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(Re)Visioning the Centre: education reform and the "ideal" citizen of the future

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Abstract
Discourses of public education reform, like that exemplified within the Queensland Government's future vision document, Queensland State Education-2010 (QSE-2010), position schooling as a panacea to pervasive social instability and a means to achieve a new consensus. However, in unravelling the many conflicting statements that conjoin to form education policy and inform related literature (Ball, 1993), it becomes clear that education reform discourse is polyvalent (Foucault, 1977). Alongside visionary statements that speak of public education as a vehicle for social justice are the (re)visionary or those reflecting neoliberal individualism and a conservative politics. In this paper, it is argued that the latter coagulate to form strategic discursive practices which work to (re)secure dominant relations of power. Further, discussion of the characteristics needed by the "ideal" future citizen of Queensland reflect efforts to 'tame change through the making of the child' (Popkewitz, 2004, p.201). The casualties of this (re)vision and the refusal to investigate the pathologies of "traditional" schooling are the children who, for whatever reason, do not conform to the norm of the desired school child as an "ideal" citizen-in-the-making and who become relegated to alternative educational settings.

Keywords: neoliberal reform, choice, governmentality, post-school pathways, exclusion.

Introduction

In the traditionally conservative Australian state of Queensland, it appears that 'the pressures of difference have begun to knock on the door' (McCarthy, 2003, p. 133). Population increase in the tropical north-eastern state from both domestic and international migration is causing some unrest due to the increased cost of real estate, dwindling natural resources, inadequacy of existing infrastructure, traffic and lifestyle change and the effects of multiculturalism upon "Queenslanders" (Graymore et al., 2002; BCC, 2005; Cole, 2005; Murdoch, 2005). In 2000, the Queensland government released the education future vision document, *Queensland State Education-2010* (QSE-2010) to provide, in the words of Premier Peter Beattie, 'a broad description of the future for Education Queensland' (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 3). The aim of QSE-2010 was to question via community consultation what the purposes of schooling in the first decade of the 21st century might be and provide a vision statement to underpin a reform agenda in accordance with those purposes. QSE-2010 reflects anxieties and priorities that are similar in nature to many expressed by governments in other nations (see Edwards & Nicoll, 2001). In line with OECD objectives (2003; 2004), education reform discourse within QSE-2010 speaks to democratic participation, active citizenship, life-long learning and social cohesion. *But this is not all it does…*

QSE-2010 generically describes forces for change by discussing changes in family structure, multiculturalism, economic instability, information technology and the devolution of government (Education Queensland, 2000). Five years after the launch of QSE-2010 and mid-way through its life-cycle, I question how this policy and its off-shoots, which have informed a suite of reforms to education in Queensland, might be operating as a form of strategic rhetoric (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995); in that

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statements within the QSE-2010 vision may be working to privilege dominant perspectives and in doing so, (re)secure existing relations of power. The analysis here questions the effects of this (re)visioning and the apparent rejection of children who do not conform to the 2010 vision. These are the children who become described as 'not suited to traditional schooling' (Education Queensland, 2002), and who end up referred to 'alternative education programs and settings for students who have difficulty in conventional school and disciplinary structures' (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 16).

Turning to literary vs literal versions of truth

Discourse analysis consistent with a Foucauldian notion of discourse does not seek to reveal the true meaning by what is said or not said (Foucault, 1972). Instead, when "doing" discourse analysis within a Foucauldian framework, one looks to statements not so much for what they say but what they *do*; that is, one questions what the constitutive or political effects of saying this instead of that might be? As Foucault (1972, p. 134) argues, 'there is no subtext'. The analyst's job 'does not consist therefore in rediscovering the unsaid whose place [the statement] occupies' (Foucault, 1972, p. 134). Instead, Foucault (1972, p.134) maintains that 'every*thing* is never said' and that the task is to determine, in all the possible enunciations that could be made on a particular subject, why it is that certain statements emerged to the exclusion of all others. There is not the scope within this paper to look to conditions of possibility. Of interest here is more the function of these statements; not how they appeared and came to dominate but what it is that they now *do* (Culler, 1997).

In the context of this paper then, discourse analysis is read as a exercise in explicating statements that function to place a discursive frame around a particular political position; that is, statements which coagulate and form rhetorical constructions that present a strategic reading of social texts to (re)secure existing relations of power (Foucault, 1972; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). The intention is to demonstrate how such statements, in eliding other competing positions, come to present a particular view of the world and in doing so, prepare the ground for the 'practices that derive from them, in the social relations that they form, or, through those relations, modify' (Foucault, 1972, p. 139).

This paper progresses with four layers of analysis. The first provides a discussion of "the problems of the present" as articulated by education reform discourse in Queensland. In the second layer, I retreat to paint a Foucauldian backdrop highlighting discursive motifs inherent to the modern art of government and development of liberal democratic society as a 'sovereignty of the good' (Foucault, 1988, p. 61). The third moves to consider how it is that exclusion can come to be rearticulated as a result of "good/bad choices" and "good/bad choosers". The final layer of analysis (re)turns to the present as a symptom of the future, isolating similar discursive motifs in education department literature. These reflect not only the view that 'in order to change "the future" or "society" one must change the child' (Baker, 2005, p. 69), but also sanction the use of exclusion and force against those who do not/cannot/will not conform to the social norms established by and through existing relations of power.

