Bicycles, 'informality' and the alternative learning space as a site for re-engagement: A risky (pedagogical) proposition?

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Abstract: The great possibility of alternative education programs rests in the affront to established conventions these present for what counts as learning, engagement and the experience of schooling. This paper takes its point of focus in one specific, in-school alternative learning program, and considers the possibilities for student re-engagement that emerged via the repair and restoration of old bicycles. The discussion focusses particularly on the 'informality' that presented within the day-to-day dynamics of the program and how the space provided in the program's workshop sessions offered the opportunity for students to re-configure their relationships to each other, their teachers and the larger practice of schooling. A discussion of both the potential and risk of a 'pedagogy of informality' is posited in light of current discussions in the literature of alternative education in Australia.

Keywords: Alternative Learning; Engagement; Inter-relationality; Informality; Pedagogy of informality.

Alternative Learning and 'Inter-relationality'

In mid 2016, the authors received a Queensland Government Department of Education and Training "Education Horizon" grant to expand on an earlier project that explored the schedule of in-school alternative learning programs offered by a large state secondary school situated in south-east Queensland, Australia. Seeking to extend an inquiry into what 'counts' as learning within the contexts of the alternative learning program[1], the new project set out to explore how *informality* featured as central to the sorts of interactions that marked alternative learning in the school. Attention turned in particular to the nature of the interactions the participating students had with each other and those adults (the authors included) involved in the facilitation of the programs, as well as offering consideration for how 'inter-relationality' featured as a hallmark of alternative learning in this setting.

Inter-relationality as witnessed in the school's alternative learning program signaled certain forms of intentioned and sociable interaction that valued open declarations of personal feeling, a commitment from educators to 'care'—as a cognisant *responsiveness* to student needs (Noddings, 2015)—and an emphasis on the nurturance of positive personal growth amongst student cohorts. This capacity for inter-relationality in the alternative program also carried with it certain pedagogical tropes that challenged prevailing forms of interaction in the school and, as will be discussed in this paper, celebrated 'irreverent' forms of interaction, the building of camaraderie and friendship and identification of group cohesion between students and students and their

teachers.

Informality featured as central to this concern for inter-relationality, with the approaches taken in the alternative program offering a touchstone for how this 'pedagogy of informality' manifested. Beyond centering an expression of 'irreverence' for established modes of conduct and behavior as core to the interactions that occurred in the alternative learning space—often those same forms of irreverence, discernible in specific forms of behaviour, modes of address and ways of speaking that had landed the students *in* the alternative program to begin with—informality surfaced in terms of giving credence to ways of being and acting that, in many cases, contravened conventions applied elsewhere in the school. This is not to suggest that the alternative program applied an 'anything goes' ethos. Certain rules and modes of conduct were still in operation, particularly as these pertained to the safety of students and respectful interpersonal interaction. However, the occasional swear word, application of vernacular language to express feeling and concern, and, as will be highlighted later in this paper, unintentioned contravention of 'the rules' were let slide for the sake of a more pressing objective: the engagement of these young people in learning.

It was with this connection between informality and irreverent forms of behaviour that specifically focused our attention. Whereas the students we came to engage in the program had an intimate understanding of those 'required' ways of speaking and acting that schooling enforces—the sorts of discursive 'rituals' enacted in schools that McLaren (1999) highlights—attention was given to exploring how more parochial and impulsive ways of demonstrating personal agency could be framed as valuable and generative in the practice of learning. The rationale underpinning this exploration hence drew its impetus from the assumption that, if it was indeed with irreverent forms of behavior that problems with engagement first surfaced, then it followed that reaching an understanding of how these more impulsive modes of expression could enable students to actively participate would be a valuable undertaking.

New formulations of dialogue and inter-relationality became possible in the workshop spaces of the alternative program; not least because of the ways that informality also mediated the teaching practiced within these spaces, but also because these workshops did not 'work' like other spaces within the school. As a program convened in an out-of-the ordinary space, convened by facilitators (viz. the authors) who were *not* teachers, and with visits at points through the sessions by others associated with the program (community partners, for example), the workshop sessions were marked by a sense of distance to the 'regular' classroom both literally (geographically) and figuratively (in terms of the differentiation in modes of engagement these sessions required). Consequently, the forms of encounter and inter-action that this space enabled were also different to those generally encountered within the regular spaces of the school; encounters that had as their driving concern the enactment of respectful inter-relationality. As a consequence, it occurred that the way the students came to act and speak in the workshop setting carried a certain 'looseness'. A certain degree of tolerance for language and behaviour that would not have been acceptable elsewhere in the school was practiced in an effort to get to something more significant—the building of relationships with the students that were simply not possible in the compressed contexts of the 'regular' classrooms from which these students had disengaged.

