

PSY-DISCIPLINARY COGS IN THE TEACHER EDUCATION MACHINE

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ABSTRACT. In his book *Discipline and Punish* Foucault (1977) offered the notion of the “psy- disciplines,” as a collective term for psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and psychotherapies, and described how they became entangled in new forms of “governing at a distance” during the 19th century. Here we set out to explore how the psy- disciplines currently manifest and operate as significant cogs in the teacher education machine. Responding to Law and Urry’s (2004) call for a more “messy” social science, we offer an impressionistic assemblage ethnography, where we pick up and consider the psy -disciplinary cogs that we happen upon in our everyday lives as lecturers in Australian initial teacher education. We offer an incomplete list of some of these cogs, and indicate the ways in which they uphold psy-disciplinary knowledges, and the psy- gaze, as relevant and significant. We conclude by reflecting on the implications for possible interventions into the machine.

Keywords: psy- disciplines; cogs; teacher education machine; knowledge; psychoanalysis

Introduction

In his book *Discipline and Punish* (1977) Foucault offered the notion of the “psy- disciplines,” as a collective term for psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and psychotherapies, and described how they became entangled in new forms of “governing at a distance” during the 19th century. In this paper we set out to explore the ways in which the psy- disciplines currently manifest and operate as significant cogs in the teacher education machine. Our exploration is compelled by our uneasiness in relation to teaching various university courses in Australian initial teacher education (ITE), such as educational

psychology, child development and classroom management, which hold explicit expectations to “cover” curriculum areas that we are highly critical of but are prescribed to teach by regulatory bodies, such as the New South Wales Institute of Teachers (see NSW Institute of Teachers, 2012, now BOSTES, Board of Studies Teaching & Educational Standards). More generally, we also understand the psy- disciplines to be dominant in contemporary university life, in that they operate as an uncontested way of making sense of students and their educational experience.

To characterize ITE as a machine we draw on various sources, as will become evident, and acknowledge that the metaphor is neither complete nor perfect. According to *the Oxford English Dictionary*, the tome of sanctioned definitions, a machine is an apparatus using or applying mechanical power, having several parts, each with a definite function, and together performing certain kinds of work. This takes our thinking to the ways in which the ITE machine is set to produce work-ready graduates: teachers, equipped to enter into other machines (Ryan & Bourke, 2012), and how we, as lecturers, are asked to perform certain kinds of work within an already existing apparatus. In addition, drawing loosely, perhaps heretically, on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of a “machinic assemblage,” we think about the machine as made up of “variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds” (p. 3). Deleuze and Guattari compel us to think about assemblages as heterogenic, as “uneven” and “out of step” as it were, and to ask what the machinic assemblage functions with, what are its connections with other assemblages, and what other machines or cogs need to be plugged into it, or integrated within it, in order to work. They make us think of intensities and convergences traversing the machinic assemblage. And then there is the torture machine in Kafka’s *The Penal Colony* (1919/2007), where the condemned suffers a slow death whilst the machine inscribes the law he has broken onto his body. This image makes us consider that the ITE machine also inscribes certain laws (norms, policies, values) onto its bodies and in doing so constitutes particular subjectivities in the shape of teacher and student personhoods (Furedi, 2004), and rather than instigating a slow death, the process perhaps puts to sleep other kinds of becomings and hence other laws. On all accounts, we are interested in all the different cogs, pulleys, spirals, and prongs that stabilize the ITE machine, to the extent that we can refer to it as stable or stabilized. Suffice to say here, it is stable *enough* to produce graduates every year.

We also pay attention to particular kinds of interventions in the ITE machine. Both of us experiment with unsettling curriculum-as-usual in domains colonized by the psy- disciplines such as child/adolescent development and classroom management. The notion of “discipline” reminds us of how the psy-disciplines were installed as academic disciplines during the 19th and 20th century and

how they seek to “discipline” (regulate, subjectivate) the objects of which they speak. As Rose (1999) writes,

In the nineteenth century, psychological expertise produced a know-how of the normal individual; in the first part of this century it produced a know-how of the social person. Today, psychologists elaborate complex emotional, interpersonal and organizational techniques by which the practices of everyday life can be organized according to the ethic of autonomous selfhood (p. 90).

