamic construction of cap(ability). Contrary to the dominant discourse which focuses on the individual agent, it is important to emphasise that cap(ability) is relational and structural. It is formed and enacted within specific normative frames and contexts, "depending on the opportunities and resources available to different groups" (Sellar, Gale, & Parker, 2009). In response to the need to reconceptualise WP, Sellar and Gale (2011) argue that this kind of rethinking equity is actually "about rethinking higher education itself" (p. 130).

What all of these effects illustrate is that the problem with WP policy has been its focus on attracting *capable people's capacity to function,* as distinct from *developing people's capabilities to function* (Sen, 1985, 2004). Within the dominant discourse on capability, learning as a powerful process of 'becoming' in *relation* to existing domains of knowledge and power is denied. Deconstructing the idea of cap(ability) that is woven through the seductive rhetoric of WP offers the possibility for challenging rigid, essentialist notions of who is cap(able) and why they are cap(able). The logic of capability– encompassing 'ability', 'potential' and 'talent'– needs to be radically reconsidered and rearticulated in a form of WP policy that recognises the relational and processual dynamic of the construct rather than as a fixed, innate attribute of a gifted individual.

Subject position 2—The proper aspirant

Like the idea of capability, 'aspiration' has not been subject to rigorous definition in Australian WP policy. The focus on 'raising aspirations' was a "policy borrowing" (Halpin & Troyna, 1995) from the WP agenda of the UK New Labour (1997-2010) government, particularly that of the *Aimhigher* initiative, as Burke (2012), explains:

> The discourse of 'raising aspirations' took central stage as the Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge initiative was introduced in September 2001. This initiative set out the Government's aim to increase the number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who had the qualifications and potential necessary to enter higher education…but might have 'lacked aspiration'. (p. 20)

The figure of the low SES person, with their distinct lack of the 'proper' aspiration, inhabits the policy texts of the Australian Labor Government. For example, the *Bradley Review* (Bradley, et al. 2008, p. 27) states that: "Barriers to access for such students include their previous educational attainment, no awareness of the long-term benefits of higher education and, thus, no aspiration

to participate." The Labor Government's major policy document, *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 14), makes clear its "intention is to create leading practice and competitive pressures to increase the aspirations of low SES students to higher education." By removing the government controlled limits (caps) on funded university places, the Labor government signalled its intention not only to raise aspiration but to meet demand, as this excerpt from a press release from Senator Chris Evans, (former Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations), suggests:

> "We are determined that all Australians—regardless of their background or where they live—should have the opportunity to gain a university education," Senator Evans said. "A university education is a ticket to greater career choice and to high skilled and high paid jobs. These are aspirations that thousands more Australians are now able to realise." (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011).

There has been spirited critical engagement with the idea of raising the aspirations of non-traditional students both in the UK (for example, Ball, et al., 2002; Burke, 2012; Slack, 2003) and Australian contexts (Gale, 2011a, 2011b; Sellar & Gale, 2012; Sellar, et al., 2009). Research suggests that many students from these backgrounds already have a 'high' aspiration for university study or an occupation requiring a degree (Bowden & Doughney, 2010; Prosser, McCallum, Milroy, Comber, & Nixon, 2008). Some commentators suggest that the idea of raising aspirations is based on a normative hierarchy that privileges university over vocational education, and middle class ideals over working class ones, thus feeding into existing deficit discourses about the working class (Ball, et al., 2002; Burke, 2012; Reay, 2001; Slack, 2003). In a comprehensive literature review, Gorard et al. (2007) found no compelling evidence that raising aspiration makes any difference to patterns of participation in HE. Indeed, in the Australian context, Sellar and Gale (2012) observe that the policy focus on aspiration is:

> a 'hinge' concept that enables acknowledgment of social democratic imperatives while promoting neoliberal market logics as an appropriate means for responding to them…Those that are not aspirational in the (higher education) context are assumed to lack awareness about, and the desire to access, university. However, closer analysis of the discourse of aspiration in (higher education) policy suggests a relationship between the 'problem' of 'students' and 'families' 'low aspirations' and the economic aspirations of the nation. (pp. 96-98)