In making reference to the notion 'regular classroom' (and by extension 'regular' spaces of school), acknowledgement of Slee's (2011) challenge of the term is noted. While we agree with Slee's (2011) suggestion that the term 'regular' stands as problematic because it implies a sense of 'normality' within which "there must be normal or regular students for whom these schools exist… and, as the logic proceeds, there are other children who are not normal, regular, or valid" (p. 12), we suggest a slight inflection of this meaning to argue, instead, that the use of the term 'regular' did resonate with the students' experiences and did not automatically come to pathologise their experiences as students who *did* recognise themselves as 'different'. That is to say, that the students did indeed hold very clear senses of what was normal (or 'regular' in Slee's inflection) and what was *not* normal, and more importantly, where it was that they stood on this spectrum. A cursory example of this was provided by one of the students engaged in the program: when asked during an interview why he felt he was a participant in the alternative learning program, the student replied "because I am a *bad* kid". Schooling for this student had provided a clear distinction around who he was, what it meant to be 'bad' and ultimately what the consequences for the sorts of behavior this student practiced would be—namely, *relegation* to the 'alternative program'.

We suggest that, with this level of consciousness around the implicit meanings that attach to programs such as that discussed here, the productive détournement of the idea of '*alternative* learning' and indeed those definitions that attach to concepts like 'normality' and 'regular' can be positively affected. Via the deliberate inversion of what it meant to be *in* the alternative learning program, the possibility to productively posit difference from the 'regular' school emerged for our students, and it is with this formulation of inter-relationality and concomitant concerns for a sense of belonging, shared identity and commitment to a group that the alternative learning program discussed here had it focus. The dichotomy 'regular-alternative' in this sense functions as a productive distinction that came to be owned and mediated positively by the students. They did see themselves as different to the wider cohort of students who remained in the 'regular' classrooms they had been excluded from, and did establish a sense of pride around being amongst those who participated in the alternative learning program. Further research into how the "multiplicity and plurality of shifting discourses which are anchored materially and symbolically by ritual performance" (McLaren, 1999, p. 128) come to be infused with meaning and enacted in practice is required on this count. For this paper however, the term 'regular' is used to denote those spaces of the school that existed *beyond* the space(s) of the alternative learning program's workshop spaces, and in terms of how the students came to define their sense of place within school.

Alternative Learning and Informality: A space for further scholarship

The literature on alternative education has to date not fully explored the implications of the forms of interpersonal interaction suggested here. Scant mention is given to the nature of 'informality' as a productive pedagogical mechanism for engaging students, with perhaps the best application of what this paper seeks to explicate coming from Paul Willis' (1977) seminal study of disengaged learners, *Learning to Labour*. Willis offers his definition of informality as follows:

The nature of informality as a mode of *opposition* in this society is that it

reserves itself as the exception to the rule. It is blind to all of the other exceptions which together could overthrow the rule. (p. 166; emphasis added)

The key point within this definition is the capability Willis gives to informality to be an 'exception to the rule'. While Willis had in mind the explicit contravention of social 'rules'—that is, the deliberate subversion of the rules of conduct mediating spaces like the classroom and school—this definition extends further to also include consideration of wider 'social' rules of decorum, interaction and expected practice. In Willis' (1977) terms:

The most basic, obvious and explicit dimensions of counter-school culture is entrenched general and personalized opposition to 'authority' (p. 11).

Willis (1977) suggests that:

This opposition is expressed mainly as a style. It is lived out in countless small ways which are special to the school institution, instantly recognized by the teachers, and an almost ritualistic part of the daily fabric of life for the kids (p. 12).

Whereas Willis found this level of informality to be fundamentally *oppositional* in its nature, our explication of the alternative learning program discussed here sought to extend the definition of informality by suggesting that informality might also be pedagogically *generative*. While it is acknowledged here that informality may well have its foundation in the expression of resistant agency, where "the incursive demands of the formal are denied" (Willis, 1977, p. 22), it is stressed in this paper that informality also suggests an impulsiveness toward agency—the active, if not always cognisant, subverting of 'rules', modes of interaction and ways of speaking that have potential as productive points of recalibration or realignment of how things can (or might) be done. Informality in this project hence came to refer to something positive and exciting; an opportunity for learning that occurred beyond the constraints that formal edicts of schooling sometimes impose. Learning via informality prefaced the *inquiry* that stood at the centre of irreverent questioning, with informality standing here as *a questioning of established codes of conduct and modes of expected behaviour*.