Rose continues, that “know-how” is dispersed in two ways, first by reshaping the knowledges and practices of those who affect others to fashion themselves in “productive” ways, such as teachers, counselors and a number of other professionals. Educational knowledge is vested with processes of dissemination, and as Vick (1996) explains, psychology became the “centre of educational knowledge ... which formed the theoretical base from which pedagogy began to draw” (p. 117). Thus the “psy-knowledges,” as Rose (1989) also calls them, both fashion professionals themselves during their “training,” and equip them with knowledges and practices which they go on to use to regulate other people. The second way in which psy-disciplines are dispersed and operate is through the “therapeutic.” The “therapeutic” or “‘psychotherapies of normalcy’ ... promulgate new ways of planning life and approaching predicaments ... and disseminate new ways for understanding oneself and acting upon oneself to overcome dissatisfaction, realize one’s potential, gain happiness and achieve autonomy” (Rose, 1999, p. 90). Our contention therefore is that the psychological sciences are not separate from the field of education, which is a trope often invoked in the recent calls for closer collaboration between them. Psy- knowledges form the dominant theoretical bases for ITE as well as other domains of education and education research (Nisbet, 2005). They shape the individual subjects of education, and they offer pedagogies and practices for regulating others. Developmental psychology, educational psychology, classroom management and special education (which is much influenced by psychiatry and psychotherapy) are the places in which psy- knowledges are explicated, but the psy-disciplines, and the “psy- gaze” they afford, also implicitly underpin the pedagogies taken up by teacher educators, including the assessment of students’ learning. Moreover, the psy- gaze offers ways for understanding students more generally, and for students to make sense of themselves, and the challenges and successes they encounter in their processes of becoming teachers. In that way, many cogs inside and adjacent to the ITE machine work to uphold psy- disciplinary outlooks, concepts and notions of intelligible and “appropriate” knowledge, academichood and studenthood.

Our interventions, both in our teaching and here, it needs to be said, are less about being “anti-psy” than they are about recognizing that psy- disciplines are particular “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 1980) with particular implications

for practice, and that there are other “regimes of truth” available that envisage practice differently. As Foucauldians we are both committed to a “practice of freedom,” which is a space, not of absolute freedom, but of working to recognize the regimes of truth that hold us captive so that it becomes possible to imagine and pursue other regimes of truth (for oneself and others). It is not surprising therefore that we are interested in the ways in which educational spaces are formed by and subject to/of the psy- disciplines and in trying to understand how they maintain themselves to be so. The unspoken assumption is, of course, that there is nothing given (“natural”) about this, rather we see it as a historical and cultural artefact. The place of the psy- disciplines as key cogs in the ITE machine, for example, is continuously made and remade. Agents of various kinds are doing this work – from organizational structures to everyday minutiae, to human and non-human bodies that are passionately attached to notions that certain kinds of knowledges are essential to good teaching, to being a learner, and so on.

Foucault in “A conversation with Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot” (1980) explains his impetus to write *Discipline and Punish* and discusses the “panoptic machine.” He expounds that he was interested after writing about the “origins of clinical medicine” to think about “how the medical gaze was institutionalized, how it was effectively inscribed in social space, how the new form of the hospital was at once the effect and the support of a new type of gaze” (p. 146). He continues by arguing that the gaze, which we specifically extend to the psy- gaze, is really “two things here: the gaze, and interiorization” (p. 155). By adopting and paraphrasing Foucault’s (1977) understanding of the “panoptic machine” to the ITE machine, the psy- gaze reforms, treats, and instructs students, it separates the “abnormal,” it supervises students and “teachers,” and puts “idlers to work” (p. 205). The ITE machine locates bodies in space, distributes individuals in relation to one another; it hierarchically organizes discourses and bodies, and channels power. The ITE machine is fed by a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behavior is imposed by applying the psy- gaze through students’ “interiorization” of the very gaze itself (Foucault, 1977, p. 205). However, the ITE machine does not only operate supported by the psy- gaze or in support of the psy- gaze, it is also an effect of it. Thus, “[w]e are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of its mechanism (Foucault, 1977, p. 217). The ITE machine works to internalize rules, to rehabilitate, to ensure (self) surveillance into so-called private aspects of life and to relay power efficiently. However, efficiency is not only about the economic cost to run the ITE machine or whether this form of power produced by the machine is more efficient than its sovereign application, but “there is also a specifically political cost. If you are too violent, you risk pro-

voking revolts. Again, if you intervene in too discontinuous a manner, you risk allowing politically costly phenomena of resistance and disobedience to develop in the interstices” (Foucault, 1980, p. 154).