The focus on creating 'proper' university aspirants from low SES and other non-traditional groups has five interrelated, and we would argue, troubling effects which we will outline in this section of the article. Firstly, to aspire, be it at individual, institutional or national level, is not just an act of rational intention (cf. Gorard & See, 2013). Reducing aspirations to calculated choices diminishes

the feeling-rules that permeate governmental power relations, including how some subject positions are legitimised over others. If the policy problem is represented as people from low SES backgrounds not *feeling* the need to go to university then the solution is to target these people with a range of programs designed to massage their future-oriented desires (Sellar, et al., 2009). Working class subjectivity is positioned as 'unknowing' in terms of factual knowledge about the benefits of HE and ignorant of lost (economic) potential. The ignorance of the working class is contrasted with an idealised middle class subject who knowingly cultivates educational opportunities to achieve future social and economic potential (Reay, 2001). It could be argued that this binary opposition between those that aspire correctly (the middle class) and the unknowing (working class) represents a "grotesquely prodigious effort" at ignorance (Spelman, 2007, p. 120) by policy-makers and practitioners who prefer to devalue the range of aspirations held by the target populations of the WP policy.

The risks of emphasising deficit extend to the second troubling effect. The idea of raising aspiration can 'muscle out' a range of legitimate affective responses to HE like scepticism, indifference, ambivalence. Some commentators suggest that ambivalence is a genuine response by the working class towards HE (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Reay, 2001). Feelings of ambivalence are certainly apparent in the work of feminist academics from working class background (Hey & Leathwood, 2009; Skeggs, 1997; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993). Archer and colleagues (2010) point out that young people facing disadvantage have complex, multiply-held, sometimes messy aspirations towards the future (and HE) and that these can change over time. Ball et al. (2002) discuss the risks for the working classes in making choices about university:

> The risks and reflexivity of the middle classes are about staying as they are and who they are. Those of the working classes are about being different people in different places, about who they might become and what they must give up… HE access and choice is a key arena of social reproduction struggles, but these struggles cannot be reduced to the emotionless and acultural deployment of 'rational action'—wherein education is viewed simply as an investment in good. Non-choice, and aversion, and the non-rational and culturalist bases of choice are also important here; perhaps particularly for those students from families who have no previous experience of HE. (p. 69)

Feeling ambivalent is very different from feeling ignorant or apathetic or hopeless or lacking ambition. However, there is little room for ambivalence or messiness in the subject position of the proper aspirant of WP policy. The proper aspirant must display an ability to rationally calculate pathways to and through HE (and their subsequent career) for maximum benefit. The subject position of the 'proper' aspirant is an excellent neoliberal governmental technology—it dis-

penses with ambivalence and mess and the constraints of social structure and risk to dictate a mode of tidy, purposeful, rational, unrestricted conduct that is deemed beneficial to both the individual and nation state.

The third troubling effect of the proper aspirant position involves an institutional dynamic. The drive to create proper aspirants is often framed in unilateral terms, that is, as a policy action to be undertaken across the higher education sector. This totalising drive precludes serious engagement with the gross divide that exists between elite universities (older, league-table ascendant) and equity institutions (younger, lower-on-the-league-table) (Gale, 2011c; Leathwood, 2004). The unilateral framing of WP action erases the long and often impressive histories that equity universities have in engaging with non-traditional students and their communities. The totalising effect of WP discourse papers over the equally important equity divide between prestigious disciplines (medicine for example) that have very low numbers of non-traditional students and 'social mobility' undergraduate degrees (like teaching and nursing) which have the historically had the highest concentration of these students (Gale, 2011c). While the *Bradley Review* (Bradley, et.al., 2008) canvassed these points, representing WP as a solution to a problem common across the HE sector ignores the often excellent equity practices of second-tier institutions and erases a long history of exclusionary practice by elite universities and disciplines (Sellar & Storan, 2013).

Until histories of elitism are opened up for critical examination by those with an interest in higher education, the hoary discourse of 'quality' versus 'quantity' of students in universities will continue to raise its very ugly head. A common response to WP policy is that increasing the quantity of certain students through WP reduces the quality of university education (Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler, & Bereded-Samuel, 2010). During the time it has taken to write this article, the Australian Labor Party had shifted its discourse from that of WP (represented as the 'quantity' of students) to being concerned with the 'quality' of undergraduate entrants. Furthermore, a number of elite universities have come out staking a claim on the 'quality' rather than 'quantity' divide. The election policy of the conservative Coalition government made no mention of equity or social justice in higher education (Liberal Party, 2013). In a short period of time, following the ousting of Prime Minister Gillard by her own party and the subsequent 2013 election won by the Coalition government, the problem has shifted from equity in higher education for social democratic and economic reasons to that of concern about the 'quality' of undergraduate students (Gale, 2011c; Leathwood, 2004). It is troubling that as non-traditional students aspire to and enter higher education they are often being positioned on the 'quantity' side of the political debate. Deficits in 'quality' have historically been applied to the working classes and other marginalised people (Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003; Skeggs, 1997). Lawler (2005) notes that these deficits are linked to social narratives of decline,

and that these are "curiously ahistorical' in nature (p. 436). The shift back to discourses of 'quantity' serves to position non-traditional students as the abject Other of 'quality' higher education.