Notable Australian studies charting alternative learning programming, including te Reile's (2014; 2012; 2007; 2006 a; 2006 b) surveys of the scope of alternative learning programming in Australia and McGregor, Mills, te Riele and Hayes' (2015) examination of exclusion and the role of alternative education in responding to marginalisation within schooling tend toward the exploration of the pathways young people take into alternative learning programs, the effects these programs have on learning and ultimately, consideration of the purpose of schooling when taken from the perspective of the alternative learning program. Mills, McGregor, Baroutsis, te Riele and Hayes' (2016) and Pennachia, Thomson, Mills and McGregor's (2016) discussions of the possibilities for social justice and the significant contributions alternative education programs provide for responding to concerns of 'open' democratic education are notable extensions of this literature. De Jong and Griffiths' (2006) study of the effects of alternative learning programs in meeting the needs of young people who display challenging and anti-social behaviours, and McGregor and Mills' (2012)

consideration of the transformative capacities of alternative learning programs, provide key examples of such concerns for social justice in schooling and alternative learning. Yet it remains that the intricacies of inter-relationality and the role that informality has in the alternative learning space are yet to receive full consideration.

Smyth, Down and McInerney's (2010) study of the formation of meaningful relationships with young people offers a shift in focus within this literature to consider the intra- and inter-personal dynamics of working with marginalised young people in school settings. Reminiscent of the personalised experiences of the classroom outlined in seminal earlier works, including those by McLaren (1999; 2015) and Shor (1992), this explication of the politics and poetics of working at the interface of learning *with* disengaged and marginalised students comes closest to the concerns relayed in this paper. But as is noted above, further consideration of the inter-personal politics of working with young people and the generative informality of the alternative learning setting is required. It is with this focus that this paper will offer some initial insights drawn from the authors' specific experiences in convening a specialised program within the suite of alternative learning options discussed here: Bike Build.

Bike Build: An outline of an alternative program

The specific component of the wider alternative learning program discussed here, titled simply 'Bike Build', sat within the suite of programs offered by the case school[2], and used the repair and restoration of old bicycles as the means for re-engaging students; students who, by and large, were at the point of exclusion from school. The bicycles, sourced through a partnership brokered with the Toowoomba station of the Queensland Police[3] provided the foundation of the program, and offered a useful 'in' for initially engaging the students. Apart from the novelty the bicycles themselves provided as the basis of a curriculum, the prospect of engaging in the hands-on repair within a workshop space captivated student interest and from the very outset offered a useful means for generating commitment to the program.

[INSERT FIGURE 1]

The authors fulfilled the dual role of researcher-facilitators, and in conjunction with the school's Youth Support Officer, and associated teaching staff attached to the program, set about designing and convening the program's 'curriculum'. The term 'curriculum' is used carefully in this instance, as the conduct of program was intended to follow a 'student-led' approach that responded to specific tasks as required in the sessions and as defined by the students. It is important to note that the workshop sessions were intended to be inquiry-based sessions and were planned to encourage students to take charge of their own learning. The approach taken in these sessions emphasised that "it is essential for…students to feel that their contribution to the group is of importance" (Bjontegaard, 2015, p. 33), and worked to instil the ethic that the participating students *did* hold the capacity to direct the workshops and conduct tasks.

Accordingly, the materials (and in particular the weekly worksheets) designed for the sessions were geared toward broad categories of task and did not contain specified, sequenced and detailed *instruction*. The workshop sessions, albeit in some instances 'unruly' occasions (a first indicator of the 'risk' that attaches to convening

such a design), functioned as 'negotiated' spaces within which the students were actively encouraged to determine what was required in the repair of *their* bicycle. This approach to the conduct of these sessions encouraged the students to investigate what was 'wrong' with their selected bicycle and to undertake the development of a plan for completing the program and, ultimately, the production of a functioning and safe bicycle.

This 'open' pedagogy of Bike Build was important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the bicycles themselves, as donated bicycles, were in various states of disrepair. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, to develop a sequence of tasks that corresponded effectively to *all* students in the group. The establishment of any fixed schedule of activities and set of instructions was consequently jettisoned as not possible and an ineffective way to engage a student-led approach.