The “panoptic machine” is a model that helps us explore the ways in which teacher education institutions operate a mechanism that “automatizes and disindividualizes power” (Foucault, 1977, p. 202). By producing power “in which individuals are caught up” (Foucault, 1977, p. 202), the ITE machine is “operating on its own, it does not matter who exactly operates it,” as “[a]ny individual, taken almost at random, can operate the machine: in the absence of the director, his family, his friends, his visitors, even his servants” (Foucault, 1977, p. 202). The effect of the tendency to disindividualize power leads to the understanding that power resides in the machine itself rather than in its operators and that the machine is a diffuse form of social control with no escape. However, Foucault argues in his later work, the power produced by the machine and the relations used and produced by it ultimately control large numbers of people by ever smaller numbers of “specialists,” such as teacher educators, counselors and bureaucrats. However, spaces for practices of freedom also open by the very operation of the machine as well, given that the machine is not “smooth” or “coherent,” but a heterogenic assemblage of multiple regimes of truth, some which are dominant and some which are more marginal (Butler, 1997).

The Study

With these theoretical perspectives we are therefore critically attuned to the psy- disciplines and the psy- gaze, also as they are put to work in the ITE machine. Yet, neither of us has hitherto undertaken a focused empirical exploration, of precisely how they appear and operate in contemporary machines, and we decided to undertake the study presented here. In undertaking this study as post-foundational researchers, we respond to Law and Urry’s (2004) call for a more “messy” social science. A “messy” social science is one that not only critiques foundational, positivist endeavors but *enacts* a social science which seeks to blur, shake and invite questions, *and* disappoints not the desire for knowledge but the desire for clarity and certainty (Stronach and MacLure, 1997). Specifically, we take up Law and Mol’s (2002) exploration strategy called “listing,” in which smooth, causal and authoritative overviews of “main contributing factors” are rejected in favor of disordered sketches of lines in complex indefinite assemblages, or put differently, of various cogs in the machinery, without assuming that a finished and complete picture could ever be achieved.

Listing as a form of assemblage ethnography, is an exploration strategy that is specifically interested in maintaining complexity and insisting on non-

reductionist knowledge of the social world (Law & Mol, 2002). Listing is an on-going activity, the list is never complete; items can be crossed out and added infinitely. Listing is not ranking, meaning that we have no interest in or capacity to determine which items on and off the list are essentially more significant. Listing asks questions about “the order of things” (Foucault, 1970), about our “systems of thought” and in doing so it may trouble ordering-as-usual (categorizing, ranking, hierarchizing), precisely in its refusal to enter into the customary ways of either implying or surmising causality and relative significance. As Law and Mol (2002) write,

The texts that carry academic stories tend to organize phenomena bewildering in their layered complexity into clean overviews. They make smooth schemes that are more or less linear, with a demonstrative or an argumentative logic in which each event follows the one that came before. What may originally have been surprising is explained and is therefore no longer surprising or disturbing (p. 3).

Listing, therefore, tries to invite non-traditional sense-making loops, to see what can be gained from that. The outcome is always unknown and unpredictable, as each reader will be actively engaged in making her/his own sensings of the items presented in the specific instance. Lists, Law and Mol (2002) argue, “assemble elements that do not necessarily fit together into some larger scheme. In addition they make no claims to inclusiveness” (p. 6). The list contains different entries, but

[t]hese don’t stand in a hierarchical relation to one another. Imagine, then, not a grid drawn in ever more detail, with ever more subdivisions; imagine, instead, turning the pages of a sketchbook. Imagine looking at different pictures, one after the other. Each orders and simplifies some part of the world, in one way or another, but what is drawn is always provisional and waits for the next picture, which draws things differently (Law & Mol, 2002, p. 7).