1. (UN)CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER

> The structure and character of the family is changing in ways that are unprecedented. With new patterns of employment and underemployment, greater mobility and new concentrations of poverty, families are shifting in configuration from nuclear families. Parents are older and working more. Children have fewer siblings in smaller families and they move more often.
>
> The nurturing family of recent decades, based on consensus that the Australian dream surrounded every child, has melted away. Teachers see the signs of family disruption in

> students – anxiety, depression, lack of discipline, aggression, inadequate literacy outcomes and a greater need for adult role models, particularly male role models.
> This places new pressures on schools and teachers to provide children with high levels of social support. It makes it more difficult for some parents to help their children achieve in school. It creates the need for parenting education, the need for a safe, accepting and disciplined environment in schools and for new links with communities to rebuild a new consensus. (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 4)

To support an education reform agenda, the opening paragraphs to QSE-2010 point to the problems of the present, describing changes in family structure and the challenge to schooling when faced with 'the signs of family disruption in students' (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 4). According to the Queensland Government this creates the need for discipline in schools, a new consensus and a (re)consolidation of the Australian identity. However, Foucault argues that identity is not fixed by some predetermined naturalised essence. Instead, it should be regarded as formulated, constituted, derived and inherently weak. He maintains, 'this rather weak identity, which we attempt to support and to unify under a mask, is in itself only a parody: it is plural, countless spirits dispute its possession' (Foucault, 1984, p. 94).

But plurality (and dispute) begets anxiety. If we historically (re)situate ourselves to recall the political imperatives leading to the constitution of the ethical pact said to underpin the ideal of a liberal democratic consensus (Foucault, 1988), we can start to grasp that plurality is not entirely consistent with consensus, and that consensus is entirely necessary to solidify a pact. When faced with 'a complex system of distinct and multiple elements, unable to be mastered by the powers of synthesis' (Foucault, 1984, p. 94), society turns to techniques of discipline and methods of subjection in order to secure that mastery; that is, modern society (re)turns to techniques of discipline-normalisation that Foucault (1975c) argues arose as a response to the threat of plague.

2. TURNING TO/FROM HISTORY…

In his College de France lectures, Foucault described a historical shift in the art of governing and the development of a productive form of power by juxtaposing two models of contagion control: the exclusion of lepers against the inclusion of plague victims (Foucault, 1975c). The methods used to manage the epidemics of leprosy and plague were different although each disease presented a similar problem. Both were highly contagious and deadly. The model of contagion control relating to leprosy though, led to the leper's exclusion where these unfortunate individuals were expelled from the community in an attempt to purify it (Foucault, 1975b, p. 43). However, despite the virtual disappearance of leprosy towards the end of the Middle Ages, this model utilising the techniques of exclusion and banishment continued; albeit with a new object of concern.

> Leprosy disappeared, the leper vanished, or almost, from memory; these structures remained. Often, in these same places, the formulas of exclusion would be repeated, strangely similar two or three centuries later. Poor vagabonds, criminals, and "deranged minds" would take the part played by the leper. (Foucault, 1988, p. 7)

Madness & Unreason

Among those confined there was distinction leading to the segregation and differential treatment of those characterised by "unreason" and those who were considered truly "mad". "Unreason" was conceptually aligned with indolence and idleness, immorality and debauchery and banished lest the unreasoned infect others with their 'contagious example of transgression and immorality' (Foucault, 1988, p. 81). Madness, on the other hand, was aligned with baseness, bestiality, a regression to animalism marked by the complete absence of those faculties of Reason which were taken to distinguish man from beast and the merely bad from the completely mad.

As Foucault (1975, 1977) argues however, exclusion, banishment and confinement resulted in a negative form of power, a power that subtracted from itself because the community suffered the loss of human utility or, in Marxist terms, the “surplus-value” that could be extracted from these individuals. Hence, institutions of refuse and waste became workhouses where labour ‘assumed its ethical meaning: since sloth had become the absolute form of rebellion, the idle would be forced to work’ (Foucault, 1988, p. 57). Although the great houses of confinement attempted to be economically independent through forced labour and industry, the competition they presented led to protests from private enterprise (Foucault, 1988). Thus “unreason” as manifest in idleness, poverty, immorality and dependence needed a self-sustaining solution.

Inclusion & Plague: educate, reform, cure…

During the classical age, the problem of unreason culminated in an ethical project which saw ‘interest in cure and exclusion coincide’ (Foucault, 1988, p. 10). This seemingly antithetical coupling deriving from the political dream of a “sovereignty of the good” resulted in an effort towards the production of an “ideal” citizenry through the use of sophisticated techniques of discipline. Foucault (1975b) discusses plague control as a historical event intrinsic to the development of the modern disciplinary society and the strategic control of human multiplicities, not through the techniques of banishment and forced exclusion, but through a forced and ever more strange *inclusion*. Individual positioning was determined through the development of methods of examination through which were established a personal itinerary of particularity. In distinguishing the exclusion of lepers from the inclusion of the plague victim, Foucault (emphasis added, 1975b, p. 46) states:

> It is not exclusion but quarantine. It is not a question of driving out individuals but rather of establishing and fixing them, of giving them their own place, of assigning places and of defining presences… Not rejection but *inclusion*.