Secondly, and more importantly, these workshop sessions were focused on re-engaging students who had found the modes of instruction that they had encountered within the 'regular' classrooms of their schooling to be stifling. To simply replicate modes of instruction similar to those enacted in other areas of the school would have held the risk of further reinforcing approaches to teaching and learning *that were not working* for these students. Instead, the focus in the Bike Build workshop sessions was to allow the participating students the space to determine their own 'curricula' agenda as this related to their specific bicycle.

[INSERT FIGURE 2]

Of course, additional 'risk' presented in taking this approach; the possibility that the sessions would fail if the students decided to disengage further and not participate was very real. In some instances, individual students did opt-out and leave the program (for example, through the second iteration of the program convened in Term 3 2016 an initial cohort of 10 students became 8 when 2 students left within the first 3 weeks, noting that they did not see the point or purpose of the activities). But on the whole, the open format did capture the students' attention, and once a sense of how the sessions were to proceed materialised, the students were able to successfully set their own paths forward, identifying what needed to be done with their bikes and more broadly, how inter-relationships central to ensuring the productive progression of workshop sessions should progress.

It is stressed that, even though the Bike Build workshop sessions were convened as inquiry-based and student-led undertakings, a *semblance* of a curriculum was still apparent. These sessions were far from being a 'free-for-all' of chaotic activity, and consequently required a base of content from which to proceed. Neville's (1999) questioning of the role of the 'teacher' within the student-centred classroom offered a useful touchstone for our own approaches, particularly in terms of Neville's (1999) claim that "the role of 'teacher' requires revision" (p. 393) with regard the place teachers come to assume in these contexts, and perhaps more pertinently, within the practice of *organised* activity. In taking this approach to the use of a 'loose' curricula structure, but with a clear focus on the intent of the program firmly in mind, an approach to the sessions that enabled a response to the students' (dis)engagement whilst also opening the possibility for the cohort to *speak* and try-on different ways of engaging with learning surfaced. In this sense, the sessions drew from an approach similar to that specified by Shor (1992), and in particular Shor's reflections on how his

own practice proceeded within a student-centred learning context:

> On this first day, I wondered what would happen in class. I always bring a plan and know what I want to do, but what would the students do? I had been experimenting for some time with "student-centred teaching", hoping to engage students in critical learning and to include them in marking the syllabus. But they came to class wary and uninspired, expecting the teacher to tell them what to do and to lecture them on what things mean. (p. 1)

Later in the same passage, Shor (1992) relays:

> When students co-develop themes for study and share in the making of syllabus, the class dialogue sometimes moves faster than I can understand it or organize it for academic study. Finding a *generative theme*, that is a theme generated from student conditions which is problematic enough to inspire students to do intellectual work, can produce a wealth of student expression. (p. 5; emphasis added)

Two important points are raised in Shor's account. Firstly, and by using bicycles as a prompt for a curriculum, set within the broad expectations of responding to issues of behavior and interpersonal interaction, the 'generative themes' core to the Bike Build emerged. It was with the student-led inquiry that framed the conduct of the workshop sessions that the pedagogy *and* curriculum of Bike Build gained structure. For instance, as the students undertook the task of repairing their bicycles, they also made discoveries relating to technical aspects of the bike's design and manufacture; with these discoveries in turn leading the students to identify the various mechanical proficiencies required for repairing these aspects of the bike. These discoveries set in train new lines of activity, and in turn generated new lines of inquiry and points of investigation. It was with the task of simply commencing that the generative themes of Bike Build took shape and directed where the sessions would lead.

Secondly, it was through these discoveries—through the realisation of these cumulative generative themes—that provocations for engagement and interaction also developed. As the students discovered things about their bicycles, they also began to discuss what they had found, explain concepts and theories, and generally, *talk*. We find it somewhat ironic that in most classroom settings, talk is generally regarded as a problem; as a distraction, or a demonstration of being 'off' task. But here, talk was crucial. It did occur that some talk was off-task, and we are far from suggesting that the engagement with the bicycles remained focused throughout the entirety of the workshop sessions. At times the students were distracted, disinterested and bored. But in general, activity proceeded productively, with talk central to the inter-relationality typical of these sessions.

The Risk of Student Engagement

But this was risky. Firstly, and as Shor found with his own students, the young people we worked with took some time to 'learn' how to interact in this space. But as they did branch out, as they came to speak and use the workshop space to its full extent, we saw the realisation of a different group of young people—young people who did

indeed have ideas on how they wished their education to proceed, and how this could be made meaningful to the everyday situations they found themselves immersed in.