So what is each item on the list or sketch, then, is it data or analysis? Is it both, at the same time, or something else altogether? As Koro-Ljunberg and MacLure (2013) argue, the distinction between them is in crisis (/has always been in crisis) and we are at a juncture where it is necessary to (/about time that we) explore methodologies that help us illuminate that. While it is outside the scope of this paper to go into the debate fully here, we merely wish to suggest that the items on the list, in our view, emerge as a data+analysis simultaneity (see Petersen, 2013), in that each item, to make it to our list, has already been recognized by us as relevant, which entails some form of analysis, but also has yet to be specifically analyzed, which entails a status as data. In other words, each item on our list has been strategically and actively picked by us, as material for our exploration of the manifestation of the psychodisciplines in ITE, yet in a sense they remain “emergent.” In line with the

“messy” approach, which challenges the usual rational “clean” narratives of scientific systematicity, we collected data pragmatically, adding to our list items that we came across in our everyday lives as lectures in ITE. As there is no aspiration to completeness, there was also no aspiration to systematicity-as-usual, as it seems to us that that construct largely rests on an idea that one most proceed systematically so that one can assure oneself and others that nothing has been overlooked. We are well aware that methodological adventures such as these are risky, in that they do not make the typical reassurances, and, therefore, may fail to be recognized as scientific and consequently as legitimate (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). Yet, we believe that much can be gained both from methodological experimentation and from the listing exercise we offer here.

In the following we will proceed to offer our messy and incomplete list. Each item/cog, it has to be said, belongs strictly neither “inside” nor “outside” the machine, as the machine is an assemblage without limits. Further, our items/cogs are not necessarily “representative” of other ITE machines, and rather than assess their relevance on those terms, we hope the reader takes them as an invitation to consider the various psy- cogs in their own machines. Also, as we have already indicated, we realize that many of the psy- cogs that could be said to *also* matter to the continuation and stabilization of the ITE machine are not things we would necessarily come across directly in our work day, which means that they would have been off the radar when we conducted this ethnography.

Psy- cogs in the ITE machine

- The National Accreditation and Professional Standards document

FOCUS	GRADUATE	PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE
Physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students	1.1.1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students and how these may affect learning.	1.1.2 Use teaching strategies based on understanding of student characteristics and development to develop student learning.

Figure 1 Photo of section of Standard 1 of the NSW Institute of Teachers' NSW Professional Teaching Standards¹

Regulatory documents, such as the NSW Institute of Teachers' (2012) *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Standards)* govern the ITE machine explicitly. The *Standards* are organized in to three parts: Professional Knowledge, Practice and Engagement. A "standard" is a norm, convention or requirement that is constituted by and constitutive of knowledges that prescribe certain views about school pupils' "development" and "learning," remediation strategies to address needs of the diverse student body, and that offer techniques to facilitate individual students' improvement and the self-improvement of the teacher as a professional and ethical being. In this way all three parts are informed by and incite psy-knowledges. Child development and educational psychology offer theories of human development, learning and personhood, and shape pedagogies based on scientific truth and evidence, often derived in the form of "best" practices. The *Standards* mandate the provision of sanctioned and legitimated knowledges in the ITE machine and ensure the economy of the ITE machine. By the prescription of certain knowledges, practices and forms of engagements, a first year student's potential as a teacher can be efficiently excavated and professional autonomy – as the product – can be approximated in the most linear and economic fashion. The cogs of psy- knowledges in the machine propel ITE students with a uni-directional force towards the acquisition of required knowledges and subjecthood of the teacher. While psy- knowledges offer ways to understand pupils and their development and learning, and shape teachers' dispositions, attitudes and practices towards their future students, they also configure the personhood of the teacher. They lay down personal characteristics and self-regulatory mechanisms for (pre)service teachers by offering aspirations, and "therapeutic" techniques, such as diagnosing their own learning needs and continuously improving their practice towards a dominant personhood ascribed in "teacher quality" and in the *Standards* (NSWIT, 2012).

- The core ITE curriculum document

Upon completion of this course, students will be expected to:

1. Understand typical developmental trends in students as they move through all stages of schooling
2. Understand individual differences in development
3. Understand current theories of learning
4. Understand individual differences in learning behaviours and outcomes
5. Understand the role of developmental and learning theories in informing teaching practice

Figure 2 Extract from child development course outline

Each course in the ITE program has a course outline, which lists its key learning objectives. It is required and policed that course readings, teaching

provisions, assignment tasks and assessment practices all align and all enable the student to meet these objectives. The key learning objectives align with government-mandated content, as program accreditation is otherwise denied. Each lecturer teaching the course is given the learning objectives and s/he cannot alter them. Although in the execution of the course there may still be a modicum of interpretative leeway, fixing the learning objectives is an effective way of ensuring the continuation of dominant, accepted knowledges, which in this case reproduce the psy- disciplinary outlook (developmental stages, differences lie within individuals).