The fourth effect, and one of the trickier things about the raising aspirations discourse, is that it situates itself within the emotional appeal of older social justice frameworks. Hey and Leathwood (2009) point out that "having aligned with a wider discursive appeal about promoting educational inclusion, participation and achievement, is a difficult ideological assemblage to be 'against'""p.104). The appeal of raising aspirations is powerful because of its emotional nexus to social justice. Education has long held a redemptive promise by severing the link between social origin and destination (Dale, 2007; Popkewitz, 1997). McWilliam and Lee (2006) argue that the problem with this redemptive promise is not in its desire for a better social order, but in the "seductiveness and elusiveness of that hope" (p.46). When such appealing but elusive hopes are not realised, because of the intense complexity of the problem, blame begins to be directed at to those who are deemed the 'target' of the policy. Blame is rarely apportioned to those who formulate the policy problem and solutions in the first place (for an example of this see Connell, 2009).

The fifth and final effect that requires critical attention is the way the subject position of the proper aspirant acts as a repository for a neo-liberal construction of hope. Rose (1989) argues that governments have increasingly sought to manage their citizenry by focusing on the subjective and personal capacities of individuals. This is an example of governmentality in action where populations are managed through an emphasis on the individual self-realisation and self-enhancement (Ecclestone, 2007). Individuals "become, as it were, entrepreneurs of themselves, shaping their own lives through the choices they make among the forms of life available to them" (Rose, 1989, p. 230). The focus on aspiration in WP policy reflects a form of governmentality whereby, with a little help from universities, schools and 'informed' parents, certain people with pre-existing capabilities can transform themselves into proper aspirants and (so the narrative goes) improve their lot in life. University-led aspiration-raising activities funded through the UK *Aimhigher* and Australian *Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program* are based on this neoliberal logic. The affective, cognitive and habitual dispositions of people from low SES backgrounds are targets of psychological intervention based on this particular formulation of hope. This marks a shift in policy as outward-looking, societal-based intervention to an interiority approach that largely 'psychologises' the problem at hand (Binkley, 2011; Raco, 2009).

The focus on moulding the interior hopes and dreams of individual subjects, particularly young people, coincides with a contemporary notion of childhood-hope, as Kraftl (2008) explains:

> [It] is not hard to see how preadulthood could become an enormous, permanent repository for hope. In our children we see (or imagine we see) the future. Children have the chance to make the world anew…[W]e can fill them and the very idea of childhood with our hopes and dreams. The seemingly logical alignment of childhood with futurity has engendered an affective *logic* of hope that operates on an almost *global* scale, and is evident in global policy making…(original emphasis). (pp. 82-83)

The logic of 'raising' a person's aspirations so that they can self-actualise into something 'better' is part of the universal affective longing for childhood as an emancipatory force (and one that also has the same redemptive promise as education). Aspiration is a neo-liberal form of hope. People from particular backgrounds are required to invest in an affective orientation towards the future that is self-reliant, competitive and entrepreneurial: they must propel their own social mobility for the good of themselves, their families and nation. Despite the facade of freedom, neoliberal forms of hope and their attendant strategies of self-realisation, are underpinned by very particular, circumscribed subjectivities and trajectories (Reay, 2008; Walkerdine, 2003). Subjects are governed through an obligation to be free (Rose, 1989). This type of freedom with its particular form of hope may not resonate with many young people or their families and can even do them damage, as Brown (2011) explains:

> Just as aspirations are an affective orientation to the future, work to *raise* young people's aspirations also works on an affective level. There is undoubtedly emotional risk involved in such work, and a danger that unless WP initiatives attend to the broader emotional geographies of the young people they engage with, they could be setting them up either to failure or to alienation from the people and places that provide them with emotional security. WP practitioners need to reflect more on how they enrol emotions in their work and think more holistically about the emotional impacts and consequences of their interventions. (p. 20)

As the five effects outlined above demonstrate, the WP agenda can be problematic for all those enmeshed within it. It promises hope, freedom and a better life, and redemption from 'deficit'. This is true for both its target population of potential undergraduate students, and for equity practitioners whose work is framed by the agenda. There are re-interpretations, resistances and re-imaginings of aspiration in WP policy and there are struggles to enact social justice in higher education that do not operate entirely as neoliberal techniques of governmentality. Documenting these lived counterpoints to WP are important. However, it is equally important, as Bacchi (2009) suggests to hold policy to account; to understand how the WP agenda frames the problem and mandates solutions and what assumptions and troubling dynamics underpin these.