The birth of the modern disciplinary society and the development of a strategic, productive form of power led to the displacement of overt forms of coercion and punishment, which by their violent nature were in danger of bringing about organised revolt and the destruction of the desired social order. This new “governmentality” was the commencement of a shift to the *regulation of self* which was made possible via the recuperative properties of psychological discourse.

Discourse of Right versus Denial of Right

Ever more sophisticated methods of population control began to characterise the modern age. This refinement was necessitated by the apparent schism between two irreconcilable forces, the overt discourse of right and the covert denial of rights, where ignoble coercive disciplines work in opposition to the promise of freedom put forward by the formal egalitarian framework of the sovereignty of the good (Foucault, 1980). However, the apparent schism arising from the conflict between these ‘two absolutely heterogeneous types of discourse’ (Foucault, 1980b, p. 107) - sovereign right versus disciplinary coercion – necessitated the unifying, collusive intervention of an arbitrating discourse that was successful via its claim to scientific objectivity. The need to reconcile the dissonance arising between the *discourse of right* and systematic *denial of rights* is what Foucault (1980b, p. 107) maintains, ‘rendered the discourse of the human sciences possible’, for psychological discourse acts as a coherent relay between these ‘mechanisms of discipline and the principle of right’.

As Foucault (1988, p. 106) points out though, the discourse of discipline is incongruent with 'that of law, rule, or sovereign will'. Instead of enabling access to the promise of freedom inherent to the discourse of right, modern disciplines silently and remotely imprison 'by means of the techniques propounded by the experts of the soul' (Rose, 1990, p. 11). These techniques bring about the seemingly voluntary management of the self by the self in order to prevent 'the weakening of discipline and the relaxation of morals' (Foucault, 1988, p. 59), strengthening the ethical pact underpinning the sovereignty of the good. It is no accident that psychological discourse has as its object the recalcitrant, the disordered and the unruly. In reconciling the irreconcilable, psychology acts to calm both dissonance *and* dissonants through the rule of the norm, as both a discursive domain and a grid of intelligibility for use in the interrogation and rectification of unsanctioned forms of difference.

The normative project culminates in the perpetual reinvestment of disciplinary power through techniques of normalisation engendered towards the production of the sovereign citizen, the self-governing individual, the self-regulated learner (Popkewitz, 2001). This modern art of governing can be characterised by its focus on the individual and preoccupation with governing the soul (Rose, 1990). Interestingly, in the effort to (re)claim the unreasoned, psychological discourses that speak to self-regulation and reason disseminate universalising theories of cognition and development that exclude through 'systems of recognition, divisions, and distinctions that construct reason and "the reasonable person"' (Popkewitz, 2001, p. 336). The generation of this power/knowledge has resulted in an impenetrable but 'fundamentally positive power that fashions, observes, knows and multiplies itself on the basis of its own effects' (Foucault, 1975b, p. 48). It is a knowledge cloaked in benevolence and inordinately difficult to resist.

Knowledge & Mastery

The imperative towards constructing a sovereignty of the good resulted in the transformation of houses of banishment to moral institutions and thus instead of purification through banishment or torture, the move to purify through curative practice was conceived (Foucault, 1988). It could be argued that the aim itself was virtuous and engendered towards the common good; to render unruly bodies productive whilst inculcating a desire to conform to the 'great ethical pact of human existence' (Foucault, 1988, p. 58). Integral to the functioning of this "consensus" to underpin the modern disciplinary society, was what Foucault (1977, p. 26) termed a 'political technology of the body' constituted by two lines of force; namely, 'a *knowledge* of the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a *mastery* of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer them' (emphasis added, Foucault, 1977, p. 26). These lines of force - knowledge and mastery, truth and discipline - traverse the modern socio-political landscape through their embodiment within relations of power to constitute a diffuse but cohesive network of power. The interrelation and reciprocity of these lines of force is illustrated in Foucault's coining of the term "power/knowledge".

Disciplinary power functions by way of disseminating knowledge as *truth*. These truths come to be dispersed via discourses or enunciations of particular truth-claims and sustained by a system of disciplinary technologies; seemingly insignificant practices that penetrate the social body to regard individuals, generating knowledge of individual particularity which then circulates to (re)produce and (re)inforce such claims to truth. Knowledge and mastery - truth and discipline, frame the socio-political dream of this republic of the good by providing a means to secure the submission of forces and bodies (Foucault, 1977). This occurs through the deployment of these two methods of observation and description, which produce a way of knowing and ordering that can be used to neutralise the potential political force of human multiplicities (Foucault, 1977).