- The journal article

Abstract

A rank-ordered list was constructed that reports the first 99 of the 100 most eminent psychologists of the 20th century. Eminence was measured by scores on 3 quantitative variables and 3 qualitative variables. The quantitative variables were journal citation frequency, introductory psychology textbook citation frequency, and survey response frequency. The qualitative variables were National Academy of Sciences membership, election as American Psychological Association (APA) president or receipt of the APA Distinguished Scientific Contributions Award, and surname used as an eponym. The qualitative variables were quantified and combined with the other 3 quantitative variables to produce a composite score that was then used to construct a rank-ordered list of the most eminent psychologists of the 20th century.

Table 1 (p. 142)	The 25 Psychologists Most Frequently Cited in Professional Psychological Journal Literature: #2 Piaget, Jean
Table 2 (p. 142)	The 25 Psychologists Most Frequently Cited in Introductory Textbooks: #4 Piaget, Jean
Table 3 (p. 144)	The 26 Psychologists Most Frequently Named in the Survey: #2, Piaget, Jean
Table 4 (p. 146)	The 100 (99 Reported) Most Eminent Psychologists of the 20th Century: #2 Piaget, Jean.

Figure 3. Journal article – Haggbloom, S. J., Warnick, R., Warnick, J. E., Jones, V. K., Yarbrough, G.L., Russell, T. M., Borecky, C. M., McGahhey, R., Powell III, J. L., Beavers, J. & Monte, E. (2002), “The 100 Most Eminent Psychologists of the 20th Century,” *Review of General Psychology* 6(2): 139–152.

In our view this journal article substantiates our experience: that there are certain names/theoretical perspectives that one cannot ignore if one has to teach or profess “psychology.” We note in particular the place of Jean Piaget, who remains one of the dominant, if not *the* dominant learning theorist in ITE. Rankings such as the ones offered in the article are interesting in that they not only stipulate “what is,” they also shape the future in their disciplinary/disciplining nature (x and y have been recognized as “most important,” so they need to be a core part of the curriculum, which reproduces them as “most important”; in a self-perpetuating loop).

- Textbooks (and a story)



Figure 4 Photo of my bookshelf

- *Story 1*

Every year I (it could be either of us) receive a few visits from representatives of textbook publishers. They are very keen to talk about the requirements of the course and offer their textbooks for inspection. Usually they send me an inspection copy that I look at and offer my review. The result is that I can keep the textbook. Other times I am asked to review textbooks before their adoption to the Australian markets. These textbooks are glossy, extremely heavy, include lots of photos of children, charts, check lists, developmental milestones and usually teaching resources, such as summaries, tasks in relation to chapter content, videos, tests, assignments and so on. Representatives and reviews point out how useful these resources are and how unique their own offering is compared to others on the market. At this point I like to show the representative my collection of textbooks and even highlight the similarities between them: size, glossiness, identical “packaging” of identical knowledge. Usually a silence is the answer and the representative either leaves soon, promises me to send a copy, or asks me how they could better address the requirements of my course. I ask about the video recordings, specifically if there are any of children recorded during group play, as those are the most useful scenarios for my course. The answer is usually that such videos only have one child and his or her development portrayed, or they are of an expert speaking about the development of the child shown.

Erica Burman offered a very similar story in her keynote lecture given at the 10th European Early Childhood Education Research Association Conference

in London, in August 2000 (Burman, 2001). In her keynote she described how she has been requested to send the mounting child development textbooks (Figure 4) in her office to professionals in the so-called developing world. Burman (2001) questions the practice of disposing of child development knowledge: “Should I now send this intellectual toxic waste to these countries to poison (fill with western debris) the minds of childcare workers? (p. 20)” In our perspective, child development textbooks are far from being disposed of or rewritten in response to the growing body of critiques (e.g. Walkerdine, 1993; Burman, 1994; Cannella, 1997; Fendler, 2001). Therefore, they continue to reproduce particular psy- knowledges in the curriculum of the ITE machine that students then legitimately demand to be taught. Glossy pictures and visual aids showing individual children performing their milestones, or engaging in particular behavior characteristic of different stages serve as visual cogs in the ITE machine.