EXCAVATION OVER (FOR NOW)

WP policy is premised on a quintessentially neo-liberal subject. The attributes of this subject are very specific. They must possess an innate intellectual cap(ability) and demonstrated longing for social mobility through HE. Both cap(ability) and aspiration are to be harnessed for the betterment of the self and the nation. The subject of WP is an entrepreneur, an individual that can self-propel along an educational and career trajectory unencumbered by their background. This is a subject who is obligated to be free (Rose, 1989): free from association with the abject Other (the incapable and ignorant) of their original milieu and not restricted by feelings of ambivalence, indifference or scepticism. To extend Ball's (1993) idea, WP policy poses problems for any subject who does not accept this obligation to be free (or be freed under WP); who refuses to admit to a psychological deficit of aspiration; and who recognises themselves to have cap(abilities) other than those assumed in WP policy.

It is important to acknowledge that WP policy has empowered individuals. However, it is equally important to understand that as a social justice project, WP is incomplete and misaligned. Part of this misalignment is due to its neo-liberal logic which locates both opportunity and blame within the individual. This logic does not attend to social, historical and contextual issues that produce educational inequalities, treating a lack of participation in HE as a 'problem' of innate ability and psychology rather than as a phenomenon that warrants complex understanding on its own terms.

Lest we think that the subject of WP represents a kind of radical break from older forms of subjectivity, it is important to acknowledge how its neoliberal logic weaves back into enduring discourses of exclusion and deficit. One of the tricks of WP policy is the way it (imperceptibly) links back into older meritocratic discourses about ability as natural and innate, with those who have it being able to rise to the top of society through sheer force of will. Likewise this meritocratic discourse underpins the 'quality' versus 'quantity' of undergraduate student debate that erupts in government circles and between HE institutions, with the subtext being that non-traditional students generally lack merit and 'quality'.

WP also rests upon older discourses predicated on the redemptive promises of education and childhood. If we accept these redemptive promises, then we must also seek to understand what problems they pose for children, young people, and their families and for educators and equity practitioners, alike. Such promises are not pure and unproblematic. They are implicated in messy relations of power (Bennett, 2012; Bennett et al., 2012; Southgate, 2012). WP can be inspirational and liberatory, and it can be cruelly dismissive of the knowledges and mores of those who are not its ideal subject—those who are not deemed cap(able) or sufficiently aspirational. Redemptive promises, particularly those that become

embedded in neo-liberal forms of social justice, require a cautiously hopeful rather than naïve response (Pain, Kesby, & Askins, 2012). Caution is especially required because neo-liberal versions of social justice have broad emotional appeal. However, this appeal masks the way the neo-liberal logic of WP distances those who make the policy from those who are meant to enact it. Both opportunity and fault are situated within the individual (student, their families, educators, equity practitioners), with scant regard paid to the difficulties of 'doing' and 'living' equity within messy social contexts. Under neo-liberal logic, if WP doesn't work the individual, not the policy or policy-maker, is entirely to blame.

WP policy is a discourse that, to paraphrase Foucault (1977), determines certain modes of existence and functions for the subject. It is a form of governmentality that relies on a 'new' neo-liberal version of social justice, which rests on older, exclusionary notions of natural cap(ability), meritocracy and middle-class hopes for social mobility (Bourke, 2012). As a form of neo-liberal governmentality, it avoids addressing historical, social and contextual concerns about the production of educational inequality and it reproduces deficit discourses on social class. Its power is in the feeling-rules that stick to students, their families, educators and equity practitioners. These feeling-rules emerge from, but are different to, the emotional timbre of older social justice discourses. The common sense, seemingly inclusive logic of WP, with its sticky feelings of a brighter, better future, makes it hard to resist, query or argue against. Despite Foucault's (1983) pronouncement that there is always a need for thoughtful critique, the feeling-rules of WP have made it difficult for us as equity practitioners and educators to carry out this very excavation.