Schools & Discipline

The imperative of good supported by the impetus of coercion led to the expansion of social institutions - prisons, factories, hospitals and schools - operating as sites for the exercise of disciplinary power. Childhood, albeit considered predictive of adult pathology, was seen as more amenable to cure. These two factors assured that 'children were to become favoured objects and targets' (Rose, 1990, p. 132) in the will to know and govern individuals. As a result, schooling became a privileged disciplinary site for the individualisation and socialisation of the child as a desirable future citizen (Synott & Symes, 1995) and ever more sophisticated methods were developed to know and master the school child. These methods - both technological and discursive - operate as the 'means of visualisation and techniques of inscription' (Rose, 1990, p. 134) and are deployed within social institutions, such as the schooling system, to fix and to know the individual 'within a single common plane of sight' (Rose, 1990, p. 132). As such, schooling operates as a field of application for the inculcation of social and moral principles (Synott & Symes, 1995), forming a net-like organisation in which relations of power become exercised, (re)informed and strengthened (Foucault, 1980).

The intersection of these techniques of enunciation and visibility (Deleuze, 1992) construct a pedagogical net which acts to capture, sort, spatialise and rehabilitate individual school children (Graham, 2006). The pedagogical categorisation of difference creates disciplinary spaces into which individuals become distributed through methods of examination that utilise 'grids of specification' (Foucault, 1972, p. 46) constituted by relative domains of knowledge; such as special education or educational psychology. As Rose (1990, p. 134) argues, the emergence of the individual within the field of knowledge came about 'not through any abstract leap of the philosophical imagination, but through the mundane operation of bureaucratic documentation'. Statistical tallies of populations tabulating births, deaths, and marriages graduated to the complex of aptitudes, disinclinations, areas of weakness, learning styles, processing speed, short-term memory, spatial abilities, word recognition, sociometric statuses and so on – transforming the work of the humble statistician into an enterprise of individualisation.

In the modern schooling institution, this new-found knowledge has come to be deployed palliatively with repression only coming into play as a lateral effect (Foucault, 1975a), obscuring the other work done in the name of schooling through those ignoble practices that occur on 'the underside of the law' (Foucault, 1976, p. 93f in Marshall, 2001, p. 35). Whilst the discourse of discipline is incongruent with the notion of autonomous freedom, this is disguised through the seemingly benign notion of meritocracy and the 'positing of a faculty of choice' (Marshall, 2001, p. 295). This brings about the appearance of autonomy with the implication that we are masters of our own destiny and hence, victims of our own folly. Arguably, these notions obscure the conditions of our own production (Olssen, 2005) and how our subjectivity has been formed via the constitutive pressure of technological and discursive forces.

These forces are heavily implicated in the practices of schooling. Instead of enabling access to the promise of freedom inherent to the discourse of right, schooling aids to imprison the soul by taking up the persuasive humanism of psychological discourse to construct the school child as an autonomous individual who is imbued with a 'faculty of choice' (Marshall, 2001, p. 295). However, the insertion of a capacity to "choose" brings with it an assertion of not only choosing *to* but also choosing *not to*. It is to the trap within this notion that I now turn.

3. The Chimera of Choice & The Chains of Freedom

Ironically, "freedom" has become compulsory in that the citizen is enchained by or even *contracted to* a particular illusion of freedom that is consistent with the aspirations of government. Central to the success of this "art of governing" is the production of the citizen who believes they are free (Olssen, 2005). The artifice inherent to this notion becomes evident when the imposition of force on bodies is masked by the seductive humanism of psychology and ensuing technologies of the self. This culminates in the constitution of an ideal subject/citizen who “chooses” to uphold the terms of the social contract in the belief that, *in this at least*, they are exercising both the faculty and right to choose (Marshall, 1997b; 2001).

Political liberalist ideology, together with conceptualisations of personal autonomy, becomes articulated in and through the discourse of cosmopolitanism, which Popkewitz (2004, p. 189) describes as the relationship engendered ‘between the freedom and will of the individual and the political liberty and will of the nation’. The power of political liberalism - and its idealised notion of the “autonomous chooser” (Marshall, 1997b), disseminated through the discourse of cosmopolitan reason (Popkewitz, 2004) - is in its *reasonableness*. It is hard to resist concepts such as individual rights, personal autonomy and rule by consensus, however poststructural critique is not simply levelled at the concept but how concepts come to be taken up and used in disciplinary ways.

For example, Olssen (emphasis added, 2005, p.372) objects to how the concept of autonomy ‘misrepresents and distorts the character of social existence… in a way that distorts the overall frame of reference in a *particular political direction*’. The misrepresentation noted by Olssen is in the suggestion that an individual can choose from a variety of options *of their own making*, resulting in conceptualisations of ‘the personally autonomous individual who was free and *could* choose’ (original emphasis, Marshall, 1997, p.33). Marshall (1997, p.33) though, argues that the personally autonomous individual has been supplanted by ‘the notion of the autonomous chooser – an individual capable of choosing correctly from a variety of free choices’. This does not mean that the “autonomous chooser” *is free* for an individual can only ever hope to choose from choices that are or have been made available to him/her and this again is within the constraints of circumstance. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that both our freedom and capacity to “choose” has already been delimited by factors outside our control.