- Teaching story and student feedback

We list here a story and a series of examples of students’ qualitative feedback on our teaching related to Figure 5 from the story. We aim to further illustrate the fixity of the desired (to become “quality teachers”) and acceptable (common sense) psy- knowledge base of the ITE machine and the “psychotherapies of normalcy” ITE practices that both utilize and produce.

- Teaching story

After 10 lectures and associated tutorials in a first year “Foundations of child development” course for pre-service teachers, students’ assignment task asks them to read and analyze particular scenarios focused on the activities of a child or group of children. One of the overall aims of the course is to destabilize child development knowledges that construct children as incompetent, as lacking, and as growing from a “primitive” being to a “rational” (male) adult. The course also presents multiple ways of understanding learning and thinking that offer alternatives to developmental theories, such as Piaget. Moreover, because students learn about Piaget in another course and his views are so pervasive in everyday thinking (the ideas of ages and stages, and related milestones etc.), Piaget is deliberately ignored in this particular course. All teaching staff were asked by me (the course coordinator) not to mention him. In the assignment, as part of analyzing the scenarios, students are asked to: “explain the ways a child learns and thinks by employing at least two theories.” The course has run the same way now for four years. Piaget’s theories are still not covered and his name is not even mentioned, yet almost half the students use his ideas in the assignment every year.

- *Student feedback on the course*

"The lecturer says we cannot use Piaget but textbooks are filled with his name"
"I would have liked to do more on milestones (even though I understand they are problematic)"

Figure 5 Extract from student feedback on teaching

Our attempts at avoiding even mentioning Piaget's name effected only a minor disruption in the ITE machine. It failed to subvert for most students the dominant psy- discourses of milestones and stages by offering alternatives. Even if we pulled the pulley out by ignoring Piaget, the levers of the ITE machine re-stabilized and continue to tick passing through teacher subjects armed with a Piagetian perspective of child development. In the story and related feedback students desire the certainty of "Piaget," whose work saturates educational texts.

- *Student feedback on our teaching in other courses*

"I don't recall any problem in regards to lectures only tutorials, which is where information from the lectures is reinforced."
"In first year I still find remembering theories hard"
"Don't expect so much from students at the beginning of the course"
"I generally found tutorials always motivating except when repeating stuff I already knew but refreshing never hurts and towards the end my motivation was low due to frustration at not being able to read anything"
"As I have already said - I seem to be repeating answers - [some personal issues] affected my motivation as well as exam stress".

Figure 6. Extract from student feedback on teaching

Psy- knowledges also offer ways for students to understand their own learning and progression on their path of becoming teachers (Figure 6). Behaviorism (reinforcement), developmental progression (first year can't remember so much, growing expectation), and motivation theory offer meaningful and common sense discourses serving as cogs in the machine that produces aspects of students' self-fashioning. Textbooks and everyday practices further sanction thinking in ages and stages. Educational aids and toys attract customers because they are developmentally appropriate therefore scientifically address the needs of the child in each stage.

- **The picture book**

According to Wikipedia (February, 2014) *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1969), a children's picture book, has sold more than 30 million copies worldwide. It has been described as having sold the equivalent of a copy per

minute since its publication and is “one of the greatest childhood classics of all time.” It was voted the number two children’s picture book in a 2012 survey of School Library Journal readers. It features a tiny caterpillar that eats its way through a wide variety of foodstuffs before pupating and emerging as a butterfly, a metaphor so often invoked in child development, such as Maria Montessori’s theory of metamorphosis. The book features in some of the literacy courses in our ITE machine, but its popularity suggests that many of our students’ bodies would be carrying that story (and the many stories like it) already. In that way they come to us already knowing about stages and developmental progression, which may mean both that developmental theories make immediate sense to them, and seem naturally convincing, and it may also contribute to the desire to engage with developmental theory precisely because it is naturalized. In other words, students’ desires and bodies may also help to uphold the “importance” and “relevance” of psy- knowledge.