This necessitated the deployment of, what is cast here as, a *responsive and relational pedagogy*. As the experiences that Shor (1992) identified assert, once the students learned the dynamics of the workshop sessions and became 'involved', the self-directed nature of the repair of the bicycles combined with a responsiveness required by us as workshop facilitators to keep the sessions progressing. As the setting of tasks and direction of the sessions was mediated by the students, points of inquiry that derived from discoveries made by the students emerged as further 'generative themes' that provoked new directions of discovery, and which formulated nuance in the curriculum needed for the sessions to proceed. We, as facilitators, consequently fulfilled roles as *provocateurs*, posing questions for further inquiry and from which learning in the workshop sessions proceeded. This was, in a Freirean (1970) sense, a dialogic 'problem-posing' approach to learning in which we did not necessarily assume a role in *leading* the inquiry, but took-on the position of co-formulating activities defined by the students, linking these to further tasks and so on.

But this was risky for a second reason: this was a very different way of 'doing' school. While the students responded to the 'alternative' nature of this alternative learning program, interestingly, it was with some of the school staff who were supporting the program that major points of resistance surfaced. One case example stands out in particular. We refer to this as the 'case of the socks'!

Case Study: Informality and the lesson of 'the socks'

One of the school's 'regular' teachers—a relatively recent graduate—undertaking his position in the school as his first major posting, was assigned to the group. From the very outset, the dynamic of the workshop sessions confounded this teacher. He was uncomfortable with the 'looseness' of the sessions and the seemingly chaotic approaches taken for ensuring that a student-led approach to the formation of curricula and day-to-day conduct would be preserved. On several occasions, he questioned each of us directly about the sessions and the unruliness he saw. He on occasion also offered suggestions for how the sessions might be 'made better', which invariably involved the application of varying approaches for ensuring discipline and compliance. He struggled with minor indiscretions 'tried-on' by the students (largely deployed by the students to provoke a response from this particular teacher) that were simply let go by the rest of us and expressed exasperation for why a more ordered and sequenced approach to the sessions was not enacted.

This teacher, while in-principle committed to Bike Build and cognisant of the fact that the students participating in Bike Build were not equipped to negotiate the structures of the regular classroom, was still confounded by the (intentional) informality of the workshop spaces. This approach to convening the session ran contrary to his own tacit beliefs, and seemingly, much of what he had himself been taught through his own preparation as an educator. It was noted on several occasions that the nature of his interactions with students tended toward what we saw as 'strict disciplinarianism', and that his admonishment of students for (what we considered to be) minor indiscretions in behaviour—the use of the occasional, mild 'swear' word, moderate distraction and so on—suggested a very much intended sense of hierarchy. More problematically still, he also 'stood on ceremony' (as we put it), requiring the students to refer to himself and us

as 'Sir' and 'Miss' (even though we had made it clear to the students that we were more than happy with any mode of address the students preferred, including the use of first names—we were visitors in *their* space, after all). While we are careful to avoid any suggestion that this teacher's persona somehow stands as archetypal of all teachers' conduct, it remains that it is indicative of how the intentions of a program like Bike Build can be stymied through something as seemingly simple as the modes of interaction and inter-relationality that come to be used in settings such as this. In all, the form of engagement and the discourse of authority through which this teacher conducted his practice as an educator had the effect of simply antagonising students. The students *knew* this discourse, and indeed were where they were in school because of their own frustrations with it. Simply deploying more *formality* was never going to work.

It was with one particular instance however that the stark contrast between the approaches taken in Bike Build and the approaches this teacher felt were required came into sharp focus. Already uneasy with what had been on this occasion a 'disrupted' session (author Hickey recalled this day in his field notes—a cold mid-winter morning—as being "a bit ratty"), the teacher drew attention to one of the students, and in the process made something of a scene, subsequently breaking what focus there was in the session to highlight and seek contrition for—of all things—this student's socks not being *pulled-up*.

The effect of this public charge, of course, was immediate resistance from the student. Annoyed not only with the affront regarding the socks, but also clearly frustrated that the focus on his bike had been broken (this student had been one of the group who *had* been working actively on his bike), the student retaliated with recalcitrance. Not long after the initial admonishment had been laid, other students in the group also became distracted, lost focus on the activities at hand, and proceeded to skilfully, and without the teacher in question being *too* notably aware (or at least not enough to allow for any formal charge to 'stick'), set about lambasting his authority with some deeply irreverent (and problematic) commentary, all of which was muttered under the breath; assessments of his capacity to teach, his masculinity and basic competence as a human being were relayed with thinly veiled chortling.