Existing relations of power and an individual’s position within those relations determine the degree to which they can exert control over their own lives. So whilst we might be able to choose from the options available, we may not have the power, control or faculty to choose what we actually want. In this regard, Marshall (emphasis added, 2001, p.295) distinguishes personal autonomy as ‘being able to *decide for oneself*’ from strategic conceptualisations of the “autonomous chooser” supposedly imbued with ‘a *faculty of choice*’. The difference here is subtle and oscillates around being the author of one’s own choices as opposed to choosing within the limits prescribed and organised towards a particular strategic end by others. Marshall (1997, p. 47, original emphasis), in a phrase that speaks to the argument I make with respect to education reform discourse in Queensland, explains:

> It is not just that the insertion of the economic into the social *structures* the choices of the individual, but that, also, in behaviouristic fashion it manipulates the individual by penetrating the very notion of the self, structuring the individual’s choices, and thereby, in so far as one’s life is just the individual economic enterprise, the lives of individuals.

Contributing to Marshall’s (2001, p. 294) discussion of the problem of in/dependence for the autonomous chooser in delineating freedom *from* and freedom *to*,[1] I argue that the insertion of a faculty of choice is strategic for an additional reason: in that it allows for the assertion of personal responsibility; that is, to be both responsible *to* and responsible *for*. This is not just the responsibility *to* ‘make continuous choices’ (Marshall, 2001, p. 295) consistent with the ideal of the “unfinished cosmopolitan” (Popkewitz, 2004). If we unpack the obligations of cosmopolitan citizenship we find; first, the responsibility *to* choose good choices; second, to take responsibility *for* the consequences of those choices; and third, being responsible *for making* those choices. This culminates in a situation whereby one becomes characterisable by the things one has or has not done, whence the individual becomes known and marked by an identity conceived around the "choices" s/he has supposedly made. Thus, a second objectionable aspect of the concept of autonomy comes into play when the rhetoric of the autonomous individual with an ability to choose is used to construct a binary of *good/bad choices* and thus, *good/bad choosers*.

If one really did have the freedom and "right" to choose, then surely there would be not be consequences for exercising that choice either way? Also any emphasis on "opportunity" and "choice" suggests a level playing field and that the "choices" available are the same for all (see Marshall, 2001, p. 294). It seems the bitter pill masked by the discourse of cosmopolitanism is that the common good is only good for some. Not those who are capable of exercising autonomy, for arguably 'nobody is autonomous in this sense' (Olssen, 2005, p. 373), but good for those who both have the capacity and are content to choose from *approved* choices, in order to cultivate a civic self that can compete in 'a race where there is no finishing line' (Popkewitz, 2004, p. 207).

4. GETTING *BACK TO THE FUTURE*…

Queensland State Education-2010 is a textual demonstration of strategic discursive positioning that weighs concerns with social justice against the demands of globalised economic imperative. The narrative deploring decay to the social fabric is an exercise in refusal that hides the responsibilities of government behind the discourse of neoliberal individualism (Davies, 2005). This becomes apparent in statements like:

> There is a challenge facing education in Queensland as we move into an era where knowledge supersedes information and technology transforms longstanding relationships of time and space. It is to become a learning society – the Smart State – in which global forces *favour the adaptable*. (emphasis added, Education Queensland, 2000, p. 8)

Pausing to think outside the current spin, Davies (2005, p. 9) remarks sagely that whilst, 'it feels good to be flexible and adaptable… it also feels terrible when we realize we cannot afford to stop'. Similarly, Lambeir (2005) argues that through the application of this rationality, to *be* 'a human being is to choose to learn this and to learn that for the rest of one's natural life' (p. 353). Like Davies (but unlike the Queensland Government), he questions 'whether this is the kind of life we *want* to live for a lifetime' (p. 350). It appears that what the individual may want is important only in so long as it benefits *certain* others, therefore desire is stimulated in accordance with dominant objectives. In effect, neoliberal individualism makes it incumbent upon the desirable citizen to cultivate an "adaptable" or cosmopolitan self, so as to avoid burdening the republic of the good. Here again, Olssen (2005, p.373, original emphasis) is instructive in arguing that:

> To define the perfection of the state in terms of such a value therefore will obviously short-change many groups. To make it the foundation value of the state also potentially exonerates the state from responsibility to assist its citizens when in need. It is not so much of a slippage, after all, from arguing that "the state should assist people to become autonomous" to arguing "they expect all to *be* autonomous".

Not only is Queensland education reform discourse in danger of the slippage to which Olssen refers but the discursive practices within constitute a correlative object (Foucault, 1972; Deleuze, 1988); the dissonant citizen at the root of civic dissonance. This is the "unreasoned" individual who fails to capitalise on educational opportunities because they do not choose in accordance with the "proper" choice put forward by dominant paradigms (Lambeir, 2005). It appears that in a contemporary individualistic society, we are free *only* in so long as we "choose" to adhere to the narrow parameters of the social norms established by and through existing relations of power. In the educational context, approved choices are presented as "opportunities" which the "good chooser," as an ideal citizen-in-the-making, should properly and promptly avail themselves.