- The learner self-assessments

ITE students often assess their learning styles or “learner selves” in interaction with each other or with us (Figure 6). Some of the self-assessments we have collected include: “I am a visual learner” (Gardner), “I am not at that stage” (Piaget), “first we need to learn the basic concepts and then the more abstract ones” (Piaget), “I knew unconsciously to reference, but forgot about it at the end” (Freud), “I suffer from really low self-esteem, so that makes it really hard for me to learn” (Bandura), “my intelligence is more emotional, if you know what I mean?” (various psychology sources), “you have not scaffolded me to do this assignment properly” (Vygotsky), “is this task supposed to be in our zone of proximal development?” (Vygotsky), “I can’t learn when I’m not motivated and you need to tell me why I need to learn this?” (Skinner, Maslow, various other psychology sources).

- The email from the student in ITE²

Hiya,
 You are the course coordinator right and so my tutor told me I had to email you. I didn’t hand in my first assignment because for many reasons and now I worry that I’ll fail the course and I just don’t know what to do. I’m going through some really heavy personal issues at the moment, also seeing a counsellor about it, and my tutor said that you need take that into account. Can you tell me what to do? Please call me on me as soon as you get this message.
 [First name of student]
 [Mobile no]

Figure 7 Email “faction”

While the stage-by-stage accumulation of curriculum and professional skills build the teacher, student personhood is also shaped by psy- knowledges in the ITE machine. Through the “interiorization” of the psy- gaze (Foucault, 1977) the ITE machine produces its self-governing individuals who understand their educational experience and problems in a particular way. We observe, again and again, the therapeutic gaze at work. The “therapeutic,” as Rose (year) reminded us, interprets personal problems based on psy-knowledges and often proposes solutions in the form of expert help: medical doctors or counselors (Figure 7) (Fejes, 2008). Feeling anxious and stressed – ostensibly a “normal” part of assessment situations – become pathologic and consequently call for remediation by all involved. Also, unhappiness, disappointment with one’s self, a lack of motivation, and so on, are continuously spoken into existence as “unhealthy,” as putting students “at risk,” and in need of immediate fixing (Furedi, 2004). The “therapeutic” as Wright (2011) so eloquently explains is:

The privileging of psychological discourses and the prominence of counseling as a remedial life strategy are emblematic manifestations of the therapeutic society. Yet the therapeutic extends more widely than concerns with psychological selfhood and the individual in therapy. It encompasses a multifaceted spectrum of discourses, social practices, and cultural artefacts that discursively and institutionally pervade social and cultural life. It takes a clinical form in which individuals either voluntarily seek – or are coerced into seeking – assistance from psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, and counselors (p.1).

- The student life website



MySupport Motivational Emails

mySupport offers fortnightly motivational emails to help you get through your semester in the best possible way. Each email is tailored to an academic stage of the semester and aims to provide handy reminders and advice at just the right time.

mySupport motivational email sign up

Interested in receiving fortnightly emails from mySupport? Sign up here!

Figure 8 The University of Newcastle website³

This page on the university’s website confirms the relevance of the psy- gaze on learning: that the individual’s motivation is crucial to sustained engage-

ment. It also works the therapeutic mode of offering individual support. This again affirms to all its consumers that that is an appropriate discourse through which to make sense of one's educational experience, and one that is legitimate to call upon in the interaction with peers and lecturers.

- Toilet door poster



Figure 9 Photo taken of toilet door poster

This poster, aimed at all who share university life, also upholds psy- knowl- edges as relevant and important. This is an officially sanctioned discourse – it is not random toilet communications (we note the screw on the frame, which serves as a barrier to the management of poster content). Stress is constituted as “unhealthy,” as something that needs to be addressed and alleviated. Gaining and maintaining happiness in the form of a stress-free life becomes a defining success of personhood. We note that the responsibility for the remediation lies with the individual (even if it is the very institution that sanctions the poster that produces the stress), which again is a psy- disciplinary outlook. As Furedi (2004) writes, therapy culture “promotes not simply emotionalism but emotionalism in an intensively individualized form” and “emotions that assist in the project of self-fulfillment tend to be presented in a positive light [joy, happiness, contentment], whilst those feelings [fear, anger, sadness, hate] that bind the individual to others are regarded with suspicion” (pp. 30–31). Contentment and happiness is viewed increasingly as a sign of well-being and health and “feeling good is regarded as a state of virtue” (p. 31).