When it was considered that this distraction and problematic behaviour resulted from the admonishment of a student for his *socks*, we left wondering whether all the hassle was worth it. This particular teacher struggled with the informality of the Bike Build sessions, and was notably uneasy with what he perceived as a lack of structure, and lack of *authority*. In our terms, he had missed the point entirely—there was indeed a profound structure in place, and focussed activity undertaken. More importantly, what was occurring within Bike Build was the development of activity that was prompted by the students themselves; activities that the students had authority to lead, and which in turn, generated enthusiasm and engagement. To admonish students on something that we considered as trivial as socks at that point of the session ultimately led to chaos, distraction and (further) breakdown in the inter-relationships between this teacher and these students.

The Risk of Informality: Inter-relationality in Schooling

When done well, and when engaged pedagogically in the spirit of inter-relationality, Bike Build demonstrated that informality has a place in schooling as a function for the nurturance of meaningful interpersonal relationships. In the informal spaces of Bike Build, dialogue occurred, and new relationships with learning and schooling developed.

This paper has outlined how consideration of the ways that relationships are formed and nurtured, the ways that behaviour is considered and the effects different formulations of learning have on student experiences of school mediate the learning exchange. In these terms, this paper argues that the ways classroom spaces and interactions between teachers and students proceed has immediate bearing on what possibilities might emerge from schooling. As suggested in the invocation of informality outlined throughout this paper, relational and dialogic interactions that result in meaningful relationships between individuals provide a powerful means of mediating learning.

Significant to this is the notion that the ethic (or indeed *ethos*) implied within such a 'pedagogy of informality' is something that has capacity to re-engage disengaged learners. But here also lies the risk to such an approach to schooling. Within contexts of 'packed curricula', increasing governmental scrutiny, the assurance of 'work ready' graduates and ultimately, the corporatisation of schooling and its emphasis on narrowly defined formations of knowledge and its utility (Connell, 2013; Lingard and McGregor, 2013; Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith, 2012; Lingard, 2011; McGregor, 2009), the arguments presented in this paper for irreverent, open and informal learning exchanges immediately strike as a risky undertaking indeed. An informal pedagogy such as that outlined here does not credence the hallmarks of the sorts of high-stakes, metric-driven education that permeate mainstream schooling in Australia at this historical moment. The risk is that the sort of approaches to learning, and ultimately, the engagement in learning of young people who find the structure and forms of the 'regular' classroom stifling will continue on as marginal(ised) practices, relegated to those sites of 'last resort' in schooling; sites like the alternative learning program discussed here. There is a risk in undertaking a pedagogy that calls for the formulation of inter-personal relationships and the qualitative appraisal of the inter-relationality that stands as core to effective human learning. There is however arguably a greater risk in not opening a range of opportunities to engage young people who struggle with the strictures of the regular school, but who *are,* by and large, entirely capable learners.

That it is possible, through the reconsideration of what counts as learning, to reformulate the ways that learning is practiced and encountered stands as a worthwhile and important undertaking and one that presents as an opening for hope that something more might be possible in existing systems of education (Wrigley, Lingard and Thomson, 2012). At a time when the stakes of high-stakes education appear as overwhelming for at least a portion of students inculcated in schooling, it may well be time to reconsider how it is that the very foundations of the educative dynamic—dialogue, interaction and shared human connection—actually function to produce a context for learning that is conducive to *all* students.

Notes

1. As distinct from alternative learning programs that operate in settings away from school. Te Reile (2014) identifies the nuance within these distinctions in her comprehensive analysis of the typology of alternative learning programs in Australian schools. This is a note.
2. Further programs within the suite of alternative learning options offered included a "Pallet Build" workshop, the "Rock and Water" mindfulness program, a sports administration training program and an applied media program.
3. The bicycles used in Bike Build were provided through the Queensland Police. These bicycles were unclaimed bicycles held and cleared by the Police, and provided a useful source of donor bikes and parts from which the program progressed.

Ethical Clearance

Ethics Clearance for the project reported in this paper was issued by the University of Southern Queensland, number **H16REA253.** Informed consent of all participants and their parents/guardians was secured, along with institutional approval from the case school to conduct this research as part of the program discussed in this paper.

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Figures

Figure 1. The Bike Build workshop space. Copyright: Author Hickey, 2016.

Figure 2: Working collaboratively: a typical interaction in Bike Build. Copyright: Author Hickey, 2016.