Assigning Places & Defining Presences

Those who either do not/cannot/will not position themselves to take advantage of "opportunity" become positioned themselves. Once constituted as an object of a particular sort, individuals can be dispersed into disciplinary spaces and, from there, become subject to particular discourses and practices that Butler (1997, pp. 358-359) argues results in, 'the "on-going" subjugation that is the very operation of interpellation, that (continually repeated) action of discourse by which subjects are formed'. Through this process, individuals not only come to occupy *spaces* at different points in the social hierarchy but, through their continual subjugation, come to know and accept their *place*. Such processes and practices of exclusion are described benevolently in departmental literature:

> State schools should provide a safe, tolerant and disciplined environment that allows *all* students the *opportunity* to learn. This means: developing alternative education programs and settings for students who have difficulty in conventional school and disciplinary structures. (emphasis added, Education Queensland, 2000, p. 16)

Importantly, non-adherence is also perceived as a *choice* which brings with it a suggestion of personal responsibility and culpability. More subtly, this contributes to the constitution of a recognizable object of discourse - the *punishable* "chooser" - upon whom the therapeutic force of the good must be directed and if necessary, intensified (Foucault, 1972; 1975c; 1977; Ewald, 1992). These manoeuvres become articulated in educational reform discourse, thus:

> This reform is about engaging young people in learning. It is not about forcing reluctant or disruptive students to remain in classrooms or lowering the standards of behaviour we expect from young people. Processes for dealing with disruptive behaviour, such as suspension and exclusion, will continue. Extra career guidance and personal support, and more flexible learning options will be provided for these young people to continue their learning *in different environments*. (emphasis added, Education Queensland, 2002, p. 7)

However, these "different environments" are not all benign. In Queensland, school suspension that is longer than 5 days in duration or repeated suspensions can also result in enrolment in alternative site placement units running intensive behaviour modification programs. Depending upon the school district, age, gender and profile of the child, enrolment in these programs can be for a few weeks[2] or up to six months (Bouhours et al., 2003).[3]

The object of choice

The concept of personal autonomy posits a faculty of choice which (dis)places responsibility and allows for the assertion of "good/bad choices" and "good/bad choosers". Such constructions of the individual subject are dependent upon the discourse of the human sciences, particularly the appeal to reason and the ability to choose *reasonably*. "Bad choosers" end up referred to and become the domain of cognitive and behavioural psychologists (Ollendick & Hersen, 1998; Powell & Inglis-Powell, 1999; Wallace, 1999),

> Please find below some suggestions to deal with Candy's[1] behaviour… If consistently applied across all situations, Candy will be more likely to learn how her choices (actions) result in a consequence (effect). The aim is for Candy to learn that it is her choices that determine a consequence (reward/punishment), not her parents…
>
> EG: "The rules are we go forward on the escalator. If you get hurt that is your choice". Then if she tantrums, "You can scream but the rules are the same. The tantrum won't work. You chose to walk the wrong way so you chose to get hurt". (Letter from Psychologist, 2003, pp. 1-2, Researcher Archive)

[1] A pseudonym.

Traces of psychological discourse can also be found in Queensland Government education policy, school management documents and media releases. For example, in Education Views, published by Education Queensland, an article entitled *Alternative Program helps at-risk pupils*, states:

> Mr Wells said the Government's approach to behaviour management issues was to have students who displayed unacceptable behaviours face up to the consequences of their actions. (Currie, 2000, p. 2)

In Schools + Parents magazine, another Education Queensland publication, an article entitled *Dealing with Misbehaviour in the Early Years*, states:

> Mr O'Brien recommends parents reinforce that their child is responsible for his or her own behaviour ('I can see you put your toys away yourself today!') and appeal to their child's own sense of self ('When did you discover how to do that?) … Mr O'Brien suggests parents *seek help* from their child's teacher, guidance officer or principal if the behaviour persists. (emphasis added, Education Queensland, 2005, p. 18, 19)

We can see clearly how the discourse of the human sciences manifests as discursive, dividing practice in an example of a Behaviour Management Plan available on the Education Queensland website. The plan outlines responsibilities and consequences for primary school students and sets out levels of conformity, described as 'Discipline Levels' that move from Gold, Silver or Bronze, to levels of non-conformity that slide from Level 1 to Level 5. From Level 2, pejorative discourse is invoked in statements such as, "*You* have failed to improve your standards" (emphasis added, Education Queensland, 1995, p. 15). At Level 5, the student is informed:

> Unfortunately, *you* have not shown any willingness to improve at this School. As a result *you have denied yourself the right* to be a student at Swayneville State School. *You* will be officially suspended from this School. The Director General of Education will determine *your* future primary education. (emphasis added, Education Queensland 1995, p. 15)

Aptly illustrating the schism arising between the discourse of rights and the coercive denial of those rights, following this excerpt is a statement that reads: 'A right is something which belongs to you and cannot be taken away by anyone' (Education Queensland, 1995, p.15). Since "the good" cannot be seen to be taking away the rights of a child, psychological discourse acts to reconcile the irreconcilable by positioning the child as "having denied themselves that right". The use of "you" also has individualising effects. It is a discursive tactic that firmly positions the incorrigible child as the site of the educational problem (Slee, 1994; 1995), demarcating between children who "choose" to conform to prevailing norms and those who supposedly choose otherwise. This suggests not only equality of choice but that the "approved" choices are relevant and desirous to all. Ironically, it could be argued that the child who "chooses" otherwise is demonstrating more autonomy than the child who chooses the choice already made for him/her. Such is the chimera of "choice".