Concluding Reflection

As mentioned, this study was afforded by our pondering, resistances and continuous spotting of psy- discourses and the unease with our implicatedness in “thinking with” and “thinking against” these discourses. The list offered here, as a never-complete form of assemblage ethnography, has furthered our own understanding of why it has been so difficult to destabilize and denaturalize the psy- disciplines in our teaching. The cogs, it seems to us, work together, but not necessarily smoothly, to uphold the psy- disciplines and the psy-gaze as legitimate or even as self-evidently relevant and meaningful. During our day-to-day work as ITE university lecturers we are implicated in the psy-disciplines. We are required to teach them to our students in order to equip them to become teachers through an efficient, progressive and linear path and to be able to teach most effectively and to become “quality teachers.” For the most part, we are not supported in teaching them content as a set of historically contingent discourses, rather we are asked to peddle psy- contents from the inside, so to speak, as if they are true and hold the key to our students’ future lives as good teachers. As we show here, the psy- disciplinary gaze, and its relevance and significance, is reproduced in all manner of ways as we travel around campus in both its analogue and digital spaces. It seems that psy- knowledges have a hold on what Bruner (1990) called “folk-psychology;” the ways in which people make sense of themselves and the world around them. As Rose, (nd, no page) explains “the psy knowledges have addressed the questions of ‘how shall we live?’, ‘what shall we do?’, ‘what kind of people are we?’, ‘how shall we conduct our existence?’” Students are invited to know themselves as learners, as pre-service teachers, as university students on psy- terms, and we, alongside them, are asked to engage with students (and ourselves) on those terms too. As our students are taught that “to teach students you need to know them and how they learn,” so are we in turn, and students have come to know to ask us to position them and ourselves accordingly. In many ways our students are constituted as fragile and in need of continuous support and motivation, and in many ways we are charged with providing these services and thereby upholding that regime of truth (and refusing to engage on these terms makes us emerge as “unkind,” “uncaring,” etc.). It could be otherwise. Students and lecturers are actively produced by the discourses that are upheld as relevant and authoritative.

Listing has helped us to make and unfold the point that discourses are multiple, that assemblages are heterogenic, and also, to try to refuse to think causally and hierarchically about “contributing factors.” This approach helped us to consider how some variously formed matters are active in stabilizing the ITE machine in its current (and accreditable/accredited) shape. The reader is invited to expand the list, take it in new directions, or begin a new one.

Any list will always already be embedded in the (re)production of “relevant” (and “irrelevant”) knowledges.

As lecturers we might attempt to disrupt the motion of psy- cogs by inserting “differently formed matters” into the machine, and in doing so to create spaces for the practice of freedom; the machine momentarily loses its rhythm, and spaces for alternative regimes of truths open. However, as we have also learned these attempts at throwing sand into the machinery sometimes become costly for us; we become unintelligible to our students and sometimes to our colleagues. We fail to be positioned as competent, truly knowing subjects, and we become placed outside the realm of proper “educational psychology” and “child development,” and cannot be recognized as having any authority in that realm (despite both of us having undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications there).

In our process of writing this paper, and in particular in assembling our list, it became clear that we are subject to and subjects of an ironic twist. Writing this paper felt therapeutic! We talked about how for many years we have been struggling with the psychological cogs all around us, and with our failed attempts at destabilizing them, and that this paper, in a sense, felt like cathartic pay-back. That experience, those sensings and sensations, the meanings that we make of the work we do and have undertaken here, illustrate how the psy- gaze has implicated even those of us who are alert to it and critical of its work. And – we watch as the plot thickens – we also enact in this paragraph a form of “confessional tale” that further stabilizes psy- knowledges as meaningful and relevant, assuming as they do that we as individuals are knowable and that various awakenings to one’s emotional and experiential life is significant and releases unwanted emotions. As Fejes (2008) puts it, “We are not only confessing ourselves to, and are the confessors of others, we are also our own confessors; that is, we confess our inner desires to ourselves, thus participating in shaping desirable subjectivities” (p. 653).

NOTES

1. <http://www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/publications-policies-resources/publications/nsw-professional-teaching-standards/>

2. This email is a “faction,” our fictitious creation based on numerous factually existing emails we have received.

3. <http://mysupport.newcastle.edu.au/departments/mysupport-motivational-emails/>

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