Ball (1990) suggests: "We do not (just) speak discourse. The discourse speaks us" (p.18). In excavating the WP problem we have sought to uncover how WP discourse tries to 'speak us"—non-traditional students, equity practitioners and educators—into certain ways of being. Within all discursive fields there are possibilities for subversion and resistance. By undertaking this analysis we want to make it more difficult for WP policy to restrain opportunities by narrowly defining subjectivities. Our analysis resists the redemptive pull of WP policy by revealing its roots in older, often conservative discourses. Hopefully, this excavation will make it easier to resist the powerful emotional appeal of certain forms of neo-liberal social justice. We think that this is a modest hope, but an important one.

REFERENCES

Abbott, T. (2013). Address to Universities Australia Higher Education Conference, from http://www.liberal.org.au/latest-news/2013/02/28/tony-abbotts-address-universities-australia-higher-education-conference

Ahmed, S. (2004). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L., & Rumbley, L. E. (2009). Trends in global higher education: Tracking an academic revolution. A Report prepared for the UNESCO 2009 World Conference on Higher Education. Paris: UNESCO.

Archer, L., Hollingworth, S., & Mendick, H. (2010). *Urban Youth and Schooling: The Experiences and Identities of Educationally 'At Risk' Young People*. Maidenhead: McGraw Hill & Open University Press.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2013). *Towards a Performance Measurement Framework for Equity in Higher Education*. Canberra: Australian Government Retrieved from http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Policy/Documents/SummaryTowardsaPerformanceMeasurementFrameworkforEquityinHigherEducation.pdf.

Bacchi, C. (1999). *Women, Policy and Politics: The Construction of Policy Problems.* London: Sage.

Bacchi, C. (2000). Policy as discourse: What does it mean? Where does it get us? *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 21*(1), 45-57.

Bacchi, C. (2009). *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to be?* Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Education.

Bacchi, C. (2012). Introducing the 'What is the Problem Represented to be?' approach. In A. Bletsas & C. Beasley (Eds.), *Engaging with Carol Bacchi* (pp. 21-24). Adelaide: The University of Adelaide.

Ball, S. J. (1990). *Politics and Policy Making in Education: Explorations in Policy Sociology*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

Ball, S. J. (1993). What is policy? Texts, trajectories and toolboxes. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 13*(2), 10-17.

Ball, S. J. (1997). Policy sociology and critical social research: A personal review of recent education policy and policy research. *British Educational Research Journal, 23*(3), 257-274.

Ball, S. J., Davies, J., David, M., & Reay, D. (2002). 'Classification' and 'Judgement': Social class and the 'cognitive structures' of choice of Higher Education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 23*(1), 51-72. doi: 10.1080/01425690120102854

Bennett, A. K. (2012). *The Power Paradox: A Toolkit for Analysing Conflict and Extremism* Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Bennett, A., Hodges, B., Kavanagh, K., Fagan, S., Hartley, J., & Schofield, N. (2013). 'Hard' and 'soft' aspects of learning as investment. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 14*(3), 141-156.

Binkley, S. (2011). Psychological life as enterprise: Social practice and the government of neo-liberal interiority. *History of the Human Sciences, 24*(3), 83-102. doi: 10.1177/0952695111412877

Bowden, M. P., & Doughney, J. (2010). Socio-economic status, cultural diversity and the aspirations of secondary students in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Australia. *Higher Education, 59*, 115-129.

Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H., & Scales, B. (2008). *Review of Australian Higher Education, Final Report*. Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Brennan, J., & Naidoo, R. (2008). Higher education and the achievement (and/or prevention) of equity and social justice. *Higher Education, 56*(3), 287-302.

Brown, G. (2011). Emotional geographies of young people's apirations for adult life. *Children's geographies, 9*(1), 7-22.

Burke, P. J. (2012). *The Right to Higher Education: Beyond Widening Participation*. London and New York: Routledge.

Commonwealth of Australia. (2009). Transforming Australia's Higher Education System. Canbera: Commonwealth of Australia.

Commonwealth of Australia. (2011). *Gillard Government Funds Growth and Quality in Nation's Universities*. Retrieved from http://ministers.deewr.gov.au/evans/gillard-government-funds-growth-and-quality-nation%E2%80%99s-universities.

Commonwealth of Australia. (2013). Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program Retrieved 22 October, 1013, from http://www.innovation.gov.au/highereducation/Equity/HigherEducationParticipationAndPartnershipsProgram/Pages/default.aspx

Connell, R. W. (2009). Good teachers on dangerous ground: Towards a new view of teacher quality and professionalism. *Critical Studies in Education, 50*(3), 213-229.

Connell, R. W. (2013). The neoliberal cascade and education: An essay on the market agenda and its consequences. *Critical Studies in Education, 54*(2), 99-112.

Dale, R. (2007). Educating. In S. Mathewmann, C. L. West-Newman & B. Curtis (Eds.), *Being Sociological* (pp. 295-315). Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Davies, B., & Bansel, P. (2007). Neoliberalism and education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 20*(3), 247-259. doi: 10.1080/09518390701281751

Ecclestone, K. (2007). Resisting images of the "diminished self" in education policy and practice for emotional well-being. *Journal of Education Policy, 22*(4), 455-470.

Fineman, S. (2000). *Emotion in Organizations* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Fineman, S. (2003). *Understanding Emotion at Work.* London: Sage.

Fletcher, J. (1995). Excavating health care policy: are league tables likely to dig out the truth about hospital performance or dig it in? *Journal of Nursing Management, 3*(5), 255-262. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2834.1995.tb00104.x

Foucault, M. (1977). What is an author? In D. F. Bouchard (Ed.), *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (pp. 113-138). New York: Cornell University Press.

Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). London: Peregrine.

Foucault, M. (1983). On the genealogy of ethics. In H. L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (2nd ed.). New York: The New Press.

Foucault, M. (1990). *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1994). The subject and power. In J. Faubion (Ed.), *Michel Foucault: Power. Essential Works of Michel Foucault* (Vol. 3). London: Penguin.

Furlong, A., & Cartmel, F. (1997). *Young People and Social Change: Individualisation and Risk in the Age of High Modernity* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Gale, T. (1999). Policy trajectories: Treading the discursive path of policy analysis. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 20*(3), 393-407. doi: 10.1080/0159630990200304

Gale, T. (2011a). Expansion and equity in Australian higher education: Three propositions for new relations. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 32*(5), 669-685. doi: 10.1080/01596306.2011.620751

Gale, T. (2011b). New capacities for student equity and widening participation in higher education. *Critical Studies in Education, 52*(2), 109-113. doi: 10.1080/17508487.2011.572825

Gale, T. (2011c). Student equity's starring role in Australian higher education: Not yet cenrtre field. *Australian Educational Researcher, 38*(5), 5-23.

Gale, T. (2012). Towards a southern theory of student equity in Australian higher education: Enlarging the rationale for expansion. *International Journal of Sociology of Education, 1*(3), 235-258.

Gale, T., & Tranter, D. (2011). Social justice in Australian higher education policy: An historical and conceptual account of student participation. . *Critical Studies in Education, 52*(1), 29-46.

Gidley, J. M., Hampson, G. P., Wheeler, L., & Bereded-Samuel, E. (2010). From Access to Success: An Integrated Approach to Quality Higher Education Informed by Social Inclusion Theory and Practice. *Higher Education Policy, 23*(1), 123-147.

Gillard, J. (2009). *Transition, Retention and Progression Forum Opening Address (Monash University, Melbourne December 2009).* Retrieved from http://ministers.deewr.gov.au/gillard/speech-transition-retention-and-progression-forum.

Gonski, D., Boston, K., Greiner, K., Lawrence, C., Scales, B., & Tannock, P. (2011). Review of Funding for Schooling. Final Report. http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/ReviewofFunding/Documents/Review-of-Funding-for-Schooling-Final-Report-Dec-2011.pdf.

Gorard, S., Adnett, N., May, H., Slack, K., Smith, E., & Thomas, L. (2007). *Overcoming the Barriers to Higher Education.* London: Trentham Books.

Gorard, S., & See, B. H. (2013). *Overcoming Disadvantage in Education.* London and New York: Routledge.

Halpin, D., & Troyna, B. (1995). The politics of education policy borrowing. *Comparative Education, 31*(3), 303-310. doi: 10.2307/3099705

Hamilton, L. C. (2010). Teachers, narrative identity and ability constructs: exploring dissonance and consensus in contrasting school systems. *Research Papers in Education, 25*(4), 409-431. doi: 10.1080/02671520903045574

Hay, P. J., & Macdonald, D. (2010). Evidence for the social construction of ability in physical education. *Sport, Education and Society, 15*(1), 1-18. doi: 10.1080/13573320903217075

Hey, V., & Leathwood, C. (2009). Passionate attachments: Higher education, policy, knowledge, emotion and social justice. *Higher Education Policy, 22*(1), 101-118.

Hoare, T., & Mann, R. (2011). The impact of the Sutton Trust's Summer schools on subsequent higher education participation: A report to the Sutton Trust. Bristol: University of Bristol.

Horton, J., & Kraftl, P. (2009). What (else) matters? Policy contexts, emotional geographies. *Environment and Planning, 41*(12), 2984-3002.

Jones, M., & Ward, K. (2002). Excavating the logic of British urban policy: Neoliberalism as the "crisis of crisis–management". *Antipode, 34*(3), 473-494. doi: 10.1111/1467-8330.00251

Kenway, J. (2013). Challenging inequality in Australian schools: Gonski and beyond. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 34*(2), 286-308. doi: 10.1080/01596306.2013.770254

Kraftl, P. (2008). Young people, hope and childhood-hope. *Space and Culture, 11*(2), 81-92.

Lawler, S. (2005). Disgusted subjects: the making of middle-class identities. *The Sociological Review, 53*(3), 429-446. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-954X.2005.00560.x

Leach, L. (2013). Participation and equity in higher education: Are we going back to the future? *Oxford Review of Education, 39*(2), 267-286. doi: 10.1080/03054985.2013.791618

Leathwood, C. (2004). A critique of institutional inequalities in higher education (or an alternative to hypocrisy for higher educational policy). *Theory and Research in Education, 2*(1), 31-48. doi: 10.1177/1477878504040576

Leathwood, C., & Hey, V. (2009). Gender/ed discourses and emotional sub-texts: Theorising emotion in UK higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education, 14*(4), 429-440.

Leathwood, C., & O'Connell, P. (2003). 'It's a struggle': the construction of the 'new student' in higher education. *Journal of Education Policy, 18*(6), 597-615.

Liberal Party. (2013, 11 September 2013). Education Plan, from http://www.liberal.org.au/our-plan/education

Lunt, I. (2008). Beyond tuition fees? The legacy of Blair's government to higher education. *Oxford Review of Education, 34*(6), 741-752. doi: 10.1080/03054980802519001

Lupton, D. (1998). *The emotional self: A sociocultural exploration*. London: Sage.

McWilliam, E., & Lee, A. (2006). The problem with 'the problem with educational research. *The Australian Educational Researcher, 33*(2), 43-60.

National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education. (1997). Higher Education in the Learning Society (Dearing Report). http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/ncihe/.

Pain, R., Kesby, M., & Askins, K. (2012). The politics of social justice in neoliberal times: A reply to Slater. *Area, 44*(1), 120-123. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-4762.2011.01073.x

Popkewitz, T. S. (1997). Educational sciences and the normalization of the teacher and child: Some historical notes on current USA pedagogical reforms. *Paedagogica Historica, 33*(2), 386-412. doi: 10.1080/0030923970330201

Prosser, B., McCallum, F., Milroy, P., Comber, B., & Nixon, H. (2008). "I am smart and I am not joking": Aiming high in the middle years of schooling. *Australian Educational Researcher, 35*(2), 15-35.

Pyne, C. (2011). *Excellence in Universities: The David Davies Memorial Lecture: Brisbane December 7*. Retrieved from https://www.liberal.org.au/latest-news/2011/12/08/excellence-universities-christopher-pyne-speech.

Raco, M. (2009). From expectations to aspirations: State modernisation, urban policy, and the existential politics of welfare in the UK. *Political Geography, 28*(7), 436-444. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2009.10.009

Räty, H., & Kasanen, K. (2013). Parents' perceptions of their child's academic competencies construe their educational reality: Findings from a 9-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 43*(5), 1110-1119. doi: 10.1111/jasp.12076

Reay, D. (2001). Finding or losing yourself?: Working-class relationships to education. *Journal of Education Policy, 16*(4), 333-346. doi: 10.1080/02680930110054335

Reay, D. (2008). Tony Blair, the promotion of the 'active' educational citizen, and middle-class hegemony. *Oxford Review of Education, 34*(6), 639-650.

Reay, D., Crozier, G., & Clayton, J. (2009). Strangers in paradise: Working class students in elite universities *Sociology, 43*(6), 1103-1121.

Reay, D., Crozier, G., & Clayton, J. (2010). "Fitting in" or "standing out': Working-class students in UK higher education. *British Educational Research Journal, 32*(1), 1-19.

Rizvi, F. L., & Lingard, B. (2006). Globalisation and the changing nature of the OECD's educational work. In P. B. H. Lauder, J-A. Dillabough & H. A. Halsey (Ed.), *Education, globalization and social change* (pp. 247-260). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rose, N. (1989). *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Pivate Self* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Schuetze, H. G., & Slowey, M. (2002). Participation and exclusion: A comparative analysis of non-traditional students and lifelong learners in higher education. *Higher Education, 44*(3-4), 309-325.

Sellar, S., & Gale, T. (2011). Mobility, aspiration, voice: A new structure of feeling for student equity in higher education. *Critical Studies in Education, 52*(2), 115-134. doi: 10.1080/17508487.2011.572826

Sellar, S., & Gale, T. (2012). Aspiration and education: Toward new terms of engagement for marginalized students. In B. J. McMahon & J. P. Portelli (Eds.), *Student Engagement in Urban Schools: Beyond Neoliberal Discourses* (pp. 91-109). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Sellar, S., Gale, T., & Parker, S. (2009). *Massaging desire: Disadvantaged students' aspirations for Higher Education*. Paper presented at the AARE Conference, Canberra.

Sellar, S., & Storan, J. (2013). 'There was something about 'aspiration': Widening participation policy affects in England and Australia. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, 19*(2), 45-65.

Sen, A. K. (1985). *Commodities and Capabilities*. Oxford: Elsevier Science Publishers.

Sen, A. K. (2004). Capabilities, lists, and public reason: Continuing the conversation *Feminist Economics, 10*(3), 77-80. doi: DOI:10.1080/1354570042000315163

Skeggs, B. (1997). *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. London: Sage.

Slack, K. (2003). Whose aspirations are they anyway? *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 7*(4), 325-335. doi: 10.1080/1360311032000110016

Southgate, E. (2003a). Liquid handcuffs: A tale of power, subjectivity, risk and the drug treatment clinic. . In M. Tamboukou & S. J. Ball (Eds.), *Dangeous Encounters: Genealogy and Ethnography* (pp. 175-193). New York: Peter Lang.

Southgate, E. (2003b). *Remembering School: Mapping Continuities in Power, Subjectivity and Emotion in Stories of School Life*. New York: Peter Lang.

Southgate, E. (2012). Ethnography as the (occasional) act of refusing correct knowledge and secure understanding: Three tales from three fields. In M. Vickers, T. McKenna & J. White (Eds.), *Discourse, Power, and Resistance Down Under,* (pp. 135-150). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Spelman, E. (2007). Managing ignorance. In S. Sullivan & N. Tuana (Eds.), *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (pp. 119–131). Albany: State University of New York.

Teichler, U. (1998). Massification: A challenge for institutions of higher education. *Tertiary Education and Management, 4*(1), 17-27. doi: 10.1080/13583883.1998.9966942

Thrift, N. (2004). Intensities of feeling: Towards a spatial politics of affect *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography, 86*(1), 57-78.

Tokarczyk, M. M., & Fay, E. A. (Eds.). (1993). *Working-class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press.

Universities Australia. (2013a). An Agenda for Australian Higher Education, 2013-2016: A Smarter Australia. Canberra: Universities Australia.

Universities Australia. (2013b). A Smarter Australia: Policy Advice for an Incoming Government, 2013-2016. Canberra: Universities Australia.

Walkerdine, V. (2003). Reclassifying upward mobility: Femininity and the neo-liberal subject. *Gender and Education, 15*(3), 237-248.

Watts, M., & Bridges, D. (2006). The value of non-participation in higher education. *Journal of Education Policy, 21*(3), 267–290.

Webb, P. T., & Gulson, K. N. (2012). Policy prolepsis in education: Encounters, becomings, and phantasms. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 33*(1), 87-99. doi: 10.1080/01596306.2012.632169

Erica Southgate (BEd, PhD) is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Newcastle (Australia). For over 20 years, she has conducted social research and published in the areas of disadvantage, marginalisation and social justice in community, health and education settings. Her interests are in qualitative and mixed-method research, including ethnography, and Foucauldian and feminist theory and methodologies.

Anna Bennett (BA [Hons], PhD) is Convenor of the Open Foundation Program at the University of Newcastle, Australia, which is the largest and oldest Enabling program offered by an Australian university. Her PhD and recent book "The Power Paradox" (2012) develops conceptual tools for studying social and power relations. Current research areas include: studies of discourses of inclusion, equity and participation in higher education policies and practice; the study of identities and subject positions; and notions and implications of neoliberalism.