Reconciling the irreconcilable

Despite the promise of freedom in neo-liberalist rhetoric, leaking through behaviour management policy discourse is the coercive subordination of the rights belonging to the supposedly "autonomous" individual to the republic of the good (Foucault, 1988). This subordination is evident in phrases like '[a] supportive school environment is where school *community* members feel safe and valued' (Education Queensland, 1995, p.4, emphasis added). Here the responsibility of the individual is to the "community" and the interests of the community are paramount, however, the neoliberal twist on community and responsibility is that the individual is responsible to the community but there is diminishing obligation by return and the dominant interests are economic (Davies, 2005). Traditionally, those with the least influence (economic and social) have had little say in the constitution of "community," or what should be considered as acceptable social norms. Typically, this group – the poor, the disadvantaged, the disabled, and migrant populations - benefits least from the unequal structural arrangements such a "consensus" upholds.

Olssen (2005, p.374) maintains that, 'in individualistic cultures… people are "responsibilized" through strategies of "power-knowledge" to believe they are freer than they really are' for 'underpinning the determinations of individuals is a mix of shaping and conditioning forces and necessities'. The forces and necessities to which Olssen refers are what Popkewitz (2004, p.193) describes as 'regulatory norms of participation' and these contribute to inclusion and exclusion by constituting centre and margin (see Graham & Slee, in press). Psychological discourse acts to rearticulate the conditions of such exclusions by establishing a causal link within the recalcitrant, uncooperative "unreasoned" child-citizen who "chooses" to make the wrong choices. In this, the discourse of cosmopolitan reason acts to reconcile the irreconcilable; masking the schism that arises between the discourse of rights and the coercive denial of those rights when, for example, a child is excluded from an education to which our justice system states they have a legal right. The cosmopolitan discourse of choice, autonomy and responsibility rearticulates that problematic by positing the child as having *denied themselves* that right.

An Illusory Interiority

Psychological discourses that speak to self-regulation and reason disseminate universalising theories of cognition and development that exclude through 'systems of recognition, divisions, and distinctions that construct reason and "the reasonable person"' (Popkewitz, 2001, p.336). The child who does not choose *reasonably* is constructed as behaving outside of those regulatory norms of participation constituting a liberal democratic consensus (Popkewitz, 2004). In this way, the arbitrating discourse of cosmopolitan reason works to construct both centre and margin by defining and universalising 'tacit standards from which specific others can then be declared to deviate' (Ferguson, 1990, p. 9). At the centre is the self-regulated child who learns according to the dominant paradigms that speak to "proper" approaches to learning in order to 'calculate the "proper" dispositions and sensitivities of reason so that children … become "reasonable" citizens of the future' (Popkewitz, 2004, p. 207).

Dispersed to the margins is the "improper" child; the "at-risk" child who comes to be described in deficit discourses and targeted with 'equity programs that focus on the right for all students to access education that leads to learning outcomes consistent with their potential' (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 17). Whilst the 'exclusions appear as a quest for greater inclusion' (Popkewitz, 2004, p. 211), this results in an illusory interiority; an ever more strange inclusion where the maintenance of notions relating to normal and mainstream ensures that certain children exist as the *included* Other (Graham & Slee, in press). This results in an uncontested, naturalised domain at centre, offering up particular individuals to the full force of the gaze whilst leaving others in the relative but contingent safety of the shade.[4]

In conceptualising the tear in the social fabric that supposedly once fashioned the Australian dream, QSE-2010 refers to the need for schools to promote social cohesion, harmony and sense of community, emphasising that 'schools where there are high proportions of students at risk will need special support' (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 4, 6). The Government pledges that it will provide resources to do so, however, this promising social justice ethic is doused by later clarification that this is simply to avoid 'the need for higher expenditure on remedial welfare later' (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 13). This resonates with Olssen's (2005, p. 382) warning that 'autonomy is a strategy for decreasing the role of the state and increasing individual responsibility for welfare'. He cautions that the pursuit of personal autonomy leads not to liberation but 'unfreedom' (Marshall, 1996, p. 83) for agency is a political skill that comes more easily to some than to Others (Olssen, 2005).

Conclusion

By privileging autonomy and individualism, education reform discourse in Queensland such as that found within the future vision document, *Queensland State Education-2010*, firmly positions particular types of children as *outside of centre* whilst indicating from where the threat to the new consensus may come. Popkewitz (1988, p. 77) describes clarion calls for educational reform as rhetoric that 'directs attention to schools as responding to people's most cherished beliefs about developing a good society'. This rhetoric also works to absolve the school from failure by delivering:

> a warning about the threats of moral and cultural disorganization as embodied in the characteristics of the child who is placed outside of the values that order the composite of the *all* children, the child who does not choose, chase desire, and become a life-long learner. (original emphasis, Popkewitz, 2004, p. 211)

The effect of this discursive positioning of centre is to naturalise traditional and privileged contemporary cultural norms as the "proper" way of being in the schooling context. QSE-2010 has been used as a blue print for a suite of reforms to education in Queensland from the introduction of a preparatory year, to a new focus on middle years and the development of alternative pathways in the senior years with vocational options. These developments are not necessarily bad but, if retaining a Foucauldian reticence, one must be cognisant of potential danger.

The analysis here is restricted to the reconceptualisation of the senior years through QSE-2010 and the resultant *Education Training Reforms for the Future*, which markets the flexible VET schooling option as 'alternative education programs and settings for students who have difficulty in conventional school and disciplinary structures' (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 16). These options are described enthusiastically despite the restriction and location of each of these alternative sites to significantly socioeconomically depressed areas, erroneously suggesting that only working-class kids hate school.[5] Alternative pathways are problematic if they produce bodies as "adaptable" (but still disposable) cogs in a conscience-free market economy (Marshall, 1997a). Or, if they happen to lead in particular directions by offering "choices" that reinforce socioeconomic and gender stratification. The argument goes that these options are a sensible offering that are more relevant to those students "not suited to traditional schooling". What seems to go *without* saying however, is that the problem resides within the deviant student and that there is nothing wrong with traditional schooling.

I stated at the beginning of this paper that my objective was to elucidate statements that work to present a particular view of the world and in doing so, prepare the ground for the 'practices that derive from them, in the social relations that they form, or, through those relations, modify' (Foucault, 1972, p. 139). Education reform discourse in Queensland positions students who either cannot or do not conform to rigid contemporary norms as deviant individuals. Statements like those elucidated in this paper coagulate to form discursive dividing practices which prepare the ground for the exclusion of non-deserving students who have denied themselves the right to an ostensibly inclusive educational system. This works to legitimise their subjection to arcane behaviour modification practices and naturalises the gendered and socioeconomically-loaded life opportunities afforded to them.

Interrogation of the strategic rhetoric (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995) within discourses that work to (re)secure a normative centre may make visible constructions that have become naturalised, privileging particular ways of living in the world. Naturalisation effaces. In naturalising a particular mode of existence, we construct a universalised space free from interrogation (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995); a ghostly centre which eludes critical analysis and thus recognition of the power relations embodied within notions of normalcy which exert influence over other ways of being (Graham & Slee, in press). When we particularise students as "not suited to traditional schooling", we work to maintain power imbalances and structural inequity by naturalising attributes that carry social, political and cultural currency, such as those said to characterise the cosmopolitan child (Popkewitz, 2004). This works to remove the scene of schooling from the field of investigation into reasons for schooling failure. In describing and reifying characteristics of the life-long learner as citizen of the future "sovereignty of the good" (Foucault, 1988), Queensland education reform discourse effectively fashions a scapegoat for social and systemic problems – the difficult child, the unruly body, the *un*cosmopolitan child – as the product of global instability and family disruption who has failed to adapt and take up the opportunity to participate in the consolidation of Queensland as the "Smart State" of Australia.

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[1] See Marshall (2001, p.294): 'Thereby, in relation to *choice* it might be argued that choice presupposes autonomy, and therefore some notion of understanding about the ability to choose and the range of choices available…. Also, autonomy presupposes that the autonomous chooser is independent and has not been influenced, manipulated or determined to choose in certain general directions. It can be argued that if genuine autonomy is implied in the notions of choice by neo-liberals that in fact there is a limited and imposed sense of autonomy operating in this notion of the autonomous chooser. Nor is freedom to be interpreted as merely freedom *from* constraints, that is in a negative sense, because there is also positive freedom, or freedom *to'*.

[2] Such as LASER and NICKLIN, short-term programs run in the Education Queensland Stafford District.

[3] Queensland does have longer stay alternative site placement centres where the child usually remains enrolled and engages in an intensive behaviour modification program for a period of six months. After this period, the child does not typically return to the suspending school but is instead relocated to another school in the area. In Corinda District, in Brisbane's south west region, enrolment is almost exclusively boys. This is not the result of policy but the result of referral and the nature of the behaviour. It appears that more boys engage in aggressive, physical behaviour than girls. This is considered more seriously and results in more serious responses; i.e. referral to long-stay programs rather than short-term.

[4] In referring to shade here, I do not claim that those at centre are immune to the gaze nor reside in the safety of darkness. Instead, consistent with Foucault's discussion of 'intensification' and 'redoubled insistence' (Foucault, 1977; Ewald, 1992), the suggestion is that there are proximal-zones of scrutiny and that the force of the gaze and intensity of light increases incrementally upon one's deviance from the "norm".

[5] I find it problematic that each of the areas named, i.e. Logan, Ipswich, Deception Bay and so on, are areas characterised by lower socioeconomic circumstances and high non-English speaking immigrant populations. Much educational discourse unquestioningly positions the socially and economically disadvantaged as the problem and not the schooling practices that might appear irrelevant or alienating to